

So what's this all about?

Polar ice caps are melting, hurricanes swirl in the seas, wars are heating up around the world, and the job market is in a deep freeze.

Whoa.

It's getting pretty ugly out there.

That's why one chilly spring night I started a tiny website called **1000 Awesome Things**. For a boring guy with a nine-to-five job, it became a getaway from my everyday.

I never imagined that writing about finding money in your old coat pocket, the smell of gasoline, or watching *The Price Is Right* when you're at home sick would amount to anything.

Honestly, when I started the site I got excited when my mom forwarded it to my dad and the traffic doubled. Then I got excited when friends sent it to friends and strangers started sending me suggestions: "When cashiers open up new checkout lanes at the grocery store," "The smell of rain on a hot sidewalk," "Waking up and realizing it's Saturday."

It seems like maybe these tiny little moments make an awesome difference in many of our rushed, jam-packed lives. Maybe we all love snow days, peeling an orange in one shot, and Popping Bubble Wrap.

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Maybe we're basically all the same.

Over the past year the website grew into a warm place where people around the world came to curl up under a blanket and think about the small joys we often overlook. With so much sad news and bad news pouring down upon us, it's fun to stop for a minute and share a universal high five with the rest of humanity.

What started on a whim has changed me for the better too. Now when I get the thank-you wave while merging, hear the crack of ice cubes in my drink, or move clothes from the washer to the dryer without dropping anything, I just smile and enjoy the moment.

So . . . that's the story so far. That's how we got from there to here. And now it's time to come on in. The fire's crackling and there's a seat on the couch here. Cuddle up and let's all get into it.

Let's all get onto it.

And let's all get a little bit

AWESOME!

The other side of the pillow

Have you ever found yourself lying in bed **wide awake** in the middle of the night?

You know how it is: **Clock's** clicking past 1:30 a.m. and you lie there with your eyes bugged open, chewing your upper lip, tapping the sheets with your fingers, completely frustrated. Your pupils have long adjusted to the dark, so your eyes are darting around the room over and over, trying to identify dark shapes or watching the moonlight shadow-dance around the walls. Maybe your thoughts won't settle down, you just can't get comfortable, **you ate spicy food** before bed, you have a presentation the next morning, or maybe it's just the frustration itself keeping you in a terrible, never-ending cycle of sleeplessness.

So you **play dead** and try to remain motionless as long as possible. You change positions back and forth, side to side, left to right. You get up and go to the bathroom or start reading a book. Maybe you try to remake the bed, since by now you've probably managed to twist your sheets and blankets into a completely unusable, tightly wound knotpile barely covering your legs.

On nights like this, when you just can't sleep, one of the greatest things invented is simply **Turning Over the Pillow**.

Yes, flipping over your pillow and checking out the other side cranks **Bed Comfort** up a few notches and is a simple and easy way to help you relax and get comfy.

The other side of the pillow, folks. Because it's flat when you're sagging, **fresh** when you're stale, and cold when you're hot, baby.

AWESOME!

When cashiers open up new check out lanes at the grocery store

Though I hate to admit it, I am a slow, indecisive mess in the grocery store checkout lane.

Since I am an **extremely cheap person**, I watch the prices scroll up on screen like a hawk, often saying things like “Oh, I thought that was on sale,” or “Actually, I don’t really want that anymore,” forcing the cashier to call in price checks to the unresponsive produce department or find a temporary home for the pack of **melting Fudgsicles** I’ve decided to leave off my list last minute.

And because I’m watching the screen so closely, I start bagging my groceries late, fumble with my wallet, and awkwardly leave my shopping cart blocking the lane like a metal **crisscrossed castle knight** enforcing a firm “Thou shall not pass” law in its trademark silence.

Yes, I clog up the line and annoy everybody behind me. I’m one of **Four People You Don’t Want to Stand Behind** in the grocery line, together with:

- **Fidgety Grandma** , who on cue dumps a pile of warm nickels on the counter to pay and then slowly counts them out by sliding them across the counter with her index finger
- **Flyer Guy** , who hands the cashier a dog-eared flyer from home, forcing her to manually tear out all the coupons while everybody waits
- **No-Math Jack** , who sneaks in piles of extra items into the Express Lane and acts like it’s no big deal

Those tense, winding checkout lanes can be a pretty rough go sometimes. It’s not easy out there. You have to watch the anxiety levels, take deep breaths, keep that blood pressure in check.

That’s why there are few things better than a **sprightly new cashier** hopping onto the scene, grabbing the “Next lane please” sign from the end of the belt, flicking on the light-bulb above her station, and offering a loud, beaming “Next customer, please!” to the scowling, stressed-out masses.

When that cashier bulb goes on, a **bright warm glow** showers down on everybody waiting. People like me feel less guilty about holding up the line and folks at the end win the big front-of-the-line jackpot. Yes, it’s **one giant mood swing**, one massive swelling of goodwill, complete with buzzing chatter, a few laughs, and even the occasional crinkly plastic sound of a tightly wound frown turning upside down.

AWESOME!

Intergenerational dancing

Have you ever felt too old or too young on the dance floor?

Maybe you and your husband signed up for a Saturday morning **ballroom dancing class** and noticed everyone else arriving on a shuttle bus from the old folks' home. Or maybe you surprised your wife with a romantic date night on your tenth wedding anniversary and accidentally stumbled into a local college hotspot full of **white baseball caps**, bead necklaces, and Jell-O shooters. Or maybe you just found out the hard way that All-Ages usually means All-Underagers.

I mean, if you've ever found yourself saying "Man, I feel old here," or "**Does anyone else smell Ben-Gay?**" then you know what I'm talking about. It's not that people of different age groups don't socialize, it's just that they don't often groove to the same beats is all.

I think that's why wedding dance floors are a real sight.

They're a breeding ground for that amazing intergenerational dancing that's just so rare and beautiful to see.

You've got grandmas slow-dancing with their **five-year-old grandchildren** to "What a Wonderful World," old men crowd-surfing over a pack of sweaty teenagers, snaking conga lines of all shapes and sizes, and circles forming around anyone who happens to be doing something interesting— whether that's a father-and-daughter team waltzing in circles or a slightly inebriated bridesmaid **shaking her booty** with a ninety-year-old great-grandpa in a wheelchair.

Yes, intergenerational dancing is a rare and wonderful thing. It's a magical moment where boundaries are broken and the thumping **power of music** sort of sweeps us all together into a tiny little place where everything's just cast aside in favor of living for the moment.

AWESOME!

Seeing a cop on the side of the road and realizing
you're going the speed limit anyway

Stress level goes up.

Stress level goes down.

AWESOME!

Illegal naps

You know what's even better than lying on a hammock in the backyard on a sunny Saturday afternoon? Better than catching a few winks after classes before a long night out at the bars? Better than falling asleep on the couch with the baseball game on the radio? You know what's even better than all that?

I'll tell you what: **illegal naps**, my friend. Sneaking them in when you ain't supposed to.

Napping any time you know you shouldn't be napping has a bit of an edgy, dangerous feel to it, like sneaking into a movie, sharing a free-refill soda at a family restaurant, or coming through customs without declaring the new sweater you're wearing.

I'm talking about driving away from work at lunchtime, parking in a nearby parking lot, tilting back your driver's seat, and sneaking in a little siesta before an afternoon full of meetings. I'm talking about waking up groggily at 11 a.m. after a long night, chomping on handfuls of cold popcorn while surfing the Internet for an hour, then going back to the bedroom to crash all afternoon, building toward that exotic and sinful **Day o' Naps**. Yes, I'm talking about the naps you pull off in the bathroom stall at work, the ones at the back of the bus just before your stop, and the naps you take in the middle of a big bout of procrastination before a deadline, when you convince yourself that a quick snooze will give you more energy to finish that big paper due in a few hours.

So come on! If you're with me, then you agree **life's just too short not to sleep when you feel like it**. So lower those blinds, unplug that alarm clock, and nap strong, nap long, and nap proud, my friends.

AWESOME!