

LEAVE LIFE
A LITTLE
BETTER

THAN YOU FOUND IT



UNSOLICITED ADVICE BECAUSE
YOU ASKED FOR IT

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THE BEST ADVICE I HAVE

- **Life is short so try and have some fun with it.** No one gets out alive.
- **Make your thoughts those of a good friend.** Since you have to live with yourself all day, try to build your thoughts to be supportive and helpful just like a good friend.
- **Be a good person.** Be as generous as you can. Giving helps both the giver and the receiver. Share your knowledge. Give empathy - as far as I know, it's everyone's first time passing through life so give people a break if you can.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THIS?

It's my attempt to share the best information and advice that I've learned as compactly and accurately as I can. It's a how-to book from my viewpoint on what has been useful or meaningful to me. I've also added some philosophical thoughts up front in an effort to provide the reader with my understanding of my worldview in case it's helpful or interesting in making sense of how I've approached life.

A lot of this information comes from nonfiction books. While I appreciate reading books and the many authors who have tried to accomplish similar goals in the past, many times after reading a 200-page book, I'm left with only one or two pieces of actionable advice. Here, in contrast, I've tried to summarize the actionable information (unfortunately removing the stories and supporting evidence) to make it faster and convenient to digest. Some books are particularly good and it may be wise to read the full books or at least skim them. I've mentioned some books I highly recommend where I believe they are worth more consideration than I included here.

So, in the end, I hope this is something I wish I had received decades earlier in life. And now I have some hopes that it will make someone else's life a little better or easier to navigate.

HOW SHOULD YOU READ THIS?

However you want. My suggestion is to skip around. Skim sections that seem interesting to you. Take notes on the topics that seem to resonate most with you and research it further.

But, whatever you do-please don't blindly believe anything you read here. What follows is based on my own opinions and collected information that I believe has helped me. Where possible, I try to use credible sources and add references - but no person's life will be exactly the same so many things may not resonate with you now or perhaps ever.

HOW IS THIS ORGANIZED?

I've organized this book into a few sections that make sense to me largely on what I call the "pillars" or domains of what I consider important: Health, Wealth, Fun, Knowledge, and a few sections for stuff that didn't fit nicely into one of those.



I based sections on my own “vision board” of the pillars/ domains of what I consider important (I’ve replaced the words Learning with Knowledge and Wealth with Finance respectively)

WHY AM I WRITING IT?

I want everyone in the world to achieve their best possible life, and this is an attempt to provide others with the information I wish I had received at less of a cost of time, energy, and mistakes. In the end, I hope the world is in a better place because I existed and was lucky enough to have the time and energy to share my thoughts with others.

I have no specific qualifications to pretend I am qualified to write anything special. But, if you find it useful, then *I* will receive personal satisfaction in knowing that I've helped another human being figure out life a bit faster and better than they may have on their own.

If this helped you and you want to let me know, or if somehow it hurt you, please feel free to reach out to me (Boyd)
- Boyd.White@gmail.com.



CHAPTER 1



FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

WHY AM I HERE?

I don't know, and I doubt I'll figure it out.

The way I figure it, there's several possible answers to that question. My best guesses in terms of what I think is most to least likely are:

1. The question makes no sense and has no answer I will understand. I am an ape that learned to talk and ask that question. All life and consciousness is a freak accident of explosions from celestial bodies that have existed forever or poofed into existence. To the extent that I can explore and understand my environment, I may be forever limited by the natural processes of evolution and life's "goals" (which appears to be propagation of life).
2. I am the result of some other consciousness / higher power that created this environment. If it's possible that life can ever create consciousness itself and it's able to do so in a reliable fashion, it would make sense to reason that I/we are most likely in this scenario. This includes a scenario where we are all living inside of a simulation and this is not the first iteration of life or a universe as we know it.
3. There's one "thing", "god", "being", and it is "I", "you", "me", "us", "them". I am you and you are I and we are destined to live and relive existence in every possible form in some type of samsara.

None of these answers make much sense to me. They also seem to require some additional first uncaused cause.

Maybe the answer is a combination of these or other ideas I haven't explored. In any case, we don't have much time on earth to figure it out-so best not waste too much time exploring this question.

FIND YOUR MEANING TO LIFE

Regardless of why you exist, if you agree that you exist, at one point you'll consider questions such as:

- What is the meaning of my life?

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- What should I do with the time I have?

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I consider questions like this extremely valuable and worth considering several times throughout life, because life will pass and time will move forward. If you do not evaluate what you care about, you will miss opportunities to act and this could leave you with regret or with a less impactful life than if you had considered it.

An analogy I've heard is that if you are in a sailboat you will float with the seas unless you decide to steer where you want to head.



An exchange in Alice in Wonderland

I think it would be most obnoxious of me to suggest a common purpose for all of our lives. And, of course, you are free to never consider your own purpose in life. We are each free to let the seas guide us as they may and never give our purpose another thought. However, if you agree with me that you can be a change for “good” in the world, perhaps you’ll find some of these ideas below useful.

START WITH WHY

When we are kids we ask *why* incessantly. And, I think that’s the right question to keep asking to help find your meaning to life. Why do you want to live? But, why?

Asking why incessantly: a Question and Answer sequence.

Q: Why do you want to live?

A: To help others.

Q: Why?

A: Because I believe that conscious life, especially human life, is inherently valuable and I want to do the most I can to help it.

Q: Why?

A: I guess that's just how I was raised and what makes me feel valuable and productive.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know, but I think the reader understands my point now, so I am going to stop illustrating this.

Q: Why?

A: Please leave me alone.

Your answer to why questions should help you discover the most important things in your life and it will allow you to focus on whatever you define as meaningful and set goals that will help you become successful however you define those terms.

Compare a purpose driven life and one without:

| No purpose | Purpose |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Why move forward? | Why stop? |

My practical advice: write down what you believe is most important in life to you. Reevaluate this on a regular interval (for example yearly around your birthday). Alternatively, or in addition, write down who you want to be in the future. I suggest writing this in first person narrative format as though you are already that person. Writing down your ideas helps you remember what you were aiming for and allows you to continually refine how you see life, purpose, and what matters most, becoming the best person you can be.

Note: I've included my own example of what I wrote in the appendix.

Counter point: if you don't have a strong opinion about your purpose in life right now: take a break. Get *bored*. See where the seas take you. Maybe take some hikes in the woods.

SET GOALS

I find I am much more likely to accomplish my goals that I write down physically in a book. I also find I accomplish more when I write down specific steps and have checkpoints along the way.

The best goals are ones that are SMART(ER): Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Goals should also be continually Evaluated and Revised to make sure they line up with your current intentions.

What's helped me is to set short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals all aligned with my "pillars" or domains of my life I am focused on. This is to give me checkpoints along the way to evaluate if I am headed towards achieving my goals or not.

I also like adding goals to a Gantt style chart to view my medium term and long-term goals and checkpoints over a long time.

Example goal setting checklist:

- Goal you wish to achieve

- Is it Specific enough (Y/N)

- Can you measure success? How will you know you've achieved it?

- Is it achievable? (Y/N)

- Do you really want to achieve it? (Y/N)

- When do you want to achieve it by?

CREATE GOOD HABITS

A habit consists of a cue, a routine, and a reward.

- A **cue** is another word for a trigger-something that tells your mind that it's time to do a certain routine. A cue can be a time, a place, certain clothing you are wearing. Often, there are many cues for habits that are unconscious to the person performing the habit. The more cues that exist, the more likely it is to trigger a routine.
- A **routine** is the action or activity performed.
- A **reward** is a beneficial feeling that is given during and after the routine. This appears most directly linked with dopamine release in the brain. Similar to cues, the more rewards you have for a routine, the more likely you will continue performing the habit. The strongest habits are ones that have reliable rewards recognized and felt after each routine.

Habits work on an instinctual level and do not require will power. Habits are similar to addictions and can work positively or negatively. Over time, habits become your daily routines which become your days which become your weeks, months, years, and eventually your entire life.

HOW TO CREATE A HABIT:

Create an implementation plan with specific dates and times you will try to do these behaviors. Habits are things that you do on a daily basis, so consider journaling each day about your success and setbacks.

A daily journal entry to record your progress might include:

- Habit you want to build
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- What are the triggers / cues for the habit that you tried to use
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- Did you achieve it for the day yes/no
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- What can you do to better prepare yourself or your environment to achieve this habit tomorrow?

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Note: the information I've provided here is likely not sufficient to put into practice. This is a topic that requires more research and effort, but will pay dividends in value when it's used correctly.

Recommended books: *The Power of Habit*, *Atomic Habits*

COMMUNICATE BETTER

Communication is the only way we have to interact with other life forms. It's an incredibly broad and diverse topic that is worth additional study by everyone in my opinion.

Here are some of the most generally useful tips I have for effective communication:

- Bottom line up front (BLUF). Write or say the most important takeaway and summary at the start of your communication.
- Write for your audience. Think about who your audience is, what preconceptions they may have, share information for the person who may not have as much information as you-this means you may have to add background information before giving detailed information.
- Be simple. Communicate in clear, unambiguous words and use as few words as necessary.
- Edit, edit, edit. If you have the time, re-read what you wrote and reduce unnecessary words and sentences.
- Check for understanding. Oftentimes we communicate, but the information is not sent or received as we intended. Being present in a conversation and watching someone's reaction may help you

confirm you are passing information along. To confirm that the information is received as it was intended, ask.

- Use correct and precise language (for example: did you mean to say person, man, or boy)
- Tell stories. People remember stories.
- Paint pictures in people's head.
- To keep things interesting, change your tone and speed.
- Repeat things when necessary. Underline them and bold them if appropriate.
- Don't talk over people. Listen to the other person instead of waiting to say the next thing.
- Meet people where they are.

The following are my top communication pieces of advice from Dale Carnegie:

- Begin in a friendly way.
- Don't criticize, condemn, or complain (It rarely helps).
- Give honest sincere appreciation to others frequently
- Remember and use people's names in sentences. People like to hear their own names.
- Smile when talking with others.
- Listen more and talk less. You have two ears and one mouth for a reason.
- Appeal to noble motives (morality is the strongest way to frame a persuasion)

Public speaking tip: remember that you aren't speaking for yourself, you're speaking to help others.

Recommended reading: *On Writing Well*, *The Elements of Style*, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

DON'T BE TOO PROUD OF YOURSELF (AKA BE HUMBLE)

Give me a child until he is 7 and I will show you the man. - Aristotle

A lot of things that shape who you are likely happened in childhood. You are a combination of where and when you were born, how you were raised, and your genetics. So even though I implore you to gain deep self-compassion and self-esteem, I would just add some caution to you (and myself):

- Everything you learned and built is being done “on the shoulders” of giants. Without great minds and labor before you, you would not be in the position you are today.
- There are probably thousands of people who have directly contributed to your life which you have benefited from. (Recommended reading - *Thanks a Thousand*).
- People overestimate their abilities. For example, most people think they are in the top 50% of best drivers. This is statistically impossible, despite the fact that we both probably think we are ourselves in the top 50% of drivers of course.
- There is often a tendency to under and overestimate our own competence. Be aware of cognitive distortions that you too may have, research psychology (like the Dunning-Kruger effect), and develop tools (like skepticism and cognitive distortions checklists) to check for your own inaccurate and uninformed beliefs.
- As moral as you think you are-there are probably things you believe today that will be considered abhorrent in 100 or 1,000 years. Just look at how many moral teachers had slaves or taught that men were better than women in the past. Today, most of us would consider some of those older ideas abhorrent. As someone who

eats meat (from conscious beings), I presume that one day history will judge me harshly. I don't even want to spend much time thinking about other mistakes I am making now.

- Everything you've said or thought has probably already been done. In fact, I was a bit surprised to learn that even the title of my work was famously said almost verbatim by Robert Baden-Powell when he said "Leave this world a little better than you found it."

ORGANIZE YOUR YEAR

When I was younger, I had structure to my years. I recommended adding structure to your years to help you stay on track. I build a yearly calendar based on a framework of quarters in the year. Feel free to consider my calendar and modify for your own purposes:

- Quarter 1 (January, February, March) - Focus on Health
 - ♦ Birthday month - Go to annual doctor physical
- Quarter 2 (April, May, June) - Focus on Wealth
 - ♦ Reconsider budget
 - ♦ June - Readjust savings and financial allotments
- Quarter 3 (July, August, September) - Focus on Knowledge
 - ♦ Consider and/or sign up for classes
- Quarter 4 (October, November, December) - Focus on Fun
 - ♦ Schedule other events in the year

CHAPTER 2



HEALTH



Without some level of health, nothing else here is possible. So, with great effort and sometimes with minimal success, I try to work towards achieving a longer health-span that is a life-span that is as best I can make it.

Tomorrow isn't guaranteed. But I believe that many can have a positive effect on their health with minor life choices.

LIVING LONG

I believe these are key to achieving your longest and best possible life:

- Sleep

- Diet
- Exercise
- Socialization

I believe alcohol and smoking are the two biggest lifestyle choices in our lifetime that negatively affect health outcomes. Never starting both of these vices would be a good way to maximize health outcomes.

Sleep rules:

- Try to go to bed at the same time each night and awake at the same time each day
- Most people need about 8 hours of sleep
- If you lie in bed for more than 15 minutes without sleeping, get up and go do something else
- Only use the bed for sleeping and sexual activities
- Stop using a computer screen/phone >1 hour before bed
- No cell phones/computers/tvs should be used in the bed; ideally not books either

Sleep tips:

- Drinking lots of water prior to sleep can help you wake up early if you need to

Diet rules

- Eat *real* food - like the stuff your ancestors did (not the manufactured stuff that gets created today)
- Eat mostly vegetables
- Eat slowly and with many bites. Eating for at least 15 minutes seems to trigger the body into knowing that it's satiated

Diet tips:

- Go for a brisk walk briefly after larger meals
- Smaller plates make the brain think you ate more food
- Foods that are low in calories and high in nutrients fill you up faster than the opposite. Alternative: no one ever got fat eating too much celery and broccoli.
- Eating vegetables first lines the stomach with fibers that help digest food better
- All major diets seem to be based on the same principle. Lose calories and lose weight. Volume of the food is one thing. Nutrient and calorie density is another major part of the equation.
- Shop on the perimeter of the grocery store-these are typically where the fresh, healthiest foods are.

Exercise rules:

- Move your body in some way that you like in a fairly vigorous manner at least 3 times a week for at least 30 minutes

Socialization tips:

- People who are resistant to socialization often find that they enjoy socialization more than they expect
- I believe those with more good friends and those who spend more time with others live more healthily and make better overall life decisions
- Ask questions. People love to talk (especially about themselves)
- To find and stay connected to someone, find something you both like to do and do it together. This can become like a habit and will keep you engaged

DR. GREGER'S DAILY DOZEN

Doctor Greger, a life and health researcher, created a checklist featuring a dozen items that people should strive to do every day to stay healthy:

- Beans
- Berries
- Fruits
- Cruciferous Vegetables
- Greens
- Vegetables
- Flaxseed
- Nuts
- Grains
- Spices (namely tumeric)
- Exercise
- Beverages (namely water)

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

Consider your own relationship with food.

- What does it mean to eat in a way that is natural and nourishing for your body?

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LOOKING GOOD

People who look better get better treatment in life in general. Here are the top ways to look good:

- Stay at a healthy weight
- Wear sunscreen. Also limit sun exposure during times of high ultraviolet light in the middle of the day.
- Wear nice clothes

STAYING SANE

You become what you think most of the time. There are several cognitive distortions that may sound reasonable, but are actually unhelpful exaggerations. Being aware of common cognitive distortions and naming them will often help you realize they are nonsense and break out of negative thought patterns. There is a concept called cognitive behavioral therapy that focuses on finding and removing negative thought patterns. Here are some cognitive distortion examples:

- **Filtering out the positives** - most people tend to remember and focus on the negatives. Try to think of or journal about good things and you may spot them more.
- **Overgeneralization** - often people will think words like never, always, or nothing. The reality is few things are absolutes. Are you “always” a failure, or did you fail at one specific thing one time you tried it?
- **Catastrophizing** - Are you going to get fired or is there perhaps a less catastrophic response your boss will take for you sending an email with a typo in it?

WAYS TO CALM DOWN:

1. **Breathe.** This trick cost me at least \$5,000 to learn but has been more valuable than that for me. To calm down, simply breathe

out longer than you breathe in. I like the 4-7-8 breathing method. To do this, simply breathe in for 4, hold for 7, and exhale for 8 seconds. Doing this a few times will relax your parasympathetic system and help you return to a calmer state. You may notice that you yawn (a sign of relaxation) or that your muscles begin to relax.

2. **Body scan.** One method to do this is to sit down comfortably. Close your eyes. Now focus on the tips of your toes. Feel how your toes feel. Slowly move your attention upward in the body from the bottom of the feet, feeling how they connect to the ground. Then, focus on your heels and upwards to your calves and shins. Keep moving your focus upwards and focus on each body part and how it feels. Focus last on the top of the head. As an alternative, you can focus on tightening and then relaxing or just relaxing these body parts as you perform your body scan.

Recommended reading: *Feeling Good*

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

- How do you approach discomfort in your pursuit of better health?

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- What can you learn from enduring challenges?

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CHAPTER 3



WEALTH



I believe it's a good idea to accumulate some level of wealth if you can, just in case something goes wrong. At the end of your life, that money will go somewhere and hopefully to a good cause of your choosing. And while you're alive, wealth can help you weather storms and be more strategic in your decisions as well as prevent some modern-day stresses.

FINDING YOUR PERFECT “JOB”

Most people throughout history have had to do something like a job to survive and feel self-worth. Since that job historically has taken a significant portion of your life, you might as well try to enjoy it if you can.

The Japanese word **ikigai** refers to a passion that gives value and joy to life, and can help you find work that you love, are good at, and that creates a sustainable income:

Four intersecting qualifications can help you figure out what you like and will excel at:

- What you love
- What you are good at
- What you can be paid for
- What the world needs

Regarding whether you are happy with your work, my old boss used to ask: do you like your job, do you like the people you work with, are you ok with the money?

Additional Resources: I like the free resources from 80,000 hours a project that focuses on using a career to make a meaningful impact. <https://80000hours.org/career-guide-pdf/>

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

Reflect on what brings you a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

- How can your work align with your values and contribute to the well-being of yourself and others?

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INVESTING

There are two ways to help accumulate wealth, you can earn more or spend less. You can maximize earnings by using simple investment strategies. Money can make new money almost as if by magic.

The most useful and compact investing advice I've seen is captured well in *The Index Card*, a book written by Harold Pollack based on the advice he wrote for his daughter on an index card. The index card read:

1. Max your 401(k) or equivalent employee contribution.
2. Buy inexpensive, well-diversified mutual funds such as Vanguard Target 20xx funds.
3. Never buy or sell an individual security. The person on the other side of the table knows more than you do about this stuff.
4. Save 20% of your money.
5. Pay your credit card balance in full every month.
6. Maximize tax-advantaged savings vehicles like Roth, SEP and 529 accounts.
7. Pay attention to fees. Avoid actively managed funds.
8. Make financial advisors commit to the fiduciary standard.
9. Promote social insurance programs to help people when things go wrong.

I would add the following comments to this approach:

1. The fiduciary standard does not have enough value alone to prove a financial advisor will be of help to you. Get a financial advisor you can trust and hopefully who don't sell you their own products.
2. Promoting social insurance programs is more of the author's personal viewpoint about life and not strictly about investing.

Reminder: wealth is not everything in life.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

Examine your relationship with material possessions.

- How can you cultivate contentment and avoid being ruled by the desire for more?

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FRUGALITY

Even high earners struggle to accumulate wealth because they spend whatever they make. There is a tendency to spend more as you make more. This is why frugality is a good topic to consider as well as creating a budget with a savings plan.

CHAPTER 4



FUN



I think having fun is the spice of life. I don't have many tips for this aspect of life specifically.

- Try new things.
- Do things that scare you.
- Remember things you used to do as a child. You may like doing them as an adult.
- Don't take yourself too seriously. Have fun with life.

- Remember to stop and smell the flowers.
- Bubble baths are awesome.
- A good time to schedule your next vacation is when you're on vacation.

Here are some of my favorite TV shows, movies, games, and books. Everyone has different opinions on this stuff, so take it for what it is. I recommend asking friends and acquaintances with similar tastes what they like-you may like those things as well.

MOVIES

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| ▪ Jurassic Park | ▪ The Departed |
| ▪ Knives Out | ▪ The Lion King |
| ▪ Inception | ▪ Idiocracy |
| ▪ Shutter Island | ▪ Deadpool |
| ▪ Memento | ▪ X-men |

To find other movies I've liked, I'll often search for the same categories of movies or ones with the same actors in them. Occasionally, I'll like movies with the same director, but this is less often reliable.

TV SHOWS

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| ▪ Cosmos | ▪ Sherlock |
| ▪ Breaking Bad | |

TV COMEDY

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| ▪ Psych | ▪ Rick and Morty |
| ▪ It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia | ▪ Arrested Development |
| ▪ The Simpsons | |

GAMES

- Super Mario Brothers
- Mario 3
- God of War 3 & Ragnarök
- Uncharted 2 & 3
- The Last of Us & 2
- Farcry 3 & Primal
- Frozen
- Age of Empires 2
- You Don't Know Jack (series)
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3 (NES)
- Overcooked - for couples

FICTIONAL BOOKS (I HAVE NOT READ MUCH FICTION SINCE HIGH SCHOOL)

- 1984
- Fahrenheit 451
- A Brave New World

BOOKS

- *The Best of Me* by David Sedaris

MOVIE HONORABLE MENTIONS

- Fight Club
- Room
- Interstellar
- The Truman Show
- Se7en
- Inside Out
- Silence of the Lambs
- Gone Girl
- The Prestige
- Groundhog Day
- The Usual Suspects
- Django Unchained
- Toy Story
- Reservoir Dogs

TV HONORABLE MENTIONS

- Monk
- Curb Your Enthusiasm
- The Office
- Black Mirror
- House of Cards
- Impractical Jokers

HOBBIES I'VE LIKED

Scuba Diving - scuba diving for me is a fun way to explore an alien environment, one that I find absolutely beautiful. The unique life and challenges of trying to survive underwater are just a cool and interesting part of our world. It doesn't hurt that scuba diving also takes you to interesting locations and there is no shortage of fans of diving. As a hobby, it's somewhat inexpensive and can be a great reason to travel to new locations.

Hiking - in the United States there is an incredible resource of national and state parks. These parks are either free or extremely cheap to visit and explore. Hiking the trails in these parks, I've seen some of the most beautiful scenery and felt all levels of energy and relaxation that I expect the human psyche is capable of.

Video Games - in the early years of my life, video games were interesting in the same way as a puzzle. I found puzzles and games both interesting. As they've advanced more into the digital age, they've become a form of escapism and given me immersive experiences that I've never felt in movies or books. Plus, new video games are increasingly social and I've known more than one person who met their spouse playing video games-they are a nice way to connect with other humans with a low bar to entry.

TIPS FOR TRAVELING

- Spending a little bit of time researching and using rewards programs have been incredibly valuable for me.

- I highly discourage the purchase of time shares. Personally, I'd rather pay full price for things than work with this high-pressure sales industry.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

- What activities bring you genuine joy and allow you to connect with your inner child?

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- What did you used to enjoy as a child?

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- What do you believe you wished for as a child but did not receive?

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CHAPTER 5



KNOWLEDGE

I believe we should be lifelong students of life, always learning new things.

HOW TO FIND TRUTH

I want to believe as many true things and as few false things as possible. I use skepticism as one method to test if things are true or not.

If you really want something to be true, be slow to believe it-you're more apt to believe false things that you want to be true.

Be careful not to fall for logical fallacies. Logical fallacies are things that might sound good, but are actually weak arguments that don't necessarily tell you whether something is true or not.

Some common fallacies to watch for:

- **Ad hominem** - a person's character does not determine whether the person is correct or not. If someone has cheated on their wife, it doesn't mean that they are wrong on how to file taxes correctly.
- **Appeal to authority** - just because someone is important does not mean they are correct. Note: someone who is educated on a topic will likely have better information, but they also aren't necessarily providing correct information. Doctors can be wrong, even about medical topics. However, if you find yourself disagreeing with the

best available science and the scientific consensus, it's probably you who is wrong.

- **False dichotomy** - “you can either stay overweight, or you can use our program.” There are obviously more choices than just using this one specific program.
- **Strawman** - a weak construction of another person's view.
- **Appeal to incredulity** - “well I just can't think of any other reason than X.” Just because someone cannot think of any reason does not mean there is not another reason.
- **Appeal to ad populum** - just because many, the majority of people, or even everyone else in the world except you believes something doesn't make it true. Though, it should certainly give you pause to consider why everyone else is wrong if you are not able to convince them.

Skepticism does not mean cynicism and it also does not mean all conspiracy theories should be given weight. Many things the vast majority of people believe is probably a fairly accurate way to view the world. If you find yourself turning to sources of information who provide information which is proven inaccurate, do not provide quality sources, or only often opinions, it would be a good idea to check more reliable sources to see if those sources confirm, ignore, or debunk your sources of information.

Questions to ask yourself when listening or taking in information:

- What are their motives?
 - ◆ Are they selling something?
- Are they using a lot of emotion in their communication?
- Are any of these things I can independently verify?
 - ◆ Should I try to validate any of these claims?
- What would I say if some of these things that are being claimed are false?

SMART PEOPLE FALL FOR BAD IDEAS TOO

I've known several intelligent people to fall victim to charlatans and purveyors of poor information. Unfortunately, I don't have much luck trying to convince people out of poor reasoning once they've been sucked in. It takes time and consistent flow of information that invalidates their bad ideas before they can recognize they are believing false or bad ideas.

HOW TO CONVINCE SOMEONE OUT OF A BAD IDEA

This is a framework for those discussions:

1. Is the conversation worth it? Why are you considering having it?
2. Ask them how confident they are in their position. If they are 100 percent confident, then they don't want to continue.
3. Ask them why they aren't more confident. Discuss.

During the entire conversation remain polite and open minded. End the conversation when it no longer feels productive. Remember that in some cases, a person's identity may be tied into their beliefs and it may not be possible for them to change their mind. Remember most claims have some truth to them, and everyone has been wrong-so never assume that you cannot be wrong again.

Tip: "common sense" is not common nor necessarily correct. Science especially is often not "common sense" even though it's one of the best tools to objectively identify facts. Common sense might tell you that the Earth is flat because it feels flat or that the Sun rotates around the Earth-because we're so important. However, upon careful observations and repeatable tests, we can prove facts which may not match what our "senses" would initially have us believe.

GO BACK TO THE BASICS

A lot of what we need to know was (or should) have been taught in elementary or high school. I believe it's important to learn and

occasionally refresh your knowledge on the basics of subjects namely science, history, and math.

READ BOOKS

Non-fiction books can be very useful. There are several tricks you can use to consume information from non-fiction books more quickly.

- Read for things you don't know. One trick I've learned is 1) read the table of contents, 2) skim through the book, read the first sentence of paragraphs and titles, slow down on any parts that look interesting, 3) read the table of contents again and see if there's any sections you might want to go back and read more thoroughly.
- Speed reading. Speed reading can be useful and can be learned to read several lines at a time. However, I find the skim method above more useful.

INTERNET RESEARCH

The Internet has everything. This is great since nearly all of current human knowledge is available to you within seconds. Unfortunately, any idiot can and likely has created content on the internet. I had hoped that the newer generations growing up with the internet would have learned to carefully parse the internet and discern factual information, but this seems to have been a wish that has not come true.

It seems that now and increasingly so we will need to confirm internet derived information with multiple sources. Here are some tips I have:

- Double check with another source before sharing anything - especially if it's not a top tier credible source (like New York Times or Wall Street Journal - and not the opinions section).
- If you must read the news, use news aggregators that compile headlines from multiple news outlets to make sure you are not receiving slanted journalism in an echo chamber or complete fabrications. Also, read different news sources for different types of information: I'd be more likely to trust CNN on England's news

and BBC on American news because they have more of an outsider perspective.

- Google is not the only search engine. There will be times when you will want to search using multiple search engines. For example (and by no means the only example), wolframalpha is better for searching math than google is. There are also paid search engines for general or specific queries that are not commerce based (hint: if you pay nothing for a service, then you are getting ads and/or they are still making money on you somehow).
- Become familiar with advanced internet searching techniques. For example, on Google:
 - ♦ site: - specify what site should be searched
 - ♦ “Exact phrase” - use exact phrases searches
 - ♦ -phrase - exclude a certain phrase
 - ♦ filetype:pdf - include only certain file types (pdf in this example)

Internet searching warning: be careful when downloading things from the internet. Make sure:

- Your computer and browser are using the latest security patches
- Don't visit websites you don't know (if you can)
- Type a link into google before visiting it if it seems unsafe

Note: even some of the top search hits in google have been malicious before. Keep yourself up to date on the latest trends and scams. A good resource is here: <https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/small-businesses/cybersecurity/basics>

SOME OTHER REALLY COOL PEOPLE TO MAYBE CHECK OUT

There are billions of incredible people past, present, and future who have given this world wonderful thoughts and insights. Some people that I would recommend checking out a bit more:

Mark Twain – (aka Samuel Clemens) left us wonderful and delightful thoughts and expressions.

Marcus Aurelius – a real self-help guy if ever there was one.

Yuval Noah Harari – this guy churns out history books that are actually interesting.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

- What are you truly curious about?
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- How can you approach learning with an open mind and a willingness to challenge your existing beliefs?
.....
.....
.....

CHAPTER 6



OTHER UNSOLICITED ADVICE

SUGGESTIONS

- Learn from your mistakes
- Dance - even if no one can see you
- Stretch. It feels good and helps many aspects of your body.

PERSPECTIVE

- Everything in moderation. Including moderation.
- Bad things have an opportunity for growth
- Don't fear change
- The things you are afraid to lose are normally not as important as you think they are
- Most of your life is the journey, not the destination
- Don't berate yourself too much, free will in the sense you expect probably does not exist, so the mistakes you've made are probably not your *fault*
- No one cares... everyone is too busy thinking about themselves
- No one who is great at something was always great at it.

- Any day 6 feet above is better than 6 feet below.
- The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the second best time is today.
- You don't get paid based on how hard you work. You get paid based on how hard you are to replace.
- The answer is always no, until you ask. Alternatively: ask and ye shall receive
- "The person in control of any relationship... is the person who cares about it the least". Alternatively: the best time to get a job or a girlfriend is when you already have one.
- Challenge your pain. Pain is all in the mind.
- If you haven't failed, you haven't tried.

ADVICE

- Lose the ego, most of your success are not directly yours.
- Breathe through your nose. Especially when exercising.
- Ask questions of people to learn from them. Listen. Most people will answer honestly and it may help you.
- Do a daily gratitude journal.
- Visualize success. Picture yourself succeeding.
- Start more often.
- Don't fret about a past you can't change. Don't worry about a future you can't predict.

MY PERSONAL OPINION

- Give back.
- Keep yourself clean and hygienic.

- Treat everyone better than they deserve.
- Lazy smart people are often great workers.
- Be grateful.
- Heart Rate Variability (HRV) is a good way to objectively measure your health.
- People like high energy as long as it's not annoying. Energy and other emotions are infectious and people like people who make them feel good.
- No one ever lies on their deathbed saying they wish they worked more.
- You probably need more fiber and less protein.
- If it's not nice, don't say it. Unless you really have to for a good reason. *"You can always tell someone to go to hell tomorrow"* - Warren Buffett
- If you share your feelings versus criticizing, others may be more ready to hear what's wrong and change their own behaviors.
- You can't predict the future but you can have better estimates for things by learning more. However, even experts that do not have feedback because of rare events often fare no better at predictions than random chance.
- Keep good friends. Be careful with advice you take from others, but be very grateful for the advice you get.
- Treat others as if you could be reincarnated as any other conscious being.
- Don't stay up late to do anything you wouldn't get up early to do. Alternative: nothing good happens after midnight.
- Fake it 'til you make it.
- Many times it's best to ask for forgiveness rather than permission.
- The world owes you nothing.

- You cannot control other people, you're lucky if you can control yourself.

Might work for you

- Eat the frog. Do the hardest thing, first thing in the morning.
- If you like black coffee, try adding cinnamon to it - it's a super food and tasty.
- Try energy shots with super foods like turmeric and caffeine.
- Learn your strengths and weaknesses so you can spend time and energy where you are best able to help.
- Consider using EXTREME honesty. *"If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything"* – Mark Twain.
- Intermittent fasting can help kickstart your body into positive changes.
- Think big.
- Reading books can be like a cheat code for life.
- Reading an autobiography is kinda like learning about the person and maybe how you can be more like that person. If they are genuine, they should be sharing some useful info.
- Showering/bathing in cold water for short periods at a time may have significant health benefits.
- If you want to learn more from others, "pull the string" and ask continually deepening probing questions.
- Micro dosing drugs *may* be a great way to learn more and be more creative and able to share your ideas.
- Your success is directly proportional to the number of the uncomfortable conversations you're willing to have.

Thoughts

- You are a combination of the people who you surround yourself with.
- You are a collection of the thoughts you have most during the day,
- New experiences are a way to “extend” life because new experiences feel slower because it’s not the same experience.

Tips

- People respond well with reciprocity (sometimes unequally so).
- Anger is a useful tool. It lets us learn. Harness it without succumbing to it.

Random

- Righty tighty; lefty loosey (how to remember how to tighten and loosen things)

MAKING CHANGES

There is a model for enacting changes called ADKAR. The model says you need the following to make changes: Awareness 2. Desire 3. Knowledge 4. Ability 5. Reinforcement

SELF-COMPASSION

When you might be being too harsh on yourself, imagine if the person with those issues is one of your friends. Talk to yourself like you’d treat that friend.

TOOLS

- Use the alphabet. The alphabet is a great tool when you need to cycle through words or physical actions. You can cycle through the alphabet to try to remember a name. You can also use the motions of the alphabet to use “random” movements. For example, I’ve

used the alphabet to move my ankles each morning to get some flexibility prior to starting my day.

MENTAL TIP:

- When stressed, consider visualizing your “happy place”. What does it look like? How can you get there even with your eyes open? What does it look like? Smell like?

MIND GAME:

- The age game. Pick a random age. What do you want to be like at that age? What would it be like if you died at this age? Play this game occasionally to think about what life might be like at that age.

PRODUCTIVITY TIPS

- If it can be done in a minute or less, just do it immediately
- Use the Pomodoro Technique: do focused work during 25-minute intervals, and then take a five-minute break.
- Try to eliminate distractions.
- Each day set an intention to accomplish between 1-3 tasks that you need to do for the day. No more.
- Try to reduce the number of meetings you schedule and have.
- Parkinson’s Law - people adjust their efforts to always finish on time. So whether you set a task for a week or four weeks-that’s when it’s most likely going to be finished. And you likely won’t receive a better outcome in 4 weeks than 1.
- If you want to be more likely to finish something, tell someone and ask them to be an accountability partner for you to make sure you finish.

Recommended reading: *Getting Things Done*

INTERESTING DEFINITIONS

Sometimes just knowing the definition of a thing can help you avoid worse outcomes. Here are some useful definitions.

Anchors are used all the time to adjust what you use as a reference point. Movie theater popcorn for example sells a small popcorn for \$6, a medium for \$7, and a large for \$10. Here, the movie theater may want you to see the medium as a good option, even if the small is a bad price. The first person to set a number often starts with that number as a baseline that must be argued away from the other participants in a discussion. This is why a common sales tactic is to compare products to those that cost much more: this boat ride is only \$1,000 when it would cost \$100,000,000 to own the boat. Since \$1,000 seems so much smaller, it may seem like a fair price for the ride.

Placebo effect - the human mind has an incredible ability to affect the body. Believing that something will have an effect is a well-known method to cause people to believe that the effect has happened.

Compound effect - things tend to build on each other and can have drastic effects when repeated over time. Over 10 years, a \$100,000 deposit receiving 5% interest earns \$64,700 not \$50,000 due to compound interest. Similarly, eating an additional cookie every day can have a negative compound effect with the long-term negative impacts due to added calories, sugar, loss of productivity, and other detrimental effects.

Pareto principle - in many situations, a significant (80%) portion of outcomes come from a small amount (20%) of sources. This is useful to know because it may help you shift your focus on the 5% of customers that make up 90% of your business or get rid of the 20% of people that cause you 80% of your problems once you recognize this principle is in play.

“OLD WIVES” SAYINGS

A great way to pass down history or knowledge is through stories and memorable lines. They are often passed along with the phrases “people

say” or “they say” with little or no evidence to support them. However, many of these sayings were created through superstitions and have been proven to be factually inaccurate even if they “sound” true.

Here are some of the sayings that I’ve found to be helpful with the caveats:

- “A stitch in time saves nine.” Repair things earlier rather than waiting for it to be completely broken.
- “The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.” It always *looks* greener on the other side of the fence, but that’s rarely true. Grass greener where you water it.
- “Never talk about a bad dream before breakfast or it will come true.” Talking about dreams for me does seem to make me remember them more during the day. If you don’t want to remember it, don’t talk about it and you’ll probably forget it.

TRIVIAL TIPS

BATTERY CHARGING

For things that need to be charged daily (like cell phones) charge them to 80% (true for most batteries today that are made of lithium-ion). Charging them to 100% will reduce battery capacity faster.

TIP FOR NOT SPEAKING TOO MUCH IN A CONVERSATION

A very helpful tip for me, since I tend to speak too much in a conversation, is to have 4 small items nearby when having a conversation - especially while on a call. I move the pieces from right to left in order to keep track physically of how much I am talking during a call. If I begin to realize that the conversation has been one sided, I will try to engage the other person/people and wait before speaking more.

DO MORE WITH LESS

Sometimes choices limit me. This is why I only have one type of sock and underwear. I believe that most people have decision fatigue-they can only make so many executive decisions in a day. This is why I believe that by imposing limitations, you can save decisions for what matters. Therefore, I like things like app blockers and limiting my choices to free up time and decisions for the things that matter.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

- How much of your energy is spent on things you can't control?

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- Can you shift your focus towards acceptance and action?"

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LAST THOUGHTS

I hope I've helped you better find your path or gave you some practical advice that you find useful. I hope you have a life full of fun, learning, and are able to reflect on the experience and challenges you have along the way. I hope you build meaningful relationships, and give and share what you've learned to help others along with their paths.

Above all, I hope you live a life that is true to yourself and leaves the world a little better than you found it.

APPENDIX A: WEAR SUNSCREEN

Wear Sunscreen by Baz Lurhman is a song that I heard in my childhood that significantly affected my feelings towards providing and taking advice. Unfortunately, not a lot of this song is actionable, but I've included it as an appendix.

LYRICS:

Ladies and gentlemen of the class of '99

Wear sunscreen

If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it

A long-term benefits of sunscreen have been proved by scientists ^[1]

Whereas the rest of my advice has no basis more reliable

Than my own meandering experience, I will dispense this advice now

Enjoy the power and beauty of your youth, oh, never mind

You will not understand the power and beauty of your youth

Until they've faded, but trust me, in 20 years, you'll look back

At photos of yourself and recall in a way you can't grasp now

How much possibility lay before you and how fabulous you really looked ^[2]

You are not as fat as you imagine
Don't worry about the future
Or worry, but know that worrying
Is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing Bubble gum
The real troubles in your life
Are apt to be things that never crossed your worried mind
The kind that blindsides you at 4 p.m. on some idle Tuesday
Do one thing every day that scares you
Saying, don't be reckless with other people's hearts
Don't put up with people who are reckless with yours
Floss ^[3]
Don't waste your time on jealousy
Sometimes you're ahead, sometimes you're behind
The race is long and in the end, it's only with yourself
Remember compliments you receive, forget the insults
If you succeed in doing this, tell me how
Keep your old love letters, throw away your old bank statements
Stretch
Don't feel guilty if you don't know what you want to do with your life
The most interesting people I know
Didn't know at 22 what they wanted to do with their lives
Some of the most interesting 40-year-olds I know still don't
Get plenty of calcium ^[4]

Be kind to your knees
You'll miss them when they're gone
Maybe you'll marry, maybe you won't
Maybe you'll have children, maybe you won't
Maybe you'll divorce at 40, maybe you'll dance the 'Funky Chicken'
On your 75th wedding anniversary
Whatever you do, don't congratulate yourself too much
Or berate yourself either
Your choices are half chance, so are everybody else's
Enjoy your body, use it every way you can
Don't be afraid of it or what other people think of it
It's the greatest instrument you'll ever own
Dance, even if you have nowhere to do it but your own living room
Read the directions even if you don't follow them
Do not read beauty magazines, they will only make you feel ugly
Get to know your parents, you never know when they'll be gone for good
Be nice to your siblings, they're your best link to your past
And the people most likely to stick with you in the future
Understand that friends come and go
But a precious few, who should hold on
Work hard to bridge the gaps in geography and lifestyle
For as the older you get
The more you need the people you knew when you were young

Live in New York City once but leave before it makes you hard ^[5]

Live in northern California once but leave before it makes you soft ^[6]

Travel

Accept certain inalienable truths

Prices will rise, politicians will philander, you too, will get old

And when you do, you'll fantasize that when you were young

Prices were reasonable, politicians were noble

And children respected their elders

Respect your elders

Don't expect anyone else to support you

Maybe you have a trust fund, maybe you'll have a wealthy spouse

But you never know when either one might run out

Don't mess too much with your hair

Or by the time you're 40 it will look 85 ^[7]

Be careful whose advice you buy but be patient with those who supply it

Advice is a form of nostalgia, dispensing it is a way of fishing the past

From the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts

And recycling it for more than it's worth

But trust me on the sunscreen

1. Science is always evolving, and beware there are some unjustified rumors claiming sunscreen is linked with more skin cancer, but these claims seem to stem from issues with people who use more sunscreen are also more likely to be in the sun longer. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-science-of-sunscreen>

2. True
3. As with a lot of this song, there is some good evidence that flossing is extremely beneficial to many aspects of your health and well-being. There are some reasons to doubt the veracity of the science, but I believe in flossing because I've seen my own results. <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2016/11/don-t-toss-floss> <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/tossing-flossing-2016081710196>
4. Adding calcium intentionally especially via non-food supplements to your diet is not recommended by most health professionals for most people. <https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/healthy-living/nutrition/get-enough-calcium> <https://nutritionfacts.org/topics/calcium/>
5. I did it in no small consideration of this song
6. Ditto with the above (but southern California)
7. Hair loss is often due to other factors outside your control. And if you really care about your hair, there's several options now available to help with your physical appearance. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hair-loss/symptoms-causes/syc-20372926>

APPENDIX B:

MY BEST SELF

Who am I? I am happy, healthy, continually learning, loving, make wise financial decisions, and regularly add fun into my life. I make others' lives more enjoyable.

Why? I want to have a long health span, experience life, touch others, and make a positive impact.

How? I nourish my body with healthy meals and drinks. I eat plants and whole, real foods. I de-stress in healthy ways such as meditation, recreation, and social outings. I limit media consumption to positive, uplifting, and educational ones.

What else? I manage my work and life and am always aware that I work to live, but love my work. I am an amateur athlete, runner, and swimmer. I am gentle with myself. I recognize opportunities to better myself and take them. I respect others and listen to them. I help others where I can. I live in the moment. I meditate. I stretch. I try new foods and recipes. I run. I monitor my weight and health. I weigh myself and feel comfortable in my clothes. I dress well. I constantly strive to better myself. I love myself for who I am.

APPENDIX C: OTHER STUFF THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL

PRESUPPOSITIONS

Everyone has presuppositions (things they believe at the beginning). At a minimum, you have logical absolutes that you must believe to be a rational person.

Some people have additional presuppositions they believe that are core to them as a person. They may not even know they carry these presuppositions. Common presuppositions include religions and morality. Many of the things you believe strongly were learned as a child and can be difficult or impossible to recognize or adapt.

THE ADAM'S APPROACH

An alternative, but similarly straightforward approach for financial investing was offered by Scott Adams, the author of the comic Dilbert. His advice he once shared on his blog offered the following suggestions:

1. Make a will.
2. Pay off your credit cards.

3. Get term life insurance if you have a family to support.
4. Fund your 401k to the maximum.
5. Fund your IRA to the maximum.
6. Buy a house if you want to live in a house and can afford it.
7. Put six months worth of expenses in a money-market account.
8. Take whatever money is left over and invest 70% in a stock index fund and 30% in a bond fund through any discount broker and never touch it until retirement.
9. If any of this confuses you, or you have something special going on (retirement, college planning, tax issues), hire a fee-based financial planner, not one who charges a percentage of your portfolio.

SCHWAZENEGGER'S 6 TOOLS FOR LIFE

I think autobiographies of people who have achieved great things can be very insightful. Arnold Schwarzenegger even wrote a condensed version of his suggestions for the best life possible. They have been rephrased several times, but they are generally said as something to the effect of:

1. Trust yourself
2. Break some rules (not the law mostly, but the rules)
3. Don't be afraid to fail
4. Ignore the naysayers
5. Work like hell
6. Give something back

Videos of Arnold saying variations of these tools or rules can be found on Youtube and I find him saying them to be quite motivating.

