

ONE PERCENT BETTER



50 POWERFUL LESSONS THAT WILL
CHANGE YOUR BUSINESS...
AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE

DOUG SPURLING

FOREWORD BY
PAT RIGSBY

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Change Your Business...and Change
Your Life

by

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Dedication

To my parents, who will never get a chance to read this book, but were the driving force for this project, and everything else I do. I hope I'm making you proud, mom and dad.

Foreword

Read this book.

I can't emphasize this enough.

Read this book.

See, for almost the past 15 years I've been able to work with some of the top small business owners in the world, rub shoulders with many of the most influential experts in business & entrepreneurship...and I've also had the good fortune to get to know Doug Spurling.

And he's smart.

Very smart.

He's built a great, profitable small business that operates in a way that he can actually feel like an owner (rather than an employee) and be paid very well to do it.

He's been savvy enough to build a solid real estate portfolio in the process too.

All before he turned 30.

The way Doug has built his business is the way small businesses can win in today's market while also being profitable and enjoyable for the owner at the same time.

Simple concepts like being client or customer-centric. Having a consistent approach to marketing and selling that yields results month after month. Operating with a systematic approach that allows team members to be great at what they do.

Concepts that all small business owners can benefit from...but few actually put into action consistently.

Let's face it, being a small business owner can be tough. The statistics spell that out with 5 and 10-year small business survival rates that are pretty discouraging. And for those small businesses that do survive, far too large a percentage are doing it due to owners working too hard for too low a wage.

But Doug can help. In this book he's going to give you a collection of essays that contain the "secrets" to how you can recapture the love for your business, have even more impact for those you serve and do it all in a way that is more personally & professionally rewarding to you as an owner.

So, if you're looking for the next "shiny object" that will supposedly solve all your business problems, I doubt you'll find it here...

...but if you want to learn a proven approach to build a great small business, Doug is your guy and this is your book.

Pat Rigsby
www.PatRigsby.com
Business Coach
14X Best-Selling Author

Introduction

How do we become the best version of ourselves?

In this day and age, we crave instant gratification, we think there is a magic pill we can take for fast results, or that there must be a shortcut we're missing in business.

But how is that working for you?

Life is not about the home runs, but instead, about showing up every single day and hitting singles.

That is 1% Better.

We're not looking for the quick-fix, we're waking up every single day aiming to be the best version of yourself, aiming to be a little better than yesterday.

In this book, I'm going to share 50 of my top lessons to help you change from the shiny object, quick fix mentality, to the stone cutter approach, the slowly chipping away, showing up, day in and day out.

We must live the 1% Better motto.

Over the last decade, I've built my life around the 1% Better mentality.

It started in 2007, when I graduated high school weighing 386 pound.

Over the course of the next year, I lost over 100 pounds.

Obviously, a journey like that challenges you, and changes who you are as a person, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally.

I learned that if I was going to stick with it, it was not going to be easy, but I just had to be a little better than yesterday, 1% Better.

Shortly after this journey, I lost my mom to cancer, I was 21, she was only 52.

That experience taught me a lot, but waking up each day just trying to do a little more.

A little more comfort to my younger brother, a little more healing, it never was perfect, and never will be, but each day I grow 1% Better.

After graduating college, I opened my first business, a community of busy people who are looking to change their life and see a transformation.

Some may call it a gym.

What it has become is a community of people, thousands at this point, that have instilled the 1% Better motto into their life. They aim to just get a little better every day, they are not buying into the gimmicks, but instead just showing up every day and looking to do a little more than yesterday.

Recently, this has carried over to my business and coaching that I provide to fellow small business owners.

In business, as in finance, or just life in general, we always look for that one thing that is just going to skyrocket our growth, we crave it, yet it never comes, and thus, we become static and don't take any action.

How do we change that mindset?

How do we take more action?

It's immersing yourself in the 1% Better motto, constantly keeping it at the top of our mind, and most importantly, implementing the strategies in this book.

Most recently, I've used the 1% Better mentality in parenting. At the time of this writing, my son just turned one.

As many of you reading this may know, the first year being parents can be challenging, overwhelming, and stressful.

Just like any other major life event, you learn a lot about yourself.

It has been tough, it's been a major learning experience, and I just remind myself of being 1% Better.

I aim to learn, be a little better dad to Kaden than I was yesterday, be a better husband to Megan than I was yesterday, and be better to myself.

Kaizen.

A Japanese word for improvement, activities that continuously improve all functions.

If you're anything like me, you're hard on yourself.

You want to be further ahead than you are.

You know you can do more.

You are overwhelmed with all things that need to get done, all things you want to do, and you're soon, if not already, going to come to a breaking point.

How do we help that?

It all starts in the head.

We talk to ourselves more than anyone else.

The 1% motto helps you think that it's okay that you're not where you want to be, it's okay that you didn't get everything done, it's okay that things are not perfect.

It's a mindset change, a change that just keeps the snowball rolling down the hill, it stacks the small wins, keep the action going, keeps the momentum going.

How?

By changing your approach to everything being an all or nothing, to slow and steady, never stop improving, always taking action, but not looking for that homerun—just hitting that single.

This book is designed to be a resource. And, although many of the lessons have a fitness-themed slant to them, they are all applicable to both business and life in general.

Read the lessons all at once, or read one a week for the next year.

It's a resource to keep the 1% Better motto alive within you.

Implement the strategies within the lessons, but reference back to it when you're filling your head with negative self-talk, when you're overwhelmed with the number of things to do, or all the things you could be doing.

I've built my business around 1% Better.

I've built my fitness around 1% Better.

I've built my life around 1% Better.

By reading this book, I hope just 1% of it resonates with you and you get a little better, 1% Better, because of reading it.

But don't delay, 1% Better is about taking action, and the best action you take right now is to read the first lesson.

1% Better.

Dedicated to Your Success,
Doug Spurling

1

How Much Are You Willing to Change?

A lot of people hate change. I've learned to actually crave change.

Focused change always means better, and I'm all about getting better. 1% Right?

We spend a lot of time talking about a change in the fitness world, and I think that's good, but I think we can get caught up in the details too quickly.

What I mean by that is we're very quick to want to know how many grams of protein we should get or what diet is best, but we haven't even asked the most important question.

Which is...how much are you willing to change?

Just like anything else, the bigger the change, the bigger the result. There is no right answer. Some people are only willing to change a few things, some people want to overhaul everything.

I think it's important to reflect on what you are willing to change and here's why:

What you change is a direct reflection of your results. Sure, we all want results, but what have you changed? The same input will always equal the same output.

We all have this desire to be lean but are you willing to make the necessary changes and sacrifices to get there? I don't know. That's up to you.

We need to think of it as a spectrum. On one side of the spectrum is no change at all.

No change = No results. Pretty simple.

On the other side is extreme, let's say a bodybuilder or figure competitor. Some may want to look like that, but they're not willing to make the necessary sacrifices to make it happen.

Are you willing to have no alcohol?

Are you willing to say no to all sweets?

Are you willing to eat three square meals a day, no snacking at all, and each of those meals is just some protein and a vegetable?

7 days a week. 365 days a year. No exceptions.

That's what it takes, not including the exercise portion, to get as lean as what you see when you look at a bodybuilder or a figure competitor.

Not to mention that it probably took ten years of doing that 7 days a week, 365 days a year to get that way.

That's that extreme side of the spectrum.

Now, I don't know about you, but that's not my goal, and I think there's more to life than chicken and broccoli. However, with that mentality, I also can't expect to walk around with a six pack because I'm not willing to make that much change.

Most of us probably fall somewhere in the middle of no change and the extreme example above. If you want to drop 50+ pounds you're going to have to make a lot more changes than the person that just wants to "tone up."

If you like your nightly glass of beer or wine and that dinner out with friends once a week, that's awesome, me too, but we can't expect to drop ten pounds a month doing that.

Just make sure that the desired result you want matches the change your willing to make.

That's always the biggest disconnect we see. People want these grand results, but their actions don't match their goals and they are not willing to change as much as they need to.

So, the question will always be, how much are you willing to change?

2

Can You Wait?

Our daily lives are filled with instant gratification.

Think about simple things like Facebook. How excited do you get when someone "likes" your post and the red dot pops up?

In the kitchen, you press a button and your food can be heated up in under two minutes in the microwave.

Fitness is filled with instant gratification promises. Six pack abs in six weeks. Ten pounds in ten days.

Our society is filled, and in some ways, craves instant gratification.

But is that what makes us happy?

As much as we want quick fixes and instant gratification, it's not what actually makes us most happy.

If you don't have to work for something, if you don't have to power through something, or go on the journey, overcome obstacles, and find your grit to accomplish the goal—then it's simply not that rewarding.

Losing 10 pounds sounds great, but if all you had to do was press a button, it's not actually that satisfying or rewarding. However, losing those 10 pounds after months, if not years, of struggles, pushing through challenging times, and finally crossing the line, that's what is rewarding.

Climbing Mount Everest is rewarding because of how challenging it is. If you could take an elevator to the top, or if it was just a stroll in the park to get there, it wouldn't nearly involve as much reward and pleasure as it does.

Delayed gratification. It's one of the hardest skills to develop in all facets of life.

If you can pass up the short term win now, put your head down and enjoy the journey, I promise the long-term wins will be much more gratifying.

3

The Big 3

How is it that some people seem to have time to get all things done, and others can't even seem to get out of their own way?

I'm a productivity nerd, but it can really be summed up with one quote...

"Most of us overestimate what we can get done in a day and underestimate what we can get done in a year."

Think about it... If I want to lose 50lbs in a year, that's just a pound a week. Totally doable, right? We could do that in a year.

But what do we have on schedule to do today?

1. Workout.
2. Meal prep.
3. Work.
4. Take the kids to school and after-school activities.
5. Social media notifications.
6. E-mail.

You get it the idea. In the grand scheme of things, losing a pound a week over the course of the year is not that bad, we underestimate that. But we think we can get 100 things done in a day, overestimating what is possible in 24 hours.

And what ends up happening?

Checking social media, being reactive to every stimulus that comes in front of us, and never actually getting anything done.

So, what can you do?

Do less.

The Big 3.

Another favorite line of productivity that I constantly remind myself of is...

Discipline = Freedom

You have to create rules, you have to build in daily disciplines of what you're going to say yes to and what you're going to say no to.

I'm challenging you to have the discipline to only focus on the big 3 each day. Decide what the three things are that you're going to get done that will move you forward?

Most of us have 101 things on our to-do list, and we get none of them done because we get so overwhelmed. We just pick at all of them, allow distractions to come in, and never actually make substantial progress on anything.

So, limit yourself to three things at a time.

For example, my three today are:

1. Do my daily writing
2. Film video for clients
3. Workout

Will I get more than that done today? Probably. In total, all three of those will probably only take me two hours. However, it allows me to focus on the three most important things.

Once those are done, then I can move onto anything else if I have time, but I'm not going to allow distractions until those three are done. It also allows you to feel like you accomplished something today.

Too often the list is so big, we never make any substantial progress. So every day feels like there is so much more to do.

The answer is to make the list smaller. Being productive does not mean you're busy. It means you actually produced things that moved the needle and made progress.

We all can be busy checking social media and responding to e-mails, but that doesn't result in any progress made. Being productive is a skill. And, just like any other skill, it takes practice and it must be developed.

To practice, begin by writing down your big 3 for the day.

And if a healthier life is important to you, a workout will be on the big 3. If it's not on the big 3, that's okay, but that's also a clear indicator that it's not a priority right now. Therefore, you can't expect results. You will constantly find other things to distract you or say yes to.

What are the 3 things you're going to get done today?

4

Beware the Barrenness

I'm not sure if it's the stage in life I'm in. Or, the being a dad thing. Or just my ability to randomly think of things. But I wanted to share something I've been pondering a lot lately.

“Beware the barrenness of a busy life” --Socrates

I've spent a lot of time lately thinking about being busy. This badge of honor that a lot of us wear on our sleeves about how busy we are. I've been toggling back and forth with this concept a lot lately.

For those who know me well, you know I'm always "busy." I can hardly sit still to watch 30 minutes of TV with my wife on the weekends. I wake up, make a pot of coffee, and start working on the daily tasks involved in my mission of building the most empowering community around. As well as helping other small business owners do the same for their communities.

Most days I look up and it's 8 pm and I haven't even taken a bathroom break. Let alone sat down to breathe and enjoy the moment.

So, recently, I've spent a lot of time trying to become more self-aware of why?

I know that part of it is that I love what I do so much that I don't think of it as work. I'm deeply motivated by a much larger mission than the day to day tasks. Plus, I'm all for working hard for what you want and earning it.

But part of it has to be this idea that busy equals better. I'm trying to reflect by asking myself what is this need for us as humans to be so busy?

The most common line I get from new people I meet with at the gym is...

"I'm so busy, I don't know how I'm going to sneak this in."

And I totally get it. For myself included, it's an absolute struggle to get 3-4 workouts in per week.

But I'm thinking the bigger picture here. What's up with the obsession with being busy? There has to be more to life than just increasing speed.

I mean think about. We rush to get old enough so we can move out of our parent's house. We rush through school so we can get out of it and start working. We rush through work so we can get out of it and work just enough to retire. So, that's it?

We rushed through 80% of our life only so we could enjoy 20% of it.

Every day is this rush to get more done and collect more stuff (houses, money, cars, etc.). But, for what?

We are moving so fast that we rarely have any time left to enjoy the things we are doing and the life we are currently living.

I'm writing this to help me just as much as help you. I'm working on slowing down, being in the moment, and enjoying the present.

Here are some strategies that I've currently been using:

1. I removed all apps from my phone. This way, I can only access social stuff from my computer which is less accessible throughout the day, especially at night and on the weekends.
2. I spend 5 minutes in bed before I get up thinking about all the awesome things in life right now.
3. I drive without the radio on. I use that time to reflect, ingest the surroundings, and decompress.
4. I prioritize 3 hours a week to workout as it helps clear my mind, allows me to enjoy the moment and fuels me with more energy.

For me, that's allowing me to slow down just a little, be in the moment, and enjoy not being busy.

As an entrepreneur, my clock never stops.

I'm still working on being 100% in the moment with my wife, family, and friends. Because, quite often, although I'm not "working" my mind is rushing with more ideas, more thoughts, and I'm not actually present.

So as I challenge myself, I challenge you:

“Slow down and enjoy life. It's not only the scenery you miss by going too fast – you also miss the sense of where you are going and why.”

When the time comes to leave this planet we won't look back and regret not doing more, but instead, we'll regret not feeling more. You will not regret not working more, but rather not connecting, not loving and not enjoying life more.

We are all still a work in progress.

5

Clear Your Head This Weekend

I wanted to share an exercise that I shared with the Spurling Team awhile back. Most of them have been doing it every week and have been finding it extremely helpful. So, I thought I'd share it with you.

It's called the Freedom Session.

It is used to help clear your thoughts and is really good for people who have a tough time shutting it off, especially as you head into the weekend.

Here's what a freedom session looks like:

Grab a notebook or a journal and write down these down.

1. 5 Positives from the week

Write down the 5 best things that happened this week. We tend to focus on what we're not getting done. But I'm sure we can all think of 5 things that were positive.

2. Clean Up

Do you ever have a clearer mind when your desk is clean? That's not by accident. Spend a few minutes cleaning up your desk, organizing all your papers, etc. Whatever "clean" looks like in your life, make that happen.

3. Inbox Zero

This is huge. Go through all your e-mails and text messages and get down to inbox zero. If something needs to be saved move it to a labeled folder. The mind will be clearer if you don't have 1000 red notifications on your e-mail.

4. 15 Minute Mind Sweep

Write nonstop for 15 minutes. Get everything that is in your mind onto paper. You can organize it later, but it will help clear up the anxiety and stress when you get it all on paper.

5. Review Your Upcoming Calendar

Review next week's calendar and make sure it looks good. Take care of any schedule rearranging you need to do (meetings, daycare arrangements, etc.).

6. Review Your "To Do" List

We all should have a working to do list. Review it, see what still needs to stay on there, and get it organized for the next week. To do lists include tasks that are single steps.

7. Review Your Project List

Not everything should live on your To Do list. If it has multiple steps, it is classified as a project. Get all your projects on one list, and then extract out single steps of those and put them on your To Do list.

8. Review Your “Waiting For” List

Your waiting for list is things that you can't move on until you get something or hear something. Maybe you're waiting for a phone call or e-mail to come back. Maybe you're waiting for a package to arrive or another co-worker to finish their part of the project.

9. Review “Someday Maybe” List

This is the list of all the things you want to do but they don't really have any urgency. It's good to have on paper so that you don't forget, but you want to separate them from the urgent things like your To Do list and project list.

10. Review Goals & Vision

We all should have goals and a vision for our life. They should also be written down. At the end of each week, I like to read my goals and vision to make sure I still like them, to make sure my actions are matching them, and to keep them at the top of my mind.

That's a Freedom Session. It will probably take you about 30-60 minutes, but I guarantee you it will clear your head tremendously. And it will make the following week that much more productive.

Give it a try.

6

Failure is Not an Option

Just think about it...

With no possibility of failure? What would you do differently? Would you try new things? Would you try harder at the things you're currently doing?

For some reason, failure has this negative connotation. I think it probably started in academics when kids either passed or failed. But failure doesn't have to be a negative thing.

Think about it this way...

Consider NASA. You know, some of the smartest people in the world.

When they send a rocket off to space, it's off track 90% of the time! Think about that. 90% of the time a NASA rocket ship is failing. But, it needs to fail because it utilizes the failures to adjust and stay on course. The failures are the guardrails.

So, what if you apply that to other things in life?

The most delicious, best-looking cake. In the middle of making it, the kitchen looks like a bomb went off, but we all judge the finished product.

In the middle of the most intense surgery, it looks like a murder scene. We, of course, don't think about that, we think about the end result.

The bottom line here is that the middle of a journey is messy. And you probably do need to fail to know what the guardrails are.

So, two things that need to happen, if you want to reach your full potential in anything in life, are as follows:

1. You need to be okay with failing, and use it as a guardrail to keep you on track.
2. You need to stop associating failure with negative things.

I fail every day. It could be that I failed to get everything done. It could be that I failed to lead a team member the appropriate way. It could be that I failed to get a workout in.

But none of those "failures" are negative things. They're just course corrections to keep me on the path to success.

So, I'll ask you again...

What would happen if you couldn't fail?

Remove failure from the equation and that's how you should go about making your decisions. I know it's not easy. But give it a try and you'll start to make better decisions. You'll find yourself being more aggressive towards your goals, and soon you'll see better results.

Think back to that rocket ship scenario. That's a great analogy for life.

We're all going a million miles per hour every day, off track 90% of the time, but we still seem to get there, just like the rocket ship does.

7

Your Thoughts Shape Everything

Every single action begins with a thought. The unconscious mind controls the heart rate, blood pressure, breaths per minute and more. The conscious mind is the "above the water" thoughts, such as logistical thoughts and emotional responses.

But, make no mistake about it, any action begins with a thought. Whether it's the choice to press the letters on my computer right now, or the actions of making this day a great one, they all begin with thoughts.

And that's the best part because, we can control our thoughts. We can shape our thoughts.

Our minds are a like a garden. If we fill it with positive thoughts and dreams, we will live a positive and fulfilled lives, full of bright and beautiful flowers. But, if we fill it with negative thoughts, our mind will be overgrown by weeds and we will live a negative life.

Every day we have the ability to choose our thoughts, and those thoughts shape our actions.

In every opportunity, you have the option to look at it through a positive lens, and that choice determines your subsequent actions.

Fitness is often surrounded by negative thoughts.

"I can't do that."

"This is going to suck."

"Look at her, she's so much better than me."

Remember, those negative thoughts lead to negative actions, and in fitness, a negative action is usually not taking action and just sitting on the sidelines.

The same applies to nutrition.

"Screw it, I'll just wait until Monday."

"I had a terrible day, I need a glass of wine."

Those thoughts are always going to lead to negative nutrition choices.

What's the difference between the man who is 36 years old and looks like he has a constant frown on his face and the woman who is 96 years old and is full of brightness?

Positive thoughts.

If you're reading this, you have the choice to make every thought a positive one. You can do this.

Make sure you only have good days or great days. Above every cloud is blue sky.

And, whatever you do, please get off the “complain train.”

8

A Single Step

There seems to be this massive hesitation in society when starting something new, especially when it comes to fitness.

Now, "new" could be starting from scratch, someone that has never done anything in their life, and new could also mean a new goal or a new event.

We quite often get the question of "how do I start?"

Although it's thought to be more complicated than this, I challenge you to realize, it's just a matter of doing something, anything. Motivation is not something you just wake up with. You don't just all of the sudden "find" motivation. That's why people who never start or attempt any action with fitness find it hard to have any kind of success.

Motivation is built on action. It's a snowball effect. You need to do something to get the snowball moving. Once it's moving, it will build on itself and continue to roll down the hill faster and faster.

That's why if you're feeling extra motivated it's usually the result of a chain of actions built on each other that has created it.

So, how do you start?

Whether it's starting a brand new fitness routine, joining a gym for the first time, or conquering a new goal or event just pick the easiest action you can do.

Think of it as a project. Every project has a series of steps.

What is the first step?

Let's say you want to register for a triathlon. Do you just show up for the event? No. You have to take steps to get there.

1. Research the event on the website.
2. Go out and buy some new shoes.
3. Register for the event.
4. Buy the bike you'll need.

Quite often we paralyze ourselves as we look at the big project ahead. Or, a new change or a new routine, or anything that challenges us—we just freeze and instead of taking any action we do nothing.

That analysis paralysis freezes you up mentally and physically and, the next thing you know, six months go by and you're still in the same place you were.

There's no magic answer, unfortunately, I think it's just a good reminder of the famous quote:

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

And it's just that...a step.

Don't get overwhelmed by the journey, just take the first step. That will lead to the second step, the third step, and then, and only then, will the momentum and motivation start to build.

9

What's Your Input?

When I put my foot to the gas pedal, the more input (pressure) I give, the more output (speed) the car will produce.

What happens if you press the pedal farther down? The car goes faster.

Input = Output.

Simply put, what you put into something you'll get an equal return out of it.

In any facet of life, but especially fitness, if you're not happy with your output (results), then you need to change your input.

I've always said, I think the reason why I enjoy all of this "stuff" is because it's all connected. Almost any principle that'll you'll read from me will have a fitness or nutrition tie to it, but it can always be applied to any other facet of life whether that's family, friends, financial, or career.

But, I like to use examples outside of the fitness world and that way you can use that same principle to gain a better understanding.

Input = Output.

If I'm not happy with my relationship I, potentially, need to put more into it. Am I spending enough quality time with them? Am I being empathetic, compassionate, and loving?

When it comes to financials, if I want my savings to grow, I need to have a certain input. The more I input, the more I'll output later.

If we dial it into fitness and nutrition. Removing all emotions (which plays a huge factor) fat loss is a simple math equation.

If I consume less than I burn, then I will lose weight.

Whether it's the right weight (muscle, water, fat, etc.) is another topic for another day, but the math is the math.

If you're not happy with your output (results) just change your input.

If you're not losing fat, decrease your input, and keep decreasing it until you like the output it's producing.

When we look at fitness the same principle applies.

Input = Output.

Inputs can be things like the type of workouts you choose, the frequency of workouts, and the intensity of workouts. If you're not happy with the output, change the input.

How can you do this? Maybe you need to bump up your frequency. If you change that input and it doesn't change the output, maybe you need to look at the intensity of each workout. If you ramp up the intensity, this changes the input, and thus will change the output.

Each day is a collection of choices. Those choices are your inputs. If you're not happy with the results, the output, you need to change an input.

Again, for some this is a fitness lesson, for others, it's a life lesson.

"Your input determines your outlook. Your outlook determines your output. And our output determines your future." –Zig Ziglar

10

You Need to Fail!

I hate chemistry. I have no desire to even look at anything to do with chemistry. I never took it in high school, but as part of my Exercise Science major in college, I had to take it.

At first, I thought I would like it, but I quickly hated it. I failed chemistry the first time I took it.

So, I took it again the following year...failed again.

I had to pass chemistry in order to solidify my degree, there were no other choices.

I took chemistry a third time (I believe this was one the one that I met Coach Josh, he was my lab partner and I cheated off of him). I still failed.

It was three strikes and you're out in my book. I was about to throw in the towel.

But, I gave it a fourth try.

During my fourth attempt at Chemistry, I was in the midst of the lowest point in my life, my mom had cancer and I was commuting back and forth dealing with all of that. The day she died was actually the day of the final exam, what a coincidence.

My professor let me make up the exam a week or so later, and I'm pretty sure I failed the test, but somehow when the grades came out I got a C and finally "passed" Chemistry. I think the professor just felt bad for me.

I still hate chemistry. But I learned a lot during that entire bout, nothing about chemistry, but a lot about life, and why it's so important to fail.

Everybody has this picture in their head that success is this straight, linear line. We just keep losing pound after pound, and it's going to be this slow and steady progress.

But in reality, you will fail.

Let me repeat that, you will fail.

And that's perfectly okay, in fact, you need to fail. Failing is when you learn the most about yourself.

Failing is when you learn what not to do.

FAIL: First Attempt In Learning

Right now, my son is six months old and just starting to learn how to crawl. He gets up on his knees for a split second and then drops. He pushes himself up, straight arms, and then drops.

As he learns to walk he'll fall. As he learns to drive he'll crash. It's all a part of the journey.

It's in the moments of a failure that you learn what it actually takes to be successful.

If you get to know any successful person or business, they all failed thousands of times. But they are now known for their one success.

When it comes to life, we need be okay with the fact that it's not going to be this linear journey.

Through our life, throughout this year, throughout this month, you're going to go through ups and downs. You're going to celebrate some wins and you're going to smack yourself for making some poor decisions. The scale is going to go up and it's going to go down. All of that is what makes this journey a journey.

It's like a rollercoaster... What makes the ride so fun? The ups and the downs!

Be okay with failing, and learn from the failure, use that as motivation and drive to push yourself forward to the next level.

Oh, and I still hate chemistry.

11

Would You Be Able to Get Out?

Remember as a kid those goofy prizes you would win at the fair or the arcades?

Some would come in those plastic cups, some would be nasty candy, and some would be those tube-shaped straw things.

Wait...

Go back to those tube-shaped straw things.

What were they called?

You remember those, right?

Chinese Handcuffs.

You and your buddies would get them and, for about 30 seconds, they were fun to play with.

Do you remember the concept?

You would stick your fingers in the tube and when you went to pull them out...

Nothing!

They were stuck!

You were "handcuffed."

The harder you tried to pull them apart, the tighter the straw got, and the stronger the handcuff became.

The harder you tried to do what seemed like the most sense, the worse off you became.

Who would think that by sticking your fingers farther into the tube that that would loosen it up and you'd be able to free your fingers?

That story illustrates the point that I want to try to get across today.

Sometimes what you think is the easiest route, what "common sense" would tell you is the right thing to do, may just actually push you farther back, or keep you from your true potential.

You get caught in the habits that look innocent enough and don't realize you've trapped yourself until you try to break free.

You see other people enjoying success and assume they must be strong, more capable, or somehow better than you.

You think that just trying harder, pulling more on the straw, is what you need to do.

Consider trying something different.

Relax.

Take the pressure off.

Try a new twist.

If you're struggling with your fitness routine, 5 more hours on the elliptical may not be the answer.

How about switching up your routine?

If you're struggling with nutrition, starving yourself for two weeks only to bounce back again may not be the answer.

How about finding a sustainable lifestyle?

Sure, there's a benefit of working harder.

Working hard is part of the equation.

However, no matter how hard you work pulling your fingers apart, that Chinese Handcuff is not going to break.

You're not going to break free until you try something new, try a new technique, and potentially do something you didn't think was possible.

Like, push your fingers farther into the handcuff!

How can you apply this lesson to fitness, nutrition, and other aspects of your life like relationships, careers, and more?

12

Creating a Solid Morning Routine

Some people are morning peeps and some are night owls, and when you're getting ready to change habits or add a new routine, don't try to fight that. Use it to your advantage.

Now, I'm going to segue into something that I feel very strongly about.

I believe everyone should have a solid morning routine, regardless of what "morning" means to you.

I'm a firm believer that how you start your day is one of, if not the biggest, ultimate predictors of how the day will go for you.

So, for what it's worth, I'll share my routine. This is not for you to copy, but maybe you can grab a tip or two.

My morning routine actually starts the day before.

Before I "check out" each night I review my next day's calendar.

I look at my "non-negotiables" first.

Those are things like meetings that can't be moved (usually meetings with the team or with clients).

After the non-negotiables, I look at my project list and "to do" list and pull 1-3 things that I want to get done the next day.

I base it off of what's urgent and important, and how much "free time" I have throughout the day.

If I have a lot of "non-negotiables" scheduled, I only plan on one "to do." But, if I'm pretty open, I'll pick three.

This usually takes me five minutes, but it creates a very stress-free environment at night and leads to good success the following day.

My alarm goes off at 4:30 a.m.

It used to be 6:00 a.m. until Kaden (my son) arrived.

I started finding that my morning routine was off once he came around. You see, I didn't want to miss out on time with him, but I also love my morning routine. This routine is a mandatory start to my day.

So, now I get up at 4:30 a.m.

I shower, come downstairs, and make coffee which brings me to 4:45 a.m.

From 4:45 to 5:00 a.m. I meditate.

This is something relatively new for me, so I am by no means an expert in it. But I started adding it to my morning routine more recently.

To say it's been a game changer is an understatement.

I use an app called Headspace and it leads me through a guided meditation.

It has been huge to just clear my thoughts and help me stay present. And, honestly, it just gives me 10-15 minutes of absolute silence which, as you know, is hard to find.

From 5:00-6:00 a.m., I read.

I aim for about a book a week, some weeks are less, some are more, but that's an average.

50 books a year.

For me, I'm usually reading about personal development, marketing, customer experience, community building, finances, or leadership.

At 6:00 a.m., I crack open my laptop and write.

Usually whatever is on my mind at that minute is some of what you're reading here in this book.

I try to picture a client, usually a different client every day, or sometimes it's a situation or conversation I had the day before. I envision their pain point or what they're struggling with, and write as if I'm talking to them.

On an average day, that usually takes me until about 6:30 a.m.

I wrap up by reading my vision, goals, and project list just to keep it all on the top of my mind.

At that point Megan is typically getting up, Kaden is up, and the day is off to the races.

I'll drop Kaden off at daycare, have my "non-negotiable" meetings I talked about earlier, punch through my 1-3 "to-dos" for the day, get a workout in, and then just be present around the gym for anything the team or clients' need.

I pick Kaden up, eat dinner with Megan, put Kaden to bed, spend about an hour or so with Megan, go over my next day, rinse and repeat.

Whether you wanted to know or not, there's my day, and more specifically my morning routine.

For me, those two hours from 430-630 a.m. are a staple part of my day.

It's non-negotiable for me.

Whether yours is at that time or from 2-4 p.m. in the afternoon because you work the night shift, that doesn't matter.

Whether you choose to fill it with meditation, reading, or writing doesn't matter.

Maybe it's some journaling, exercising, and then peace and quiet.

Whatever.

Maybe, it's not two hours.

Maybe it's only 15 minutes.

The point is that it's a routine, it's non-negotiable, and it happens every single day.

Too many people just wake up and react to everything. They have no guardrails. They have no plan. They just react.

I'm not saying it needs to be perfect. And, I'm not saying every day is going to go as planned, but I'm a very firm believer in having some sort of time carved out for you where you do things for YOU.

Hopefully it helps set you up for success.

13

Laps Around the Track

That's how I try to think about this whole journey we're on.

Laps around a track.

The more laps you can make around the track, the more progress you'll make.

Now, your first thought might be... Why don't I just keep sprinting around the track?

Well, that sounds great, in theory. But, in reality, can you always be sprinting at full speed?

Of course not.

Throughout a year and throughout life you're going to go through ups and downs, times of focus and non-focus, and times of being motivated and not being motivated.

The laps around the track analogy really has four main components with the overall premise or analogy that progress is laps around the track.

1. Sprint.

Throughout certain times of the year, you can really put your head down and sprint.

You can make some really good progress. You can cover a lot of laps.

This may be what you're doing right now.

Typically, we find sprints work well in January and September.

This is a time frame, usually 60-120 days where you're hyper-focused and ultra-disciplined.

You may be working out 3-5 times per week.

You're very consistent.

You're saying no to a lot of things.

You may have a "dry" time where you are not drinking any liquid calories during this sprint.

If you were to rate how focused and disciplined you are on your fitness and nutrition, you would rate it a 9 or 10 during this time frame.

This is also the time frame where you try to really accelerate your results.

2. Jog.

Since we can't be sprinting all the time.

Because you'll get burned out.

And, you won't enjoy the long-term process.

As you jog around the track, you're probably rating your fitness and nutrition at a 7 or an 8.

You're working out consistently, but you're not perfect.

You're eating clean 80% of the time, but you may say yes to that social on Saturday or have that pizza on Sunday.

You may get some results, but you certainly can't expect them to be as drastic as during "sprint mode."

Remember that track analogy?

You're jogging so you're getting laps in, not as many as if you were sprinting, but certainly more than if you were walking.

3. Walking.

Here you're just trying to maintain.

Life may be a little hectic, nutrition is probably a 5 or 6, and you're just trying to stay above water.

You're making progress, you're getting laps in, but you certainly don't have the commitment and drive to jog or sprint, and of course, the results match that.

4. Watching.

Now, you're just on the sidelines watching.

Here, you're not doing anything.

You're not making any progress around the track because you're not even on it.

You're not getting any results and your nutrition is probably a 2 or 3.

You're frustrated.

But, most importantly, you need to have a very clear understanding that throughout each year you will go through all four stages at some point and that's totally okay.

However, be aware and know that your goal is to get as many laps around the track as possible. No matter how you get there, just keep moving.

And, if you're on the sidelines just watching right now—don't get overwhelmed, just start walking.

Literally and figuratively.

Start with something small and easy just get the motion going.

If you're walking, you're making progress, and sometimes life gets in the way and that's all you can do.

However, if you plan on making any substantial progress, you need to map out at least two times this year where you're going to put your head down and sprint, and two to three times where you're jogging.

For example, if you look at my 12-month calendar, I'm probably sprinting for four of them. I'm jogging for five of them. I'm walking for two of them, and on the sidelines for one them. That's my schedule, on average.

14

Fill Your Cup

Fill up your cup.

No, I'm not talking your beer or wine cup.

I'm talking YOUR cup.

I think as humans most of us are motivated by serving others.

Whether that be in our career, as a parent, or for a loved one, deep down we are highly motivated and highly fulfilled by serving others.

Sure, we have some lofty goals of more money and better and bigger things, but, ultimately, our largest drive comes from being there for others.

It could be more memories with your family.

It could be doing volunteer or community work.

Or, just the fulfillment of watching little Johnny run the bases.

If you really think about most of your superficial goals (fat loss, money, etc.) it's usually to be a better servant to others.

So how do you do that?

Fill up your cup.

You can't pour from an empty cup.

Take care of yourself first.

I know, it sounds so cliché and you've heard it before, but I see it as my duty to keep it at the top of my mind.

You can't take care of others until you take care of yourself.

Do you want to be energetic for your kids when you play with them in the backyard?

You need to take care of yourself first.

Do you want to be around to see your granddaughter get married?

You need to take care of yourself first.

Do you want to do philanthropic work, work that lasts well beyond yourself?

You need to take care of yourself first.

In order to be the best for others, you first need to be your best self.

This means exercising regularly, eating clean, and managing your stress and sleep.

It's not rocket science, but it's the truth.

Remember...

You can't pour from an empty cup.

15

The Power of No

Remember as a kid how easy it was to say no?

Heck, we got yelled at all the time for saying it to our parents.

"Eat your veggies."

No!

"Do your homework."

No!

What happened to us?

As adults, we have a hard time saying no to anything that comes in front of our face.

We aim to be all things to all people and say yes to everything.

More work projects?

Yes!

More commitments on the weekends?

Yes!

More late night events?

Yes!

Whatever happened to just saying no?

Today, I'm challenging you to think about the power of no.

Remember this...

Every time you say yes to something, you're saying no to something else.

When you say yes to staying late at work, you're saying no to family time.

When you say yes to that new job title that sounds fancy and comes with more responsibilities, you're saying no to weekends at home with your kids.

When you say yes to things that are not a priority, you're saying no to things that are.

So, how do you know what to say yes to and what to say no to?

Priorities.

You have to first set rules for what is important to you.

If going to the gym 10 times per month is something you want to make a priority that's fine. But what are you going to say no to in order to make time for that?

Maybe that means not staying late at work.

Maybe that means saying no to sleeping in.

Or, maybe that means dad is going to cook dinner tonight so mom can go have some "me" time.

Saying no to things allows you to say yes to your priorities.

It allows you to say yes to things that actually matter, the things you enjoy doing. The things that make the biggest impact.

The more you say no to, the more focus and attention the things that you do say yes to get.

Thus, you get better results to those things.

Remember, we all have the same 24 hours.

I know you always hear it, but it's the truth.

Albert Einstein had 24 hours.

Mona Lisa had 24 hours.

Gandhi had 24 hours.

I have 24 hours.

You have 24 hours.

So, why are some people so good at getting things done and making an impact each day and others just can't seem to get out of their own way?

Some have the power of saying no to things that are important to them.

Saying no is freeing.

It simplifies your life.

It gives you more time to do the things that make you happy.

So...

What is one thing you're going to say no to?

And what will that allow you to do more of that truly matters?

16

Do I Turn Left or Right?

You're driving down a winding road and you come to a stop sign.

You roll your window down and ask the guy on the street...

"Hey, do I go left or right here?"

What's he going to say?

"It depends on where you want to go!"

That's just about the perfect example of how we approach our life goals.

We react to every bump. We don't know whether to turn left or right. We want to ask for help, but we don't know where we're going.

Start with the end in mind.

That's your vision.

Imagine asking for directions without knowing where to go.

What does success look like in three years?

Start with that.

Right now you can call it "Project Future."

Too many of us don't know where we actually want to go, thus, we set some arbitrary goals that sound good, complain about the present, and then take scattered action.

However, if you know where you're going, then we can plug that into the GPS and come up with a clear plan of action, a set of directions.

Let's pretend that we are sitting together on New Year's Eve, 3 years from now.

What is life like right now?

What time do you wake up today?

What did you do before work?

What did you do for work?

Where are you living?

What does it look like?

Who are you living with?

Who's a part of your family?

How do you spend your free time?

What do you look like?

What do you feel like?

What makes you happy?

What are you contributing?

Describe it all. (Tip: write it in the first person.)

Paint a picture.

Then, from there, and only then, can we work backwards and start to move towards that vision.

Life is about constantly moving closer to your vision.

We do that by being clear on what that is and then breaking that into goals.

Take some time to paint your picture.

Get clear on where you want to be.

I like to go about three years out at a time, and every year refine the vision.

Start with that and then you can set some goals to get you there.

That way you know whether you need to turn left or right.

17

It's Not There...So Stop Looking

We all know the Wright Brothers, right?

They are the brothers credited with inventing, building, and flying the world's first successful airplane.

They invented the airplane, but they didn't invent flying.

The ability (science, universal laws, etc.) which allows something to fly through the air has always been there. It just took the determination and hard work of the Wright Brothers to make it successful.

The materials the plane was made of already existed, it just took the creativity and grit of the Wright Brothers to put it together.

You have everything you need.

It's all within you, you just need something or someone to bring it out.

Everything you potentially need for success in life you already have.

Nothing is new.

There is no quick fix for anything you want, fitness or otherwise.

There is no detox that "cleanses" you.

There is no magic pill or new exercise that is instantly going to give you the results you're looking for.

Everything you need, you already have within you.

Everything you could possibly do or possibly know is already out there, you just need to find it.

How long does it take to feel inspired?

Zero seconds.

How long does it take to be committed?

Zero seconds.

How long does it take to put a smile on your face?

Zero seconds.

Time is not what you need more of.

What we need is to use all of our potential.

We all have the ability inside of us to achieve any goal we want; we just need to bring it out.

We all have the ability right now to smile and instantly feel a little happier.

We all have the ability right now to make a better decision.

We all have the ability right now to be more consistent.

To work a little harder.

To be nicer to each other.

To feel more inspired.

It's right here, right now.

It's just a decision you need to make.

So, stop looking for this "magic secret" or the "quick-fix" because it's not there.

Instead, look inside you, everything you need is right there.

18

An Uncomfortable Feeling

Think back to the most significant things you've done in life.

New job?

Gotten married?

Become a parent?

Bought a house?

Started a business?

Prior to those events, and probably after as well, you had a feeling of discomfort.

Any significant change is going to come with some sense of feeling uncomfortable.

However, anything worth talking about, any big change, requires discomfort.

It's easy to do the status quo.

It's easy and comfortable to think you're eating healthy "most of the time."

It's easy and comfortable to just buy the gym membership.

Easy is comfortable.

No change is made while being comfortable.

Use the above examples, or any significant thing you've done in your life, it always had a level of discomfort.

If you want to make a change, you have to be uncomfortable.

If you're not uncomfortable, I'm certain the change won't be drastic enough to see the results you're looking for, in any facet of life.

Leaving a job that you hate is uncomfortable.

Leaving a relationship that you're not happy in is uncomfortable.

Walking into a gym for the first time is uncomfortable.

There are different examples in all aspects of life, but the principle is the same.

Anything substantial change requires a certain level of feeling uncomfortable and it's that feeling that causes a change to happen.

So, as you set goals, as you look to make this year your best year yet, make sure you pick things and make choices that scare you a little.

Remember, fear is just an emotion.

Very rarely are any of your choices going to have any substantially negative effect.

Ask yourself, what's the absolute worst that can happen?

Joining a good gym and making smarter nutrition choices is uncomfortable, but you're not going to die.

In fact, as we know, the opposite will happen.

No real change is made while being comfortable.

It's discomfort that creates the leverage that makes something worthwhile.

If you're not uncomfortable in what you contribute to this world each day, I'm certain you're not bringing your true potential.

Get comfortable being uncomfortable.

19

Today Is the Day

One year I got an awesome Christmas gift from one of my employees.

What's funny is it was probably a less than \$10 gift, a coffee mug. Which. to most, would have been pretty normal.

On the coffee mug it says...

"Today Is the Day!"

For 99.9% of people in this world it would have been just another coffee mug that you stick in your cabinet.

For me, it's a reminder of my biggest area of opportunity, and this employee has been a huge mentor to me in this category of life.

One of my largest strengths is to be able to have a vision and plan out 3, 4, 5 years from now, reverse engineer that into a daily or weekly goal, and then execute on that daily.

It's no coincidence that Megan (my wife) and I bought a house at 26, that we got married in 2016, or had Kaden in 2017.

Five years ago, both of those were on my 5-year plan, and I reverse engineered the goals into manageable chunks that I executed daily, weekly, and monthly.

With that comes a massive area of opportunity.

At any given time, I'm very rarely "in the moment."

I'm always thinking about ways to make things better, what's next, it's never good enough, and constantly focusing on the future.

During the holidays this is especially true.

I'm not one to sit around and do nothing.

I'd be reading a blog, watching a video on marketing, or planning out my next week.

I know it's scary, but I'm being honest.

The mug that she got me is my daily reminder (I drink A LOT of coffee) that TODAY IS THE DAY.

So, I'm writing this for you, and I'm writing this as a reminder for me.

Today is the day.

My son is always a great reminder to slow down, enjoy each moment, and remember...

Today is the day.

As you spend time with your family and friends, remember today is the day.

Soak it in.

Engage.

Be present.

Put that phone away.

Pick your head up.

Today is the day.

20

What's the Minimum?

What's your minimum?

When we set goals for anything (fitness, finances, family, etc.) I like to set three goals for the topic.

The stretch goal.

This is the goal that is shooting for the stars.

Everything would have to align, you'd have to work your tail off, and your dreams would have to come true for this to happen.

Then there's the actual goal.

Finally, there's the floor goal.

The minimum goal.

You will do everything possible to hit this no matter what it takes.

Let's roll with an example both fitness and non-fitness.

Let's say your goal is to consume 8 glasses of water a day.

That's your actual goal.

Your stretch goal may be 12 glasses.

Then your minimum, your floor, may be 6 glasses.

So, the goal is 8, but you're not going to bed until you get 6 glasses of water in at minimum.

I don't care if you have to sit on the edge of your bed to drink 3 glasses because you only drank 3 throughout the day.

You do what it takes to hit the minimum, the floor goal.

A non-fitness example could be with your finances.

Let's say you want to contribute \$10,000 to your savings or retirement.

A stretch goal may be \$20,000, and the floor goal, the minimum, may be \$5,000.

As the deadline gets closer, if you're not on track to hit at least the \$5,000 you may need to walk to work, eat Ramen noodles, and cancel your cable. But, you'll do whatever it takes to hit the floor goal, the minimum.

In goal setting, the floor goal is actually what drives you.

So, what's your minimum?

Maybe it's the 6 glasses of water.

Maybe it's 3 servings of vegetables.

Maybe it's 2 workouts in the week.

Focus on at least getting the minimums, do whatever it takes.

21

The 5 S's for Sustainable Change

Change. It seems like, ultimately, that's what we're all trying to create.

You know the ice cream is not the best choice, but those damn behavioral habits are going to cause you to choose to eat the ice cream over the veggie dip.

When we look at creating sustainable change it comes down to five things.

“The 5 S's.”

Now, before I share what those are there is one keyword I think you might have missed above.

Anyone?

Sustainable.

That's the goal with all of this.

We're trying to make changes that will last, not a change that you can only do for a month and then bail on it.

The 5 S's of Sustainable Change.

1. Simple

Keep things very simple.

Ask yourself this question...

"How confident are you that you can do this every day?"

If your confidence level is not at least an 8 out of 10, then it's not simple enough.

2. Segmental

Break things down into smaller chunks.

And, although it's actually quite simple, not enough people do it.

If your goal in 2018 is to lose 40lbs, what does that look like in 3 months?

10lbs.

What does that look like in 30 days?

3lbs.

What does that look like this week?

1lb a day.

Segmental. Break it down.

3. Sequential

Start with "thing 1" before you move onto "thing 2", "thing 3", etc.

Meaning, go back to that goal of 40lbs.

What's the first thing I need to do?

Maybe it's writing the goal down.

Then it's cleaning out the kitchen.

Followed by making a weekly grocery list.

Shop for the right healthy choices.

Start moving a couple times a week.

Get those things down before you get super fancy.

Snowball it.

4. Strategic

Be strategic about things.

Don't just "wing" it.

If you're going out with friends on Saturday, adjust things during the week leading up to it.

If you fail to plan, plan to fail.

5. Support

No one can do this alone.

I repeat, no one.

Our coaches need coaches.

Everyone needs some form of accountability.

Whether that's joining a support group, hiring a coach, or getting a buddy to join you in the journey.

We all need a teacher, we all need a coach, and we all need support.

It's too hard doing this alone.

So there's the 5 S's.

Which one do you need to start implementing?

22

Tips to Make Your Life More Productive

This chapter's theme is about productivity.

Before I go into the five tips, I wanted to explain why I feel productivity is important.

There's a difference between being busy with things and actually producing results.

It's very easy nowadays to be busy.

You catch yourself flipping across 8 different tabs on your computer, checking your e-mail with every notification, opening Facebook to every little red dot, but at the end of the day what have you actually produced?

It's the same thing with fitness.

It's not enough to just go through the motions of exercise and not make any changes with nutrition.

Ultimately, you have to produce a result.

Being productive does not mean that you're getting MORE done, it just means that you're actually producing more than what you currently do and there's more to show for it.

However, all the "productivity hacks" don't mean anything if you're not happy.

And if you're trying to put a square peg into a round hole and do things you don't enjoy doing, it's never going to work.

That's where your ideal life (and body) come in.

What do you actually want?

Here are five quick tips to help keep you focused on that:

1. Focus on what you love.

In fitness and in life we're here for a short time and a good time.

If you don't enjoy your fitness routine, there are 1001 ways to lose belly fat, find something that you enjoy doing.

The same goes for life.

Surround yourself with people, things, and jobs that you enjoy being around.

Only then will you create a "productive" environment.

2. Do what's important to you.

No one but you can determine your priorities.

If the family is most important, make sure that's backed up by action like being home at a certain time or being present at night instead of on a device.

The same goes for fitness, if it's important to you, make it a priority, and be okay with saying no to other things.

What you say no to is more important than what you say yes to when it comes to productivity and to life.

3. Keep it simple stupid. KISS.

It's an analogy I try to live by in business, life, and fitness.

When we try to overcomplicate things that is when we get overwhelmed.

For fitness, workout a couple times a week doing something you love, get the heart rate up, burn some calories, keep your water and protein intake high, and don't consume more than you burn.

Every routine or "diet" comes back to those principles, every single one of them.

4. Action will always trump ideas.

The people that we see that have true success are action takers.

They not only learn and educate themselves, but they take daily action to move them closer to their goals.

We all know what we need to do, but it's those that take action who separate themselves from the rest.

Remember, productivity means you have to produce something.

5. 1% Better.

It's our motto. It's the core focus of this book.

It's truly what we represent and live by.

Daily bite size chunks of getting a little better. You only have good days and great days.

Even a failure is categorized as a learning experience.

This is a marathon, not a sprint.

You're on a journey—so fall in love with the process, not the end goal.

Have a growth mindset of always wanting to get just a little bit better.

All of that and more encompasses 1% better.

It doesn't change overnight.

Which one of those five resonated with you the most?

23

5 Pillars of Productivity

What are the rules you follow in life that allow you to keep your guardrails up?

What do you say yes to, what do you say no to?

These rules are what allow you to stay focus on what actually matters.

Today, I want to share the 5 Pillars of Productivity.

It's what the rules are built on. Whether you're looking to be more productive in fitness, work, or life in general, these five carry over to all aspects of life.

1. Planning & Preparation

This is something that seems so obvious, but how many of us actually do that.

This is planning the night before what is the one thing you're going to get done tomorrow.

This is mapping out your meals on the weekend so you don't just grab something quick.

Planning your schedule to allow for a 45-minute stop at the gym to get a workout in, and being prepared for that by having your clothes packed the night before.

It doesn't have to be anything crazy, but all productivity starts with preparing and planning ahead of time.

2. Professional Accountability

We all need coaches.

I have a coach.

My coaches have a coach.

Steve Jobs had a coach.

Bill Gates has a coach.

Tom Brady has a coach.

So what makes you think you're special and don't need a coach?

If you want to get better with money hire a coach for that.

If you want to get better at your craft hire an expert coach for that.

If you want to get better at fitness hire a coach.

We all need accountability, and a good coach will give that to you.

3. Social Support

Quick story.

In Alaska, crabbing is a huge thing.

Imagine you walk out onto a pier and see a bucket of crabs.

As you watch those crabs it looks like one is climbing out and ready to escape.

You grab the fisherman and say...

"Hey, one of those crabs is escaping!"

He says...

"Oh, don't worry about it, just watch."

As you look on, just before it looks like the crab is ready to tip over the edge, get out of the bucket and back into the cold water something happens...

Another crab pulls him back into the bucket.

Crabs will not let one escape, if one goes down, they all go down.

That's a great analogy for a lot of our social support.

As soon as we want to have any kind of success or want to become good at something there's always that "friend" that becomes jealous and keeps us tied down.

If you're looking to change your behavior, in whatever facet of life, you need to make sure you have strong social support.

If you're looking to change your nutrition your family is going to have to be supportive, if not, your chance of success is slim.

Find strong social support, people that challenge you and lift you up, not bring you down.

4. Incentive

What's the point of all this?

What's the carrot we're chasing?

What's the point of being productive, achieving a goal, if there is no incentive at the end?

Now, as one of my famous sayings goes...

"We're not a dog, we don't need to reward ourselves with food."

It doesn't mean that when we hit a goal, or when we "behave" all week we treat ourselves with food.

However, there needs to be an incentive.

So maybe if you're really locked in for 90 days, and you lose 15lbs, you reward yourself with a mini vacation.

Or, if you're trying to be productive with your money after you hit a milestone you agree to take a small percentage of it and buy that thing you've been wanting.

Whatever it is, there has to be some form of incentive to change the behavior.

5. Big Deadline

This one, I think, is the most important.

There's a universal law called Parkinson's Law

Again, a law, something that is not up for negotiation, we all fight it.

Parkinson's Law states that work expands as to fill the time allowed to complete it.

Meaning, if you have two weeks to complete a project, it will take you two weeks.

If you have a week to do that same project, it will take you a week.

Use deadlines for everything you do.

A goal is great, but if it doesn't have a deadline it will never happen.

Any project you decide to take on, give it a deadline.

Anything you need to get done, give it a deadline.

We work off of deadlines, it's how we're wired, don't fight it, just set the deadline.

So there you have it...

The 5 Pillars of Productivity.

Which one do you need to build up?

24

3 Ways to Get Back on Track with Fitness

Last month the team and I had our annual vision meeting.

One of the breakout sessions we had was looking at our values as well as to see if we could come up with a "mascot" for our business.

As you can imagine, some of the animal responses were quite amusing.

However, the one that stuck out as a "mascot" was the infinity symbol.

So, not really a mascot (we're still working on that), but I believe a nice a symbol that defines our philosophy that fitness is a never ending journey.

It's a pursuit to be happier, to be 1% better, and it never ends.

You don't lose pounds down to your goal weight and then just stop.

It's like the infinity symbol...it just keeps going.

So...

Although we may get "off track" or off the wagon, that's all part of the journey.

You can't always be on, none of us are always 100% on.

So what do you do if you're feeling like you're off track?

Here are my top three recommendations...

1. Identify The One Thing

I think the biggest reason why people stay off track is the fear of being overwhelmed.

There's always going to be 101 things you could be doing better.

But what's the one thing?

I can't tell you what yours is.

Maybe it's working on getting 7 hours of sleep.

Maybe it's getting 2 servings of vegetables in.

Maybe it's going for a walk around the building at lunch to spark activity.

Whatever it is...pick one thing.

Don't try to tackle everything at once.

Tackle one thing, stay consistent with it for two weeks, and then tackle another thing.

Keep the snowball rolling.

Next thing you know, that snowball that was the size of a golf ball is now the size of a big boulder.

2. Plan Well

Life is going to happen.

You're going to be up with the kids.

You're going to get invited out to dinner.

Something is going to get in the way of you going to the gym.

If you have a "plan B" for the most common scenarios, then you just execute the plan.

For example...

We know time is our most valuable asset.

If you can't make it to the gym, do you have an at home workout ready to go?

Or...if you're trying to work on increasing protein intake.

Have you made it really easy by preparing quick on-the-go protein sources you can intake at any time?

Failing to plan is planning to fail.

We all know life can get in the way, and may "knock you off the wagon," but if you have a backup plan you can't be stopped.

3. There are Only Good Days & Great Days

This is the mindset I try to live by every single day.

Most people that fall off the wagon get caught up in their own heads.

They have one bad day, and then that snowballs into a bad week.

Next thing you know, it's been a month or two since you've done something for yourself.

Positive thinking and gratitude do wonders for the mind.

You'll quite often hear me say...

"It could always be worse."

I live by the belief that we only have good days and great days.

Sure, something could have gone wrong today, but that doesn't make it a bad day.

Spend 30 seconds realizing how good it was.

You got to wake up and see your family or kids.

You have a roof over your head.

Whatever it is...

Missing a workout or not getting enough protein in one day does not make it a bad day.

Spend each morning as you wake, and each night before you go to bed, thinking about the top three things that were good today.

Every day we always have at least three.

Some days we have more, some days finding those three is a struggle.

We only have good days and great days.

Feeling like you're "off the wagon" is 100% a mental game.

All it takes is some positive thinking and one action to get the snowball rolling again.

Easy?

No, of course not.

However, if you work on these three things it will be much easier next time it happens.

25

Blue Sky

Life can be tough sometimes.

Things don't go our way.

We lose a close friend or family member.

We get frustrated with the progress we're making.

Whatever it may be.

Those are the clouds in our life.

But what we tend to forget is that the blue sky is always there.

Remember, the blue sky is always there.

You're going to have days, weeks, and times in your life where you feel like you have that black cloud hanging above you and you can't escape it.

But remember, the blue sky is always there.

Those clouds will pass.

Have you ever taken off on a plane on a cloudy or stormy day, and then as soon as you elevate above the clouds you get blinded by the sun and blue sky in your window?

That's a great reminder that the blue sky is always there.

No matter the situation, no matter how frustrated, angry, or sad you are, remember...

The blue sky is always there.

It's the cloudy days and the rain storms where growth occurs.

If every day was a blue sky no growth would occur.

Think about our great green earth.

Things live, thrive, and stay green, partly because of the water that falls from the sky, water that is formed on those dark days.

Our biggest growth happens on those dark, cloudy days.

Think back to the times in your life when you had the most personal growth.

The change was usually the result of something negative.

Whether it's as large as losing a family member or a day to day struggle of finally being fed up with how your pants fit, it was those cloudy day moments that instilled action in you to then bring out the blue sky.

No matter how many clouds, the blue sky is always there.

26

Does It Match?

We all want results.

I mean who doesn't want to be stronger, leaner, have more money, etc.?

But do your efforts match the desired results?

Quite often, the biggest frustration from people when they tackle their fitness and nutrition is a lack of results.

As you break it down and look at what they're doing, it's no wonder they haven't seen any results...they haven't changed anything.

"If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got."

My mentor used to drive that quote home on a daily basis.

With every change we want to make there needs to be a certain level of sacrifice that goes into it.

How much you want to sacrifice is up to you, but it needs to match your desired result.

Let's run through a couple examples...

If you're 50 pounds overweight, you haven't been to a gym in 10 years, and you're just looking to feel healthier, lose some weight over time, and just have more energy.

Then, that's the desired result.

Now you have to make sure the change matches that.

So, you're going to have to workout.

Every day?

No.

But probably 8-10 times per month.

You're going to have to change your nutrition.

Does it have to be perfect?

No.

But you're probably going to have to cut out most of the snacking, get in more vegetables, and drink more water.

There's a certain level of sacrifice required to make that change.

There may be a financial sacrifice to hire a coach.

There may be a time sacrifice of a couple hours a week, away from the family, while you're at the gym.

There also may be the sacrifices to make healthier choices 80% of the time when you're eating out or meeting up with friends.

You get the point.

Is it super drastic?

Probably not for most.

But it's a certain level of change, a certain level of commitment that matches the desired results.

Now, let's look at another example.

You want to be super lean.

Flat tummy, no jiggle, very lean, and super strong, and you're currently 30 pounds overweight.

The sacrifices needed to make that desired result are going to be greater than the first example.

You're probably going to have to bump up your workout frequency substantially.

That means earlier mornings or later nights to sneak them in.

You're going to have to eat clean all the time.

In the first example, you probably are okay having a glass of wine a couple times a week. But, in this example, the wine would probably need to be restricted to just on holidays and birthdays, let's call it once a month.

You're going to have to keep your calories low seven days a week.

Again, in the first example, you can probably achieve those desired results by eating healthy 80% of time, and "treating" yourself a couple times a week.

That's not going to happen in this example if you want the desired results.

You get the point now.

We all think we want six-pack abs and ripped arms, but does the desired result match that work you're willing to put in?

That's up to you.

The end goal is to find a level of desired result that matches the level of change and sacrifices you're willing to commit to.

27

What's the Point?

A Bugatti can go 257 mph.

It's the fastest car in the world.

At about 257 mph it actually can go faster, but it starts to catch air, hover, and flips over.

Who was the person that figured that out, I wonder?

I do a lot of pondering.

Like a freakish amount.

I'm genuinely curious about why people think the way they do, how they're motivated, why some people have success, and others just chuck things up as losses.

I quite often think about "what's the point?"

Seriously.

What's the point in life?

What's the end goal?

What's the gold standard?

What's the point in fitness?

Is it really to lose the belly fat?

That's a piece of it, but what happens after that?

We don't just stop exercising, and we certainly don't just instantly become happy.

So, what's the point?

There are of course several aspects of it, but I think at its core, a piece of it is that Bugatti story.

Trying to push the limits.

To be the absolute best version of YOU.

I won't stop until I am the best dad, the best husband, and the best leader to my team.

I want to see what the limits are.

How far can we go?

How many lives can we truly change?

How good can we make the experience?

How good can our results be?

And, personally, what are the limits of being the best partner, the best parent, the best co-worker?

That's what puts goosebumps on my arms.

A Bugatti goes 257mph.

It's not about the speed, it's the fact that they found the absolute limit.

So often in life, we don't find our limits.

We don't strive big enough.

We don't go all in and try to be a better person.

We just throw in the towel.

Push yourself.

Not just physically, but in life, you can do more, you can be more, and it's just all about the drive to find everything that you can be.

28

Create versus Consume

I try to drive home to my team leadership lessons that also apply to fitness.

As an industry, there is no shortage of information.

If you type in "fat loss" into Google, you get over 262 million hits.

My point?

It can be very easy to consume.

Both on our end and on your end.

As fitness professionals, we're always trying to consume that latest information, understand what the latest research has to say and consume information in hopes of bettering the client experience, and their results.

It can be a huge time suck, and you catch yourself consuming so much that that's all you do, and you don't actually create anything.

On our end, create would be putting on a great experience for the clients, creating results, creating engaging conversations.

Basically the "do" or the action.

It's the same with you as the human trying to tackle a fitness and/or nutrition journey.

Quite often, because of all the information out there, it can be very easy to consume.

We quite often hear lines like....

"I know what I need to do, I just need to do it."

"I read this article that said eggs are bad."

"I read in this blog that eggs are awesome."

"Let me just do some more research and think about it before I sign up."

Consuming.

I'm challenging you to create!

It's not to say that you don't need to consume any information, we want you to be educated.

But don't let that paralyze you.

Instead, create your own journey.

Create a workout schedule that you can commit to.

Create some nutrition habits that you can build upon.

Create some relationships with friends and/or coaches that will hold you accountable.

Create!

Don't get caught spending all your time consuming, and instead ask yourself, what are you going to create?

29

Excellence in the Ordinary

“Excellence in the ordinary.” This may be one of my favorite lines.

I use it a lot with our team.

It's about doing the small, boring, ordinary things with excellence.

Sometimes we try to really get fancy, do some special things, and that causes the ordinary things to suffer.

What makes the biggest impact?

Excellence in the ordinary.

Your fitness journey is the same thing.

It's about doing the small, boring, daily things with excellence.

You know what I'm talking about.

Good sleep.

High water intake.

A solid amount of protein.

Movement daily.

The ordinary things done with excellence will always produce better results than doing the "shiny" things inconsistently.

As the fitness industry continues to expand you'll be bombarded with more and more "quick fixes" and "shiny objects."

It will be those that stay disciplined with excellence in the ordinary things that see life-long changes and avoid the dreaded yo-yo cycle of progress.

Don't chase the rabbit.

Excellence in the ordinary.

30

Find the Trigger

Did you know that 45% of what we do as humans is habit based?

Meaning, close to half of everything we do is coming from our unconscious, we don't even realize we're doing it, it's just the habit we've built.

No wonder nutrition can be so hard, right?

That's why you see our focus not on giving you meal plans, or telling you what specific foods to eat, but on improving your habits.

So, how do you change the habit?

First, before we get into the three step process of changing a habit, there's one important note to make.

YOU have to decide what the habit is.

We can guide your decision, ask you some thought provoking questions, but ultimately, you have to pick ONE thing you want to change the habit of.

By you picking it, you take extreme ownership of it, and the success rate goes through the roof.

It's like parenting...

If you tell your kids to eat their vegetables, they won't do it.

But one day, something triggered them to make that decision on their own, and now they eat their vegetables.

Changing behaviors is the same way.

Here's a three-step process to changing nutrition...

1. Identify the Trigger-"When this happens..."

The trigger is the moment when you're at the crossroads and could go down either road, the "eat the chocolate cake" road, or the "have a glass of water" road.

What is that trigger?

It starts with identifying the trigger, if you don't know this, you can't move on to step two.

The more specific the better.

There are five types of triggers: location, time, emotional state, other people, and the immediately preceding action.

So, do you find that every night at 9:00 pm you make a poor nutrition choice? That's a time trigger.

Do you find that every time you're stressed and frustrated you pig out? That's an emotional state trigger.

Step one is identifying the trigger...

2. Identify the old habit - "Instead of..."

Articulate the old habit so you know what you're trying to stop.

Again, the more specific the better.

"It's not that I can't eat at 9:00 pm, it's just so that every night at 9:00 pm, I look for a poor nutrition choice."

Becoming aware of what the trigger is (9:00 pm), and what the habit I'm trying to work on (extra unneeded calories) is the key here.

3. Define the new behavior - "I will..."

What are you going to replace that old habit with?

"I will drink a glass of water every night at 9:00 pm."

"I will pack my clothes the night before so I don't have that excuse."

"I will..."

It seems simple, but it's not easy.

However, this three step process can begin to change your habits, both nutrition, and other habits.

Start small, keep it simple, and focus.

31

Are You Up for It?

Run your own race.

Quite often we can catch ourselves trying to either keep up with someone else or trying to run their "race" entirely.

And I'm not talking a 5k here.

I'm talking life.

As you go on this journey of a better you, a stronger you, a more empowered you, it is just that...

YOU.

Now, you can have supporters and people to lift you up and inspire you, but it's important that you run your own race.

We can catch ourselves looking at pictures online or comparing ourselves to others in the gym and saying things like "I wish I was like her."

What we don't realize is they may have been putting in the work for years and years, and you're now just seeing the result.

They've made countless sacrifices, stacked several wins, and you're judging how they are just now.

Or, physically they seem great, but maybe they're dealing with mental and emotional things at work or at home that you couldn't even imagine.

I get it. It can be frustrating.

Run your own race.

Your journey is unique.

Make it that way.

Don't compare yourselves to others, don't try to keep up with people that have been going at it a lot longer than you, and remember this too...

As much as you look up to people, there's always someone looking up to you.

Maybe it's that lady on day one who is still confused with what a foam roller is.

Going over, saying hi, and giving her a helping hand can make a big difference.

Don't compare yourselves to others, focus on your journey and what you need to improve on, but just like in races, if a fellow "runner" needs help, feel free to give them a little push.

To build off of that...

Don't run someone else's race.

We all have our own goals, we all have our own battles, our own stories, don't try to live vicariously through someone else by running their race.

Set your own goals, pave your own path, and create YOUR story.

Run your own race.

It doesn't mean you have to go at it alone, but it does mean that your kind to yourself.

32

Focus

Life can get crazy.

I get it.

Work, family, kids, school...

Where do you fit it all in?

I get that question a lot.

I can relate even more now with a kid at home.

Family, your spouse, kids, work, etc.

We all have a long list of things that keep us busy each day.

How do we get it all in?

FOCUS

It seems simple, but it's easier said than done.

Follow One Course Until Successful.

Right now, this chapter is the only thing I'm focusing on. I'll be 100% all in until it's done.

I'll then move on to the next thing that needs my attention.

I get it, things come up, babies start crying, phones start ringing, etc.

Address those when needed, but take advantage of every opportunity you can to put your head down and focus on one thing.

Control your environment as much as you can.

Can you put your phone in the other room when you're working?

Can you really take advantage of the 2 hours today that you don't have the kids?

You see, it's like a bragging right to be busy.

I don't get it.

I know a lot of people that are "busy," but at the end of the day what did you actually get done?

It's not about being busy. It's about being productive.

No distractions.

For me...that means I block everything.

I work in 50-minute blocks.

I build in procrastination.

I have a meeting for 50 minutes.

Then I check my phone for 5-10 minutes, check social media, listen to voicemails, etc.

I write a blog post for 50 minutes.

Then I check the latest sports news for 5-10 minutes.

However, for those 50 minutes, I'm ALL IN.

FOCUS.

I think a lot of people get caught up in thinking they're busy, yet when you look at how they spend their day it involves a lot of multi-tasking, checking social media at the same time, having the TV on in the background, checking e-mails just for the heck of it, etc.

But, at the end of the day, nothing really gets done.

There's a reason why you'll very rarely see me at the gym before noon time.

I still love our morning peeps, but between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and noon, I work undistracted. I lock myself in my office. I have a punch list and I hammer it out like no one's

business. The TV isn't on, there're no distractions. I would bet I get more things done in those five hours then some people do in a week.

I challenge you to really analyze your day.

Are you actually productive, or are you just busy?

It's the same thing with fitness.

Did you know that when you focus on just one goal or habit the success rate is 90%?

Yet when you focus on two goals the success rate drops to 30%.

FOCUS.

33

When Life Feels Like Stretch Armstrong

Remember the toy "Stretch Armstrong?"

You know what I'm talking about...the blonde hair, muscle-bound, gel-filled action figure that was popular in the 80's and 90's.

A normal looking guy, you could take his arms and legs and stretch them as far as you wanted, spreading himself super thin.

That's the perfect analogy for my life right now.

And yours may feel the same way at times.

Hopefully, me opening up about it and talking through some strategies that I'm using may help you out a little.

A thriving gym business with hundreds of clients that I want to see every day...

A rock-star team of employees that I want to help and inspire every day....

A wife who needs my love and attention and a break from baby Kaden every once in a while...

Kaden who is growing so fast and I don't want to miss it...

A consulting business that has me inspiring other gyms to have the success that we do at Spurling, but demands a lot of time and travel...

So, where does "me time" fit in?

The list can go on and on, and I'm sure each of you has your laundry list of things that are stretching you thin in life right now and feeling like that Stretch Armstrong doll.

Luckily for me, I see this stuff as a learning opportunity and love the challenge.

Each of those things (listed above) and more are all vitally important to me. And, sometimes, it can feel like they all require my time and attention at once. Because of that, we're spreading ourselves thin, and just putting a little attention on each one, instead of being all in.

So how do you improve it?

And, just as importantly, how do you carve out time for you?

Here are a couple of strategies that I'm implementing right now that are helping me, and maybe they can help you as well.

1. Find your “why” again. The other day I revisited my entire purpose. I sat there, in dead silence and asked myself the hard questions. What gets me out of bed each morning? How do I want to make a difference? What's important to me? I revisit it often, but it took revisiting it in the mental state I was in to get some growth out of it. Always remember why you're doing what you're doing. What's your why? That creates strategy number two.

2. Know your guardrails. This is huge. For me, I have certain guardrails in my life, that if I don't catch myself, I'll let them down, and it will cause me to go off track. Just like on a highway, life is moving fast, and you need those guardrails to keep you on track, and moving in the right direction. Some guardrails for me include family first, my morning routine, and communicating with my team and clients every single day.

Recently, I've caught myself working late at night, not paying attention to Megan or Kaden. Family first is one of my guardrails. I catch that and need to adjust, work can wait.

My morning routine. I've mentioned this earlier in the book. I'm about as routine as can be. It's been an adjustment with Kaden because I can't always do it when I want to do it, but I know my days are much better when I get my morning routine in. This includes gratitude and appreciation, reading for at least 30 minutes, writing, and reviewing my big 3 rocks for the day. In total, it takes about 90 minutes. I see a very clear difference in my physical and mental state when it's a day that I don't get my morning routine in. That's a guardrail for me. If I catch myself not doing it, I need to make an adjustment.

And just as a final example, guardrail number three is communicating with my team and my clients every single day. I don't ever want to take them for granted, and it's important for me to communicate that every day verbally and through action. I may not be able to be physically present every day for them, but I will always call, text, or shoot them a nice note. Every single day. That's important to me.

The one guardrail that I still have not installed again is some me time. The morning routine is part of it, so it's there, but it's not where I want it to be. That includes things like getting my workouts in (I often cancel my workouts right now to get work done, meet with clients/team members, or take a phone call) and leaving some time to think and reenergize without interruption. It's not non-existent, but it's definitely not a firm guardrail yet. I'll get it there.

The other thing I like about guardrails is that they not only keep what is important at the top of mind and helps keep me focused, but they tell me what to say no to.

For example, I've said no to more consulting opportunities and traveling right now.

It's a huge interest of mine, but if I want to keep family first, keep my morning routine, and communicate with my team and clients every single day, I can't increase that workload right now.

Do I want to travel more and help more gyms? Of course. But as of today, I haven't found a balance of adding more, while still staying all in with my current commitments.

Saying no is hard, but it's important.

Guardrails also help me stay focused day to day, saying no to little things that take away from family first, and being there for my team and my clients.

What are your guardrails?

Just like with anything, write them down, and keep them at the top of your mind.

Is it perfect?

Of course not.

But it's better than it was yesterday and tomorrow will be even better.

When it feels like you're being pulled in a million directions, you're spread thin, and you want to be all things to all people, remember these two strategies.

Know your why, and put your guardrails up.

I want you to know that we all struggle. We're all fighting our own battles. And all any of us can do is continue to strive to get a little better.

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Your 12 Week Year

The concept of the 12-week year is to think of every 12 weeks as a year, and each week as a month.

This drives the urgency that every week you have to take massive action to get things done.

So, it actually starts with the bigger picture like we've talked about in previous chapters.

Think out three years from now...

What's your vision?

Where do you want to be?

Who are you with?

What are you doing?

How do you look and feel?

All of that is documented in your three-year vision.

Then, each 12-week year is just a micro breakdown to move you that much closer to your vision.

So in 12 weeks, what are the big things you want to accomplish?

I challenge you to pick things from each spoke in the wheel of life.

Also, pick things that are a bit of a stretch that you'll have to challenge yourself, but not too far out in left field that you'd just be setting yourself up for failure.

So, maybe your 12-week year looks something like this.

Drop 3 pant sizes

Add \$1500 to my savings

Go on one family vacation

The big three.

From there, under each big thing, you're going to write down the weekly action items required for each one.

For example...

Big Thing: Drop 3 Pant Sizes

Keep my calories to 1200 calories each day (8400 weekly total)

Workout 3x per week (36 total workouts in the 12 weeks)

Get 7 hours of sleep (49 hours each week)

The importance of the 3-5 weekly action items is it takes a goal and forces you to think about what are the action items required to make that goal happen.

Keep them short, condensed, and measurable so you know exactly what success looks like.

Follow this outline and make the next 12 weeks the most productive yet.

For each category of life develop a 12-week year outline.

Mentally, start to think about everything as 12 week years, that now puts the urgency to treating each week like a month, and you'll be that much more productive and successful at accomplishing your goals.

The next 12 weeks will go by no matter what, but only a few of you will actually take the time to map out and write down your next 12 weeks. For those that do, I can guarantee success.

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What is ECOC?

As most of you know by now, I try to spend my time studying behavior change, people's drive and productivity, and less "X's and O's" of exercise.

As much as I think variations of squats are important to know, I think what keeps people motivated long-term on a fitness or life journey goes much deeper than that.

I recently came across something and I just had to share it with you.

It's called ECOC.

Emotional Cycle of Change.

It's the five stages we all go through when we're going through ANYTHING that is voluntary change.

Now, as always, I'll focus on how it applies to fitness, but you'll see that this level of behavior change applies to all facets of life.

You go through this when getting a new job, a change in a relationship, or even something as small as a new idea you want to implement.

The ECOC is 5 stages.

1. Uninformed Optimism

This is commonly referred to as the honeymoon stage. You're excited, you can't wait to get started, you see all the great things that can happen because of this stage. You're informed, meaning you don't yet realize all the costs (time, energy, money, sacrifices) associated with making this change.

2. Informed Pessimism

This is when things get a little rough. This stage is when you learn about all the costs associated with making the change and you may start to get a little angry or frustrated. You're out of the honeymoon phase, and now because you're more informed about what's involved, you either have to find ways to push through it or give up. Obviously, we want to push through it, but know that at this stage it's important to understand what you're willing to do to make that change and find motivators to push you through it.

3. Valley of Despair

Before it gets good, it must get really bad. The valley of despair is when your frustration and anger is at its highest. This could be a plateau with your fitness and nutrition or the negatives of balancing a long-distance relationship. Remember, for today's overview, I'm keeping it brief and general so you can put the pieces together and understand that good fitness and nutrition is a behavior change, just like any other behavior change, it all follows this path.

4. Informed Optimism

We're on the up and up. You start to get the hope and confidence again that you had in stage one. We know now what it takes to get the results, we're willing to put in the time and pay the costs, and we're excited about what the future holds. We're motivated, we know what drives us, and we're optimistic about what is to come.

5. Success & Fulfillment

This is the gold star. You've reached your goal, and you feel fulfilled. This may be hitting a fitness goal, finding a career you love or saying "I do" to your best friend that you've been in a relationship with. It's time to keep trudging forward, you've achieved the desired outcome, and it's time to set some new goals!

In reality, each stage could be its own chapter, but I've kept it brief here for the purposes of making my point.

Just remember, success at anything, fitness or life, is not a linear path.

It's a series of ups and downs, and if you look at any behavioral change, they all follow these five stages.

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4 Keys to Successful Commitment

Committing to something.

What does that actually mean?

Whether we're talking commitment in fitness, commitment to family, commitment to a relationship, or committing to being a better employee, worker, or spouse it comes down to four things.

1. A strong desire.

Without a compelling reason, it's really hard to commit to something. You'll need a clear and personal reason to commit to something. When things get difficult (which they will) you'll need a strong desire and a compelling reason to stay committed. If you don't have that as your base, you won't stay committed. With a strong desire and a strong "why", you're capable of much more than you think you are and you'll have a strong commitment.

2. Keystone actions.

Once you have a strong desire to accomplish something, you'll need to identify the core actions that are going to get you there—the keystone actions. Remember, it's what we do that counts, and there are numerous activities to accomplish a task. However, it's important to stay focused on the "big rocks" the keystone actions, the things that produce the greatest results. Remember the 80/20 rule. 20% of your actions produce 80% of your results. Focus on the big things that make the most impact.

3. Count the costs.

In any commitment, there are going to be costs associated. It may be actual money, but it also may be the costs like time, uncertainty, or loss of comfort. For example, if you have a strong desire to drop some body fat percentage, there's going to be costs associated with it. You're going to have to dedicate time away from other things to work out. You may have to say no to some social things to not put yourself in a poor nutritional setting. And, of course, there is the cost of probably feeling a little scared or uncomfortable in the beginning. With any commitment comes some type of costs. And you have to ask yourself, are you willing to pay the price?

4. Act on commitments, not feelings.

There will be plenty of times when you don't feel like doing the critical activities required for the desired outcome. Things like waking up early, going to the gym after work instead of going home, or maybe going somewhere you really don't want to go, but you know it will make your spouse happy. It's during these hard times we need to learn how to act on commitments, not on feelings. If not, you'll never build momentum, and learning to do things you know you need to do, regardless of how you feel, is a core principle of success.

There you have it.

The 4 keys to successful commitment.

As always, I love how this applies to not only fitness but all other aspects of life as well.

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Results versus No Results

Success leaves clues.

In every facet of life, if you pay attention, not only to what other people say, but how they act, their choices, and their habits, you can start to learn what makes someone successful.

Success can be measured in many different ways.

I like to study why some people get results, and why others don't.

In my opinion, there are five key factors that go into the difference between the person that does get results and the person that's frustrated because they can't seem to see any progress.

Now, there may be others, but these are the main five, the five that make the biggest difference.

1. A clear picture of what success looks like. I say it all the time, write your goals down. I would bet less than 10% of you reading this have your goals written down. Answer and document the question "what does success look like?" Those that have a clear documented picture of what they're going after know what the target is, and are going to have more success hitting it.

2. A deep understanding of why they are doing it. I reference this a lot, for no other reason other than I think it's important. We spend a lot of time talking about what we're going to do (lose weight, drop inches), and how we're going to do it (circuit training, nutrition, and so forth), but we don't spend enough time talking about why. What is the real deep down reason that you want to make these changes? As you know by now, it's more about that than it is the number on the scale.

3. A positive growth mindset. This journey that we're all on that we call life is going to be filled with ups and downs, just like a rollercoaster. If you approach it like a rollercoaster, without the ups and downs, what's the fun of it? It's those that not only know there are going to be ups and downs, but they stay positive throughout the setbacks, use them as learning experiences, and are always aiming to just be a little better than yesterday, 1% better.

4. They stack small wins. Making the healthier choice of the two when presented with two crappy choices is a small win. They don't go for the big home run, they don't yo-yo, and they don't try to bite off more than they can chew. Aiming to go for a walk around the block instead of not working out at all is a small win. Getting ten more grams of protein per day is a small win. It's these small wins, added up over time, that build this foundation, this wall, that is an indestructible creation of habits that create lifelong results.

5. They show up daily. Consistency will always, I repeat, always, win out in this world. The relentless pursuit of just doing something every single day. I like to call it excellence in the ordinary. It's doing the ordinary things (sleeping, eating healthy, exercising a couple times per week) done with an extreme amount of excellence, consistently.

As I mentioned above, success leaves clues.

When you study successful people, they all follow very similar habits.

They don't chase the shiny object.

They don't look for the quick fixes.

They don't beat themselves up when things get hard.

Which one of these are you going to try to develop starting today?

Go take action.

38

I Give You Permission

I'm not sure if you need it, but I give you permission to think bigger.

I'm pretty confident most people don't think big enough.

Quite often we get caught up in the hustle and bustle of daily life, going through the motions, checking things off lists, but we never actually take time to think.

In order to think big, you first have to think!

Here are 9 random thoughts on thinking better and bigger.

1. It's a skill. Just like any other skill, it must be taught and it must be practiced. Like I mentioned above, most people don't actually take time to think. If you want to get good at thinking you have to practice it.

2. Dedicate yourself to it every single day. Whether it's 5 minutes or 5 hours, we need to take time to just think every single day. I'm not talking about just the random thoughts that run through our heads, but actually finding a time and a place every day where all you do is think. It seems so small, but when was the last time you let yourself slow down for even 5 minutes and all you did was think?

3. The brain is best at creating ideas, not storing them. Let me repeat that, it's gold. Your brain is good at coming up with ideas, not storing them. How many times have you had this great idea or thought, but then a day, an hour, or even a minute goes by and you forget it? As soon as you have an idea, you must write it down. I carry a notebook with me at all times. I have a small one next to my bed. And when, in a crunch I have nothing else, I use the notes app on my phone. Then, about once a week, I gather up all the notes, clean them up, and see what I'm going to take action on. However, without writing it down in the first place, it just becomes lost in your brain. Also, when you start to clear ideas out of your brain and onto paper, it clears up more "room" to creatively think.

4. Don't strive for certainty, but instead strive for action. As ideas run into our heads, we want to make them "come to life" or be perfect right away. Doing that is setting yourself up for failure. You want to see what you can put into action right away (see #5), but big thinkers are okay with ambiguity. Think broadly, and be open to multiple ways of doing things.

5. The entire purpose of an idea is to create action. I call it the squirrel. Most people have 1000 thoughts running through their heads and because of that never actually take action on anything. We spend all our time complaining or waiting for things to be perfect (see #4) before we end up taking action on it. I strive for imperfect action. Some may call it the ready, fire, aim approach. For every idea, I want to know the next step right away. I can envision what the end result or perfect looks like, but I don't want that to cause analysis paralysis. Action always trumps any good idea.

6. You can accomplish 100x what you think you can. I've mentioned before that I'm a productivity nerd. I constantly try to study why some people can get so much done in a day, and others just seem to always look busy but nothing actually gets done. There's a lot that goes into that, but since we're talking thinking today, I definitely see how that plays a role. People that are unproductive probably fall into two categories. One, they are ideas people. They're great at thinking, but never write it down or take action on it, thus, they have dozens of "tabs" open in their brain and never actually get anything done. These are the people that think multitasking is good, and chip away at everything but never actually make progress on anything. Two, are the people that never actually take time to think, thus they don't have a clear direction of where they're going. Which ties nicely into lessons number seven.

7. Thinking creates a blueprint for your life. Way too many people fly by the seat of their pants, wake up 20 years later, and say, "Crap, where did life go?" Taking the time to think, and to think big, allows you take control of your life and create a plan to live your dream life. This applies to all aspects of life. We want more money. Why? What's your plan to get it? Are you just complaining that you want more money, but you don't actually have a plan to get there? Do you know when you

want to retire and what life looks like during retirement? How much money (not a random number) do you need for retirement? Do you take them to reverse engineer that number to see what you need to save this month to stay on track for that? This stuff doesn't just magically happen. Fitness. What does success look like a year from now? Really think about what your life looks like. What brings you happiness? What do you need to change today to keep that one-year vision on track? Create your own life through bigger thinking.

8. Learn from every single experience. This is a skill I've been constantly trying to develop. I get business ideas from everything ranging from the books I read to the experience I just had pumping gas. Pick up your head, and learn from every single experience. Every single conversation, every single experience you have, there is something you can learn from it. Megan makes fun of me because I literally rip apart (in my head) everywhere we go. Not necessarily negative, but no matter where we go I look for ways things are being done and think to myself, "How can that be done better?" Whether that's making it faster, more efficient, more appealing, or whatever. If you want to think big, you have to learn from every experience.

9. Surround yourself with bigger thinkers. I really don't want to spend my time around negative people. I also try to surround myself with people who think bigger than I do. People who think changing the world is something they can actually do. I think there's a lot we can learn from anyone, but I really try to limit my day to people who are positive big thinkers. Because, that will only elevate me. If you're spending your day arguing on the internet, stepping over dollars to pick up pennies, complaining about how bad you have it, or thinking more than 30 seconds about what you're going to wear that day or cook for dinner that night—you need to think

bigger. There's a reason why people like Mark Zuckerberg wear the same outfit every day. It's just one more thing he doesn't have to think about and can spend his time thinking about how he's going to change the world.

That's my thoughts on thinking.

Keep thinking bigger.

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220 In A 110 World

I read this line in my book recently, and it really resonated with me.

Maybe it will do the same for you...

Be a 220 person operating in a 110 world.

Dang.

For those who don't know, most of the US electrical runs on 110 volts.

Some of the high energy big stuff requires 220 volts.

Double the volts.

A 220 person in a 110 world means a lot of things.

If you're a 220 person...

Your energy is a step ahead of everyone else's.

Your productivity is superior to everyone else's.

Your attitude is extremely positive.

Twice as good.

No time to be average.

Think of how much that can carry over.

There's so much negativity in this world.

There will always be something to complain about.

Why can't we challenge ourselves to be that 220 person in the room?

The person that shines brighter, the person that is more positive, and the person that leads the way.

There will always be the people that keep doing the same thing, not willing to change, and expecting different results.

There will always be the people who don't want to put the work in, who just want to be "average."

And there's nothing wrong with that.

But that's the 110 world.

If this resonates with you, you're the type of person that wants to go above and beyond, be that 220 person in the 110 world.

Work twice as hard.

Shine twice as bright.

Be the energy for others.

So many applications.

So I challenge you...

How are you going to be a 220 person in a 110 world?

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4 Walls to a Well-Lived Life

I truly believe way too many people just go through the motions of life and never actually create what they want, live their dreams, and fulfill themselves.

Why?

Simply put, they never actually take the time to think about it.

We can get caught up in the daily hustle and bustle, and soon you look back and you have to ask yourself...

Why am I still not happy?

These, in my humble opinion, are the four walls you have to build to live a life well-lived.

1. Awareness: Know who you are

This is the first wall that must be built and is the most important.

Self-awareness.

The ability to know who you are, what makes you tick, what your values are, what makes you happy, etc.

This wall, like the others, is never ending, but it must be started.

Self-awareness is one of the largest skills we can develop if we want to live a more fulfilling and happier life.

It takes time but can be done through meditation, journaling, and just really taking the time to ask yourself deep questions about what's important to you. What's your character? And, what are your motives and desires?

2. Vision: Knowing what you want

Although I think self-awareness is the most important, this one is my favorite.

Your vision.

Why do you exist?

What are you trying to accomplish in your short time here?

Where do you want to go?

What do you want to do?

The answers to those questions and more are all a part of your vision.

Just like it's important for a company to have a strong vision, I think it's vital for each of us to have a really clear vision.

A vision creates two things:

Clarity and Drive.

With a clear vision, you'll have an enormous amount of drive towards something that is bigger than yourself.

3. Achievement: Know how to get it.

So the first two walls are the most important, but they're kind of "fluffy."

They're not concrete and may be difficult to put on a paper, but the achievement is very tactical.

Achievement is where you start learning how to go after your vision.

Kaizen.

A Japanese philosophy of continuous improvement.

1% Better.

Become a lifelong learner.

Find something in your vision, learn it, and be the best at it.

There's an extreme amount of fulfillment in learning how to do something.

We had to learn how to walk. We had to learn how to read. We had to learn how to be a good spouse, a good parent, and so on.

It's the things that we must learn that keep us fulfilled and happy.

So, whether it's learning a new career, learning how to be a dad, or learning how to squat properly, achievement is an essential part of a well-lived life.

4. Fulfillment: Know how to enjoy it

All right, let's back up for a second.

You know who you are, self-awareness.

You know where you want to go, vision.

You know how to do it, achievement.

Now, it's time to enjoy it.

Fulfillment is about finding the things that are a part of your vision, that you learn how to do, and now you need to find a way to enjoy it.

Let's talk through a couple examples.

When I first started my business, I had to learn how to do it—the specific skills like finances, marketing, leadership, etc.

Now, in order to truly live our vision, I had to learn how to enjoy it.

That meant finding the things that I really enjoyed doing the most.

Another easy example...being a dad.

Right now I'm building the wall of achievement.

I'm learning the skills, and eventually, once the skills are developed, I'll learn fulfillment, the aspects of being a dad that is most rewarding, which comes from a continuous improvement of my self-awareness.

Let's tie a bow on this...

For some of you that struggle to think "bigger picture" like this let's relate it to fitness.

Before you even start a fitness routine or a journey to a healthier you, it starts with being self-aware.

You are aware that you need to change. You become aware of why, why now, and what your motives and desires are.

From there, you create a vision of what success looks like.

A breakout of this would be goal setting.

Goals are just milestones that are moving you closer to your vision.

At that point, you get into the skills...

Learn how to eat properly.

Learn how to exercise regularly.

Learn specific movement patterns and healthier recipes.

Learn the tactics.

From there, you find what you really enjoy, you master it, and that's when you become fulfilled and enjoy the process.

Start thinking about who you are, what you want to go after, learn it, and master it.

And that's the four walls of a well lived life.

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It's Never Straight

Each and every day we handle conversations from clients or prospective clients that revolve around results—the speed at which results are or are not occurring.

We hear it a lot, but I think it's important to have a continuing reminder in your head that success is never a straight line.

Let's take it outside of fitness first.

When in success in life ever a straight line of progression?

Hardly ever.

You struggled to sit upright as a baby. Then you learned how to balance on your bum.

You started crawling, tried to stand, fell, and eventually after several falls learned how to walk.

You fell riding your bike before you got better at that.

You maybe struggled in school before you figured it out and graduated.

You were dumped or told no in relationships until you figured it out, and it can still be a rocky road.

You struggled in your career, and still, have good days and bad days.

In life, let alone fitness, success is never a straight line.

And until you realize that and use that as part of what makes it so fun, you'll continue to get frustrated. You'll mentally beat yourself up, and stay discouraged.

When it comes to fitness, you have to mentally prepare that things are not going to go your way.

Stay positive, have a growth mindset, but know that it's never going to be this continuous flow of results.

You're going to miss a whole bunch of workouts.

You're going to go through a stretch where you don't workout for months or maybe even years.

You're going to make some poor nutrition choices.

You're going to gain weight when you're trying to lose weight.

You're going to not make it to the gym because something else demands your attention in life.

And guess what?

That doesn't mean you're a bad person.

It means you're human.

Part of the fun of this journey is realizing that it's not going to be a straight line.

I mean how boring would that be?

Part of the fun can be troubleshooting why you're not getting results, seeing what you can change, analyzing your behaviors, and trying new things.

It's what makes it so fun!

That's the way you have to look at this journey.

It's not about the workout today.

It's not about how much protein you had today.

It's not about how much water you drink today.

It's about the journey.

And this journey is going to have some highs and it's going to have some lows.

And that, my friends, is what makes life worth living.

Keep at it.

Remember, success is never a straight line.

42

Barriers & Bridges

Throughout life, we go through lots of barriers.

I remember the barrier of trying to find my first job at 14.

The barrier of wanting to lose all that weight before going off to college.

The barrier of finding my true passion.

The barriers to business.

I'm sure I could go on and on, and I know you have your own barriers.

The barrier to fit into those dress pants.

The barrier of finding a job that you love going to every day.

We also have emotional barriers like not believing we can do something, anger, or a feeling of disempowerment.

But what happens as you continue to try to get past these barriers, doing small things to chip away at them, 1% better, you don't realize what's going on underneath your feet.

You're building your bridge to get over it.

When a barrier comes up in life, you have two choices...

You can turn around and give up.

Or, you can build a bridge and get over it.

We all have barriers, but it's those who can build a bridge to get over them that have the most success.

Do you remember when you first lost those first few pounds?

That was a barrier, and whatever you did, you built a bridge to get over it.

That bridge took you on a journey until the next barrier.

That bridge now has to go back under construction to get over the next barrier.

Life is a relentless pursuit of building bridges to get over your barriers in the way.

Attack your barriers, build your bridges, and you'll have massive breakthroughs.

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The 4 Agreements

The four agreements.

The four things, as good human beings, that we need to keep in mind and take action on.

The four things that create love and happiness in our lives.

Understanding these commitments is easy and simple. But, actually living and keeping these four agreements can be one of the hardest things we do.

Integrate these four agreements into your life and every area will improve—fitness included.

1. Be impeccable with your word.

This is integrity.

Doing what you said you were going to do.

Committing to what you said you could do.

Saying only what you mean.

It's also avoiding using negative words to speak against yourself or to gossip about others.

This can have a nice carryover to the negative self-talk we often feed ourselves throughout a weight loss journey.

Use your words to drive happiness and love—not negativity.

2. Don't take anything personally.

What others say and do is a projection of their own reality.

Nothing others do is because of you.

When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others you won't be impacted by their negativity.

This one clearly carries over to several facets of life, but it also has some weight throughout your fitness journey.

"Oh come on Doug, why are you getting that grilled chicken dish? What are you trying to eat healthy or something? Just get the burger and beer!"

We've all heard that.

We're trying to make healthy choices and our social circle gives us a hard time about it.

Now, hopefully they're just joking, but it can still weigh heavily on you.

Don't take anything personally, keep your head down, stay positive, and focus on your journey.

3. Don't make assumptions.

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want.

Communicate with others as clearly as possible to avoid misunderstandings.

Whether it's communicating with your coach, communicating to your spouse, or communicating to your coworker, don't make assumptions.

Spell things out clearly. Ask good questions and don't assume.

4. Always do your best.

This is my favorite one.

In every moment, you should always be doing the best you possibly can.

Life is too short for half-hearted efforts in anything.

Now, an important thing to understand before I go on is that your best is going to change from moment to moment.

Your best when you're sick is not going to be as good as when you're healthy.

Your best when you're tired is not going to be as good as when you're rested.

That doesn't matter though.

In any situation, always do your best, whatever that looks like at that time.

Jump higher.

Put 100% effort in 100% of the time.

Always do your best.

44

Jar of Awesome

We've spent a lot of time talking about happiness, gratitude, and positive thinking in this book.

I think we all "get it" but then that begs the question of how do I work on it?

There's no right answer.

Some people are motivated by scare tactics like such as:

If I live till I'm 80, I only have about 18,000 more days to make an impact on this world.

Why spend any time being unhappy when we're here for just a short time?

Some people are motivated by surrounding themselves with positive people.

Being a part of a community, a part of something bigger than yourself, or a having a social group that is less about drama and negativity and more about happiness and positivity.

But how do I think most people are motivated to be happier and more positive?

Just like with nutrition and fitness it all comes down to small daily habits and small daily wins, stacked on top of each other.

And that's where the Jar of Awesome comes in.

Grab a mason jar and leave it where you see it every day.

Next to it is a pile of scrap paper.

Every day write something down that was awesome about that day and put in the jar.

It could be something big like your son graduated from high school and it could be something small like the sun came out today.

You could even keep it displayed in the house and get the whole family involved.

Why does an exercise like this work?

It forces you to keep happiness and positivity at the forefront, and there is something awesome happening each and every day, it just takes the jar to remind you what it is.

Try out the Jar of Awesome and let me know how it goes.

Life is way too short to be nothing but positive and happy, and maybe this Jar can be the tipping point to helping you get there every single day.

45

Time Management in A Box

I have a total obsession with time management.

I consider myself to be uber-productive, but I also study the heck out of time management.

Removing emotions, I try to study why some people don't have time for things and some people seem to fit it in.

Let me start with two of my favorite quotes on time management before we get to the good stuff.

Instead of saying, "I Don't Have Time." Say, "It's Not a Priority."

"Being busy is not the same as being productive. In fact, being busy is a form of laziness-lazy thinking and indiscriminate action." –Tim Ferriss

I've talked about both of these before but just a point on each one here.

We are all saying yes to something and no to something else.

Right now you are saying yes to reading this which means that you are saying no to something else.

Being great with time management isn't necessarily doing more, it's saying no to what's not a priority.

The priority quote applies a lot to fitness because if you say...

"I don't have time to exercise."

Versus...

"It's not a priority to exercise."

It just sounds different, right?

Because, let's face it, we do have time. It just may mean waking up earlier, staying up later, saying no to friends, or whatever else—it's just not a priority.

And don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that's a bad thing all the time, but we just have to be aware of it.

I wrote a piece awhile back about busyness that got some good feedback and it stemmed from reading the second quote above from Tim Ferriss.

Most people think it's a badge of honor to be busy.

"How are you today?"

"Oh, good, really busy...but good."

He believes (and I try really hard to agree) that being busy is a form of laziness.

You're busy because you said yes to too many things. You're not taking enough action, and you're just spinning your wheels.

Okay, we get it.

But how do you fix this?

The best exercise I have for time management is following Steven Covey's time management grid.

It's broken into four boxes.

The goal is to fill in your tasks into each box to help you be more aware of what to focus on and what to say no to.

1. Urgent Important: These are things that are both important and urgent. Things with deadlines, appointments, and emergencies. Items in the box are necessary, there's no avoiding them.

2. Not Urgent Important: These are things that are important but not urgent. This is where exercise would fall. Along with that, you would have things like planning, relationship building, other tasks that you feel are important, but don't have a deadline. The key with this box is FOCUS. The things are important, but they don't have a deadline so it's easy to get distracted.

3. Urgent Not Important: These are things that pop up that need to be taken care of, but are not important. These include things like unplanned interruptions, drop in visitors, some meetings, and e-mails.

4. Not Urgent Not Important: This box is the key. These are things that are not important and not urgent, yet it's the things we waste our time doing the most. This includes things like checking e-mail multiple times per day, checking social media, surfing TV, gossiping, etc.

Go ahead and fill in the boxes for your life.

The goal is just to be a little more self-aware.

Say yes to things that are important and urgent, but try to avoid distractions that are no urgent and not important.

It seems basic to some, but if you documented your time, I would all but guarantee most of us to spend too much time on not urgent/not important things.

46

The One Thing

It's a lot.

I get it.

You're being fed information left and right, and not sure what to believe.

You know so many things you COULD be doing, but you end up getting overwhelmed, freeze and don't end up doing anything.

My challenge to you.

The One Thing.

Pick one thing you're going to do today to move the needle.

It could be showing up at the gym.

It could be taking a 20 walk around the parking lot at lunch.

It could be choosing to bring your lunch instead of buying it.

Heck, it could be calling a loved one to tell them you love them.

My goal is to always over deliver and always add value, but I know that sometimes it's a lot to take in.

It could be personal stuff, work stuff, fitness, nutrition, relationships, etc.

Once that's dialed in it's about the ONE THING.

Each day, pick one thing that is going to move you closer to your goal.

You can conquer the world.

You can change your life.

It just starts with one thing.

Pick one thing, crush it for the day, and repeat every single day.

What's your one thing today?

47

The Ultimate Guide to Goal Setting

I want to get a bit more tactical and talk about the wheel of life and how you need to use that as your guide to goal setting.

But first, I'll ask you to think about and write down the answer to two questions....

What are your values?

What does your ideal day look like?

It starts with that.

Every goal, every decision, and every plan will tie back to those two questions.

Now, we're going to dive deeper and go bit more tactical, but please don't go on until you've written down and spent time answering those two questions.

For the few that actually took action and wrote them down, I can all but guarantee improvement right away.

For those that didn't...just remember that ideas are crap and execution is everything.

I got the idea of the wheel from Tony Robbins

Just like everything in life, everything I've learned came from the people I've met or the books I've read.

So, if you think of a bicycle wheel, what holds the tire on?

The rim.

And what's inside the rim so that it doesn't collapse as you ride the bike?

Spokes.

Spokes on a wheel are the best way to think about goal setting.

You have different spokes, and you can make up your own spokes, but these are the ones I recommend.

Physical
Family
Career
Financial
Emotional & Spiritual

So, as you look to set goals, use these as your categories. And, ideally, you're chipping away at each of them.

Now, the most important thing to remember is that it's all connected.

If your physical spoke is suffering, it's most likely going to affect your family and your emotions.

Same thing if your financial spoke is suffering, it's going to affect your emotional, family, and career spokes.

So, just remember that they are all connected as you go through this journey.

All right, so where do you begin?

List out each spoke in your wheel of life and write down the answer to the following question for each category:

What does success look like 12 months from now?

Seriously.

If you got to wave a magic wand and have everything come to fruition, what would that category look like?

Paint a clear picture.

Ideally, this is taking your ideal day and values and breaking it down into each subsection.

So for physical maybe it looks like a certain number of workouts per week, a certain event completion, a milestone on an exercise, or a specific pant size.

For financial it may look like dollars in the bank, specific amount saved for retirement, or getting to debt free status.

For emotional it could be doing a gratitude journal every day, with a rank of 1-10 how you're feeling that day and trying to get to an 8 or a 9.

For a family, it could be a certain vacation, the plan to have a child, or setting a milestone as a family.

Your specific goals are your specific goals.

I'm not here to tell you what your goals are, that's up to you, but hopefully, this puts some structure behind it.

So you have your values, you have your ideal day, and you have what success looks like in each of your spokes on the wheel of life.

It's time to execute.

Constantly have one action item that you're executing on each day that is moving you towards that "magic wand" scenario.

Once you answer the question, "What does success look like in this spoke 12 months from now?" then you can answer the

question, "And what are the action items required to make that happen?"

That's it.

It's about execution.

All of this planning is great, but if we don't have any execution of those ideas it was a waste of our time.

You have to know what success looks like for each category, but then from there, it's about a daily execution of something that moves you closer to that goal.

You could set certain milestones or check-ins like 30 days or 90 days.

If your ideal financial spoke is to have a million bucks in the bank, you can break that down into what that needs to look like a year from now, 90 days from now, or 30 days from now.

However, it's still going to require some type of daily action, and that's where the magic is made.

You're constantly chipping away at this sculpture with daily actions to build your masterpiece.

Daily action.

Daily execution.

This is 1% better at it finest.

48

Your Vacation

Do you wake up on a Monday dreading going into work?

As you go through the week, do you spend your time wishing for the weekend to come?

And finally, do you spend the weekend dreading Monday all over again?

If so, it's time for a change.

One life.

This is not a dress rehearsal.

We have one at bat, one chance to do everything, make all the difference, and leave the world a better place.

If you agree with that, then why are you spending over 70% of our time on earth (Monday through Friday) miserable, wishing for the 30%?

I read an interesting quote the other day...

"People spend more time planning their vacations than they do their life."

Really?

Okay, so what if you're nodding your head to all of this, but you're not sure what to do to fix it.

First off, you're not broken, all of us struggle with this, and it's just a matter of slowly chipping away at it.

However, I truly believe life is too short to wake up miserable. There are no redo's, this is the only life we have. So, why spend it with people you don't enjoy being around doing something you hate?

It starts by having a clear vision.

A clear north star.

Once you know the "end" you can reverse engineer everything backwards.

Today, my goal is to give you some questions that you can start to ponder as you work towards spending a little more time planning your life than you do planning that trip to the Bahamas.

Question 1: What are your values?

When you think of values, think of your guardrails.

You're on this journey (the road), going a million miles per hour. What are the guardrails that keep you on track?

For me, my values are happiness, family, and legacy.

So, when it comes time to creating my ideal life and my ideal day, I always go back to those three things.

If it's not going to make me happy, help my family, or leave an impact on someone else's life and improve my legacy, I'm not going to do it.

Let's look at a few examples...

Why do I spend an hour of every day writing?

I'm sure there are more "productive" things I could be doing.

However, it makes me happy and ideally leaves one person a little better after reading it so that helps slowly chip away at my legacy.

What about cutting the grass?

I pay to have a landscaper come to our house because right now cutting my lawn does nothing for my values.

It doesn't make me happy, it takes time away from my family, and it doesn't leave the world a better place, so I'm not going to do it.

You can see that if I didn't have my values in place, I'd probably be cutting the lawn.

And don't pull the money excuse thing, because the \$50 that I spend on landscaping is the same as what someone who really values socializing spends on restaurant and bar tabs. Or what the person that really values nice clothes spends at the store.

There's no right or wrong, it's just what's important to you.

Now, the cool thing is, no one person's values are alike.

What if one of your values is the environment, and you love being out every day planting and growing things? That's awesome, do it every day.

Or, what if one of your values is also happiness and you love the satisfaction of seeing the fresh cut lawn, knowing that you did it yourself.

Then you should be doing it as often as you can.

I'm not telling you how to live your life, but I am telling you to spend some time planning it.

So, now that you have your values, and you know your guardrails, it's time to move onto question two.

What's your ideal day?

Seriously.

Now, I'm not talking sitting on the beach with a drink in your hand ideal kind of day. I'm talking, what do you see yourself doing every single day?

Sitting on the beach with a drink in your hand sounds great, but I think we can all agree that three things would happen...

Your bills wouldn't get paid.

You'd become really unhealthy.

And, ultimately, you'd get bored and lonely after a week or two.

It might sound good, but what does your ideal day look like in real life?

What time do you wake up?

What do you do at work?

What kind of people do you surround yourself with?

What time do you get home from work?

What do you do after work?

All of this is important.

Because it becomes vital as you look at what makes you happy.

If you love sleeping in until 9 a.m. and that's super important to you, maybe you find a job that doesn't require you to start until lunch time. (restaurant/hospitality/medical fields)

If you value being home by 5 p.m. every night, you better not work in the fitness industry. That's our busiest time of day,

and it will always be, so you're most likely going to have to work during that time.

If you value being around people and you're an IT person, that could help you make a job decision.

Job one has you sitting at a desk working on projects.

Job two has you going around troubleshooting with others.

If you value people, you should take job two. If you value independence and working by yourself, job one sounds like a better fit.

Again, no right answer, it's just important to have some guardrails in place.

So, I'm not saying let's all work two days a week and sip on margaritas all day long.

What I'm asking is do you know what your ideal day looks like.

Map out from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed what your ideal day looks like.

Then, slowly chip away at your daily decisions to work closer to that ideal day, keeping your values in mind and using them as guardrails.

It's not going to happen overnight. And, I'm not asking you to quit your job tomorrow if you're miserable. But your daily actions should be moving you towards your ideal day.

Finally, I used careers examples a lot for context, but this applies to all aspects of life.

Are you happy in your relationship?

Do you love your fitness routine?

You do know that with the right people and programs fitness can be fun, right?

Life's too short for anything but doing what you love.

So, your two questions for today...

What are your values?

What is your ideal day?

If you can take the time to answer those, you'll be making great progress. And, it will be rewarding, knowing that you're spending more time planning this one life we have than your next vacation.

49

The Niagara Syndrome

One of my favorite parts about our honeymoon was the late night hot tub conversations...

You know what I'm talking about.

You get back from dinner and you want to unwind, so you head over to the hot tub.

On any given night there were 4-5 other couples there, and I'm always interested in meeting new people so I loved it.

I always admire someone older than me, what they've done, how they've done it, and what I can learn from them.

Aside from that crowd, we also met a couple our age, and they were talking about some of the coolest places they'd been.

She was talking about how they'd just finished up a trip to Niagara Falls and tried out the new zip lining that goes over it.

Cool, huh?

And of course, me being me, I started thinking about how Niagara Falls relates to life, and what we can learn from it.

Hear me out...

Life is like a river.

Most people jump on the river of life and they don't really decide where they want to go.

So, what ends up happening?

They get caught up in the current.

Current events, current fears, current challenges, etc.

When they come to a fork in the river, they don't actively decide which direction they want to go.

So they just go with the flow...

They go wherever the river (life) takes them, and they blend in with the masses.

They feel out of control and scared because they don't know what's around the corner.

They just keep going with the flow, letting the environment control their life.

One day, they wake up to the sound of raging water, and they realize they're five feet from the Niagara Falls in a boat with no oars.

They're going to take a fall.

It may be a physical fall, a financial fall, or an emotional fall.

It's likely, though, if they'd made better decisions upstream, they would have never come to that point.

It's time to take control.

It's time to carve your own path.

Get super clear on what you value, and set a course for where YOU want to go.

That's the only way you can make quality decisions along the way.

This could be for your physical destination, your financial destination, your family destination, or any other aspect of life.

It's time to get in your boat and paddle like there's no tomorrow.

You control your own destiny.

50

Trading Problems

As I close this book out, I want to end with a final life lesson.

If you're on a journey to a healthier and happier you, you know the road is not smooth.

It's bumpy as heck.

You start getting some momentum, lose focus for a little while, get busy, and the longer you're "off track" the harder it is to get back on.

That's why we preach slow and steady consistency, not beating yourself up if you miss a week here and there, because, in the long-term, it's more about just showing up consistently.

Okay, we get that.

But, I'm on this road to a healthier and happier me, and I still have "problems."

And that's the problem!

We think that once we get going, once we hit a certain goal, once we've accomplished something that all our problems go away.

In his book "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*CK," Mark Manson talks about how life is all about trading problems for better problems, but it's also an understanding that we'll always have problems.

Let's think about it...

When you first start a fitness journey you're scared, you're intimidated, and you're not in the shape you want to be in.

That's a problem that you're looking to solve.

So, let's assume things go great, you find a gym you're no longer scared of, you're into a routine, and you're getting results.

And guess what?

A new problem emerges.

You now have to balance, how do I fit these three hours at the gym into my hectic life?

Who and what do I say no to at home or at work in order to take a priority of ME for a couple hours?

Still a problem, but a better problem.

Let's keep rolling...

You're crushing it, you've found balance in your schedule and you're getting all kinds of results.

Another problem emerges.

You may have to go buy an entirely new wardrobe, you may have an unsupportive spouse or some jealous friends that make fun of you every time you try to eat healthy.

Again, a better problem, but still a problem.

The problems I solve today running a business with seven employees, hundreds of clients, a kid, a wife, and all the other factors that play into it are completely different (and better) than the problems I had to solve six years ago when it was a one-man operation and I'd just started dating Megan.

But there are still problems.

This is a great reminder, and something Mark preaches in his book, that we will never eliminate problems in our life. If you set yourself up with that expectation you're going to fail.

The goal is that you continue to grow and develop, in all aspects of life, so that you trade bad problems for better problems.

But there will always be problems.

And that's okay.

That's what makes it fun.

We're internally motivated to solve problems.

As much as we dream of everything being perfect and going smoothly 110% of the time, we crave the ability to fix stuff that's broken, we crave problems.

We just hope we're trading good problems for great problems.

I'll end with my favorite quote from the book.

"There is a simple realization from which all personal improvement and growth emerges. This is the realization that we, individually, are responsible for everything in our lives, no matter the external circumstances. We don't always control what happens to us. But we always control how we interpret what happens to us, as well as how we respond...

Life is essentially an endless series of problems. The solution to one problem is merely the creation of another....

Don't hope for a life without problems. There's no such thing. Instead, hope for a life full of good problems."

Conclusion & What's Next

There you have it. 50 lessons on getting 1% Better.

So what do you do now?

Take action.

Live the 1% Better motto. Take action on just one lesson, remember just one lesson. Remember, action breeds motivation.

Don't look to conquer everything today, but take action today. Move the needle.

When things are feeling stale, when you feel overwhelmed, when you're frustrated with the progress you're making, or when you find yourself looking for the quick fix, read a lesson as a reminder.

Always improve, always get better, never stop improving, and always take action.

1% Better.

If this book meant anything to you, I'd love for you to pass a copy along to a friend.

Acknowledgements

This book is a few hundred pages, but, in reality, it's years of learning, developing, and sacrifices. I find it vital to my success that I have a "team" around me, in all facets of my life. I'd like to acknowledge my team for all they have sacrificed for the success of others, including myself.

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To my son Kaden, who can't talk yet, but teaches me so much. I am forever driven to provide the best life possible for him.

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And finally, to you, the reader. Your time is your most valuable asset, and it is so humbling that you took time out of your busy life to read this book. I can’t thank you enough for your support and I hope it was empowering and impactful.

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