

"This book made me uncomfortable. Well done!"

SETH GODIN, author of *Poke the Box*

STOP TALKING

START DOING

A
KICK
IN THE
PANTS
IN SIX
PARTS

SHÁA WASMUND
RICHARD NEWTON



This was supposed to be about something else. It's not what we expected it to be. But once we started, it took on a life of its own. And now it's this. And as a result, it's hopefully better than the original idea.

Such is life. Such happy things only happen if you **get started** on something. There's something to say about this on page 117.

Originally, the book was mainly intended for people teetering on the brink of setting up their first business and in need of a friendly shove in the right direction. But it changed.

The impetus needed to start a business is the same as anyone teetering on the brink of **anything**. So for you – this is your kick in the pants.

If you want to do something but secretly fear you're never going to do it, whatever that might be, then this might help you:

- Go to the Amazon (not just the website, you've probably already been there).
- Learn a new skill.
- Run a marathon.
- Go back to school.
- Write a book.
- Ditch your partner.
- Find a partner.
- Sell a company.
- Create art.
- Learn to play polo.
- Seek the promotion you want.
- ... OR set up your own business.

As a result, it's not written just for the entrepreneurial businessperson but for the entrepreneurial in spirit. The lessons, the advice, the nagging, the cartoons, the jokes, the exaggerations, and the things that possibly never really happened... All these things apply to anyone trying to cross that bridge between their dreams and their reality.

Talking of the things-that-probably-never-really-happened ...

A Tibetan Lama was speaking to a group of monks and to make a point, pulled out a large jar, set it on the table in front of him, produced a few fist-sized rocks, and placed them, one by one, into the jar.

When no more rocks would fit inside, he asked: "Is this jar full?"

Everyone said: "Yes." He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel, dumped some in and shook the jar, the gravel worked between the rocks.

Again, he asked: "Is this jar full?" The monks were catching on.

"Probably not," one answered.

"Good!" he replied and reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He dumped the sand into the jar until it filled all the crevices. Once more he asked: "Is this jar full?"

"No!" the monks shouted. "Good!" he said and grabbed a pitcher of water and poured it until the jar was filled to the brim.

Then he asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One young monk responded, "The point is, no matter how full your day, you can always fit some more things in."

"No," the speaker replied, "the point is that if you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

This book is all about making sure you get the things done that really matter.

STOP TALKING, START DOING

A Kick in the Pants in Six Parts

10th Anniversary Edition

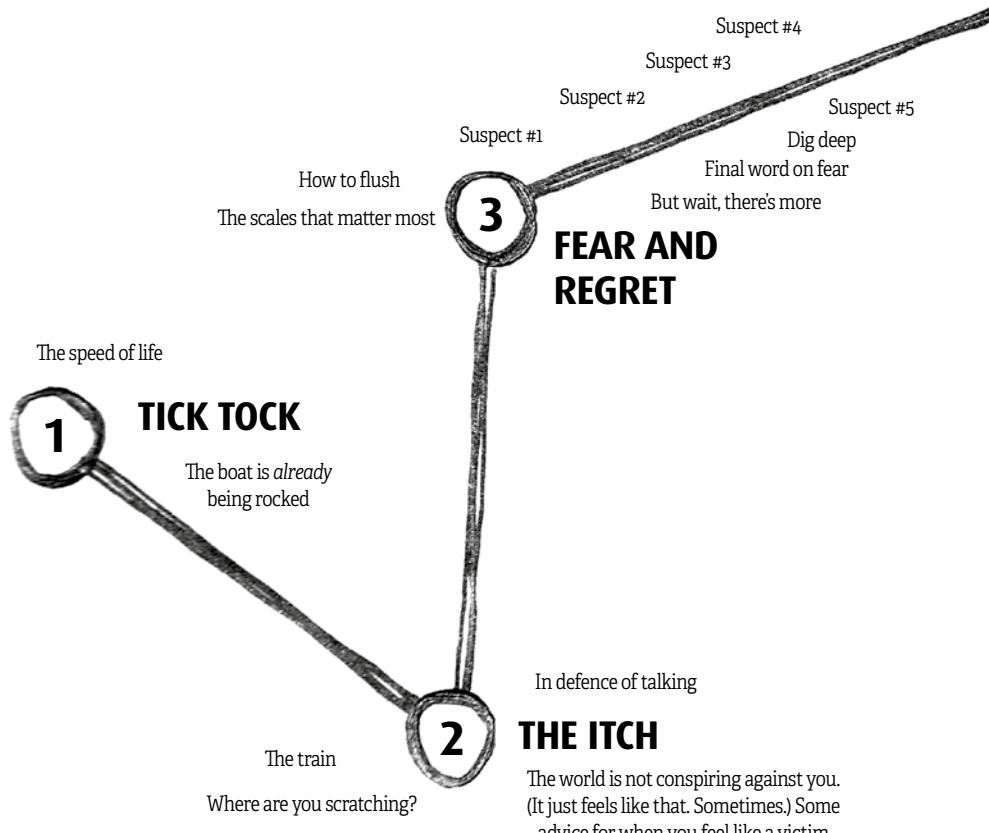
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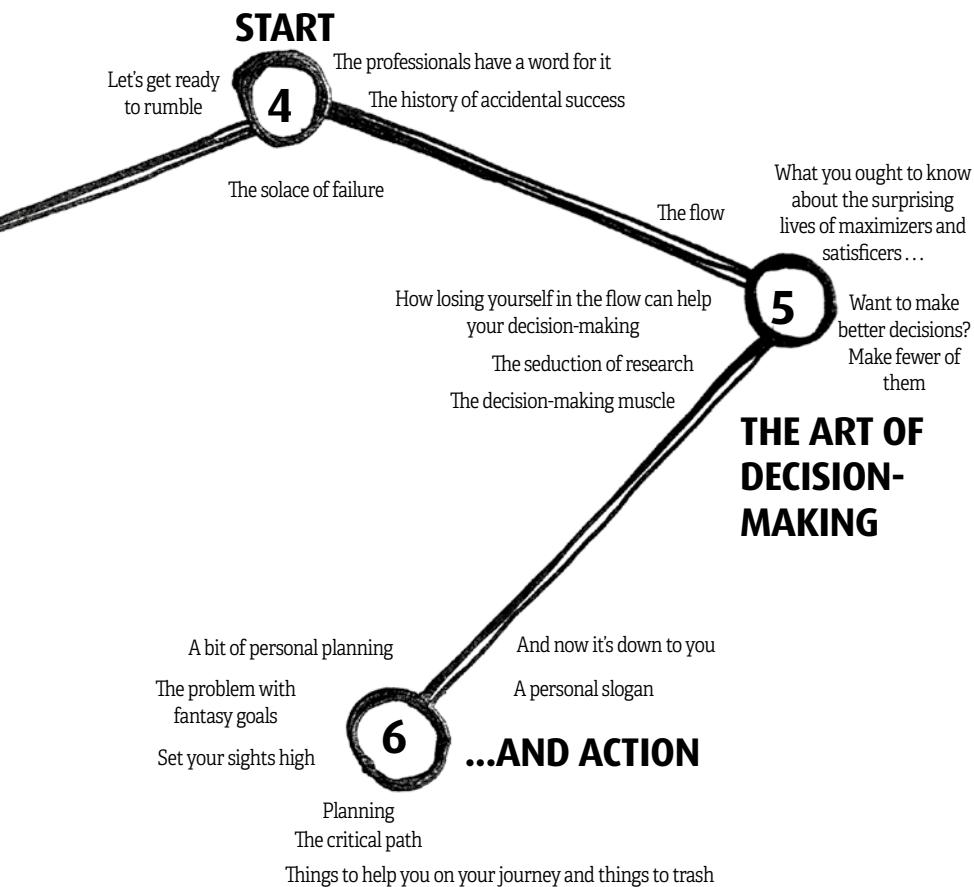
“Viva gumption!”



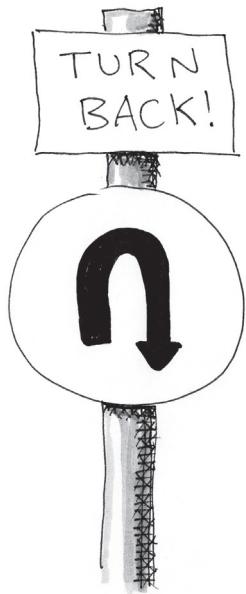
How to Get From: Talking...



Your internal nagging friend



...to Doing



What's Your Favourite Way To Procrastinate?

Take this quiz and find out ...

We all know we procrastinate, but one of the ways that we can help ourselves to *Stop Talking and Start Doing* is to understand the things we typically do to get in our own way.

My personal favourites are; binge watching Netflix series 'whilst doing admin' and pretending that I am being very efficient in multitasking! Another sign is endlessly scrolling through social media, when I have a list of genuinely important things to do but for some reason watching someone turn an IKEA cupboard into something worthy of Soho House seems a far more useful way to spend my time ... and of course there's always redesigning my office, which might be caused by my obsession with DIY IG accounts!

This little quiz will help you pinpoint those triggers so you can be more conscious of them in the future ... it will take you less than 3 minutes, be a lot of fun and a genuinely useful reminder of the key culprits that steal your time.

Pop on over to shaa.com/stoptalkingstartdoingquiz and take the test ... and make sure to come and tag me on social media with your results - I wonder how many we share in common!

Dr Seuss:

“Oh, the places you’ll go!”

PART 1



TICK TOCK

“Unfortunately, the clock is ticking, the hours are going by. The past increases, the future recedes. Possibilities decreasing, regrets mounting.”

— Haruki Murakami, *Dance Dance Dance*

“The past is always tense, the future perfect.”

— Zadie Smith

Life has a sting in the tail.



It's shorter than we expect.

And it races by while we're working out what's really important and what actually isn't.

As time roars past our ears we drift, deliberate, doubt, and take ourselves too seriously. Yet all the while we talk about what we would, could, and should do to make it better.

And then it's gone. So let's walk the talk.

Because there's never been a better time, or a more urgent time, to start doing the things you want to do.

After all, if not now, then when?

The speed of life

This book is about starting.

It's about shifting from a static state to an active one – a state where things happen because you *do something*. You may not always get it right, but you're gonna give it a damn good go!

It's about changing gears, moving direction, transforming what you do with your day, your week, your year, and taking control.

It's about deliberately putting one foot in front of the other and stepping forward with purpose instead of being carried along by the crowd.

There's never been a better time to start something. We are surrounded by opportunity at every turn; thanks to technology and new approaches to life and work, anything is possible.

But the downside to this world of opportunity is it can seduce us into being passive and drifting through life.

We find ourselves lost online, scrolling through videos, commenting on photos, updating statuses, Googling, and shopping. It's not that these things aren't fun; sometimes they're even worthwhile. But they trick you into feeling like you're "doing" – in large part thanks to the power of billions of dollars of marketing – yet leave you with a feeling that there's got to be more to life.

My motto:

“Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone.”

Pablo Picasso

I bet you've got an itch for something.

Life is short.

If you've got something you want to do ...
now is a good time to start.

Here are four reasons why ...



The **FIRST**
reason to start
something now . . .

YOU CAN

The doors are wide open.

You can take some initiative, bring your ideas to life, and make your dreams come true in ways past generations could not have imagined. In our hyperconnected world, there's nothing stopping you.

1

Whatever you want
to

know is accessible – instantly.

Want to: collect fountain pens from around the world, learn how to collect truffles, find someone to build a mobile phone app for you in another continent, retrain for a new profession, or research how to bicycle across the world?

No problem. It's all at your fingertips.

2

You're just a click away
from expert help.

It has never been easier to connect with people who can help you. The soaring development of the internet has demolished barriers between you and the expertise you need. It empowers you to ask friends of friends (and friends of friends of friends) if they can offer advice, make introductions, and share experiences. Remember, we're all only six connections away from Kevin Bacon.

You can take an online course to learn everything from the ukulele to creating your own online course.

3

Find your people.

Whatever you want to start doing – working on a business or a social project, creating a piece of art, setting up a local artisan coffee shop – there are people all over the world who share your passion. Want to find people to trade antique fountain pens with? There are thousands of them. You don't need to be Sherlock Holmes to find these people either. In fact, you can pretty much do it all from your phone. You can support each other, learn from each other, do business with each other. And one day, you might even meet each other in real life.

4

You don't need to be rich to start something great.

The cost of setting up many businesses, social endeavours, and other projects has fallen off a cliff. Most digital start-ups don't even need an office. You can work from shared spaces, cafes, or home! This has, for example, had an impact on the venture capital world. The power used to be in the hands of the VCs because you needed money to set up a business and they would exact a heavy price for that cash. Now that it doesn't cost so much to start up, the power is with people who have the ideas and the "gumption" to make them happen.

Got the gumption? Then let's get going!

5

You're already at the centre of
the universe.

And if in fact you are starting a business or collecting fountain pens from around the world, the global markets are wide open for business. Right from your own front room. The fat is in the frying pan. Get cooking.





The **SECOND**
reason to start
something now . . .

**Unconventional is
Conventional**

The boat is being rocked.

The world looked pretty different ten years ago when the first edition of this book came out. At work, people had started to push against the boundaries of convention. Offices introduced a hotdesk or two, and our calendars began filling up with webinars. We were staying in touch with people on Facebook and retweeting celebrities.

Fast-forward to 2021, and all that seems archaic. Partly thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, many of us work from home, or a cafe, or wherever we can; we can set up businesses in a matter of hours; we connect with thousands of people around the world with videos, photos, audio, and live streaming.

The conventions of society really are vanishing. Now you get to design your future.



1. Sixty years ago a man wouldn't go to work without a hat on; ten years ago we could wear jeans to the office on dress-down Fridays. Now you can choose a beach background for your Zoom call while you're in your pyjamas. Who even knows if the colleague on your screen is wearing trousers ... and the point is, who cares?!

Society cares less about conformity than it used to, making it easier to swim against the current – easier to do something different, to challenge convention. If you want to give up your job and travel round the world, your friends and family might raise an eyebrow. Or they might just tell you how they always wanted to do the same thing themselves.

2. The concept of a job for life is long gone. The lines that used to confine a career from start to finish, from apprenticeship to grave, aren't imposed by anyone but you. It's not unusual to hold down three part-time jobs at once or to shift jobs every couple of years. In response to the absence of job security, we have had to become more agile in our approach to work. Self-employment is soaring. Many of us, myself included, have "portfolio" careers out of choice. In fact, I think our careers should be like a good book; when you come to the end of a great chapter, start a new one!

3. Since life expectancy is increasing, you are probably going to live a long time. As I write this, my wonderful, indomitable, 97-year-old Nan just came back from a holiday in Lanzarote! So, if you're going to be around a long time, you might as well do something you enjoy for as much of that time as possible.

Jump in and let's make some waves!

The boat is *already* being rocked.

Some examples of how lifestyle, work, society, and leisure are changing.

The most entrepreneurial country in the West is built on failure

Of US companies, 10% go bust every year.

(Source: *economist* and writer, Paul Omerod)

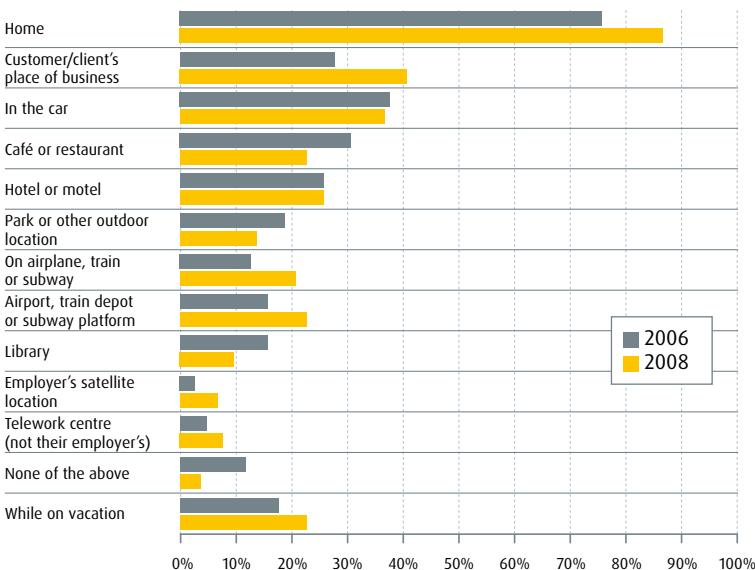
People are managing themselves and themselves alone

Eighteen million people work in non-employer businesses. Meaning they have no boss and they have no staff underneath them.

They just get up and do.

(Source: US Census Bureau)

Locations where work was conducted during the past month



(Source: *Telework Trendlines 2009* by World at Work using data collected by the Dierenger Research Group)

People are escaping the cubicle on a daily basis – way before we started using the word *pandemic* outside of zombie films.

Before the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, 17% of U.S. employees worked from home 5 days or more per week; a share that increased to 44% during the pandemic.
(Source: "Remote work frequency before and after Covid-19 in the United States 2020" by Justina Alexandra Sava, 16 February 2022, www.statista.com)

Upwork also estimates that 22% of the US workforce (36.2 million Americans) will work remotely by 2025.

(Source: "STATISTICS ON REMOTE WORKERS THAT WILL SURPRISE YOU (2022)", 16 January 2022, www.apollotechnical.com)

People are taking career breaks to rediscover life and themselves.

Over 20% of companies offer a sabbatical programme that allows employees to take up to three-month periods of time off to pursue personal interests.

(Source: "Boomers Taking More 'Life Sabbaticals'" by Jane Ganahl, 10 May 2011, www.secondeact.com)

Lots of people share the same starting line . . . and it's not with a silver spoon in their mouth.

It's estimated that one in every eight workers in the United States has at some point been employed by McDonald's.

(Source: New York Times)

And being different is becoming the new norm.

Measured in 2011, 34% of the population of Greater London in 2011 was born outside the UK. That's up from 27% in 2001.

(Source: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_London)

Small businesses are everywhere

In the UK, 2% of enterprises have more than 50 staff; 88% have fewer than 10 staff.
A big shout-out to the small businesses!

(Source: Office of National Statistics)

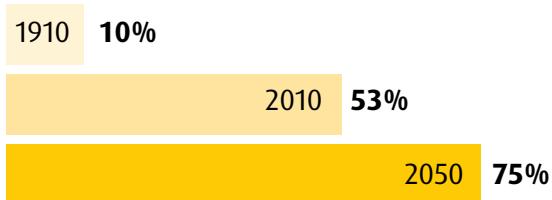
You will live longer
So do something you enjoy.

	Male	Female
1930	58.1	61.6
1940	60.8	65.2
1950	65.6	71.1
1960	66.6	73.1
1970	67.1	74.7
1980	70.0	77.4
1990	71.8	78.8
2000	74.3	79.7
2007	75.4	80.4

Life expectancy in the United States

(Source: National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 54(19), 28 June 2006. www.cdc.gov/nchs)

The dominant habitat of the human has historically been the city, but that is all changing. Even more so, post-pandemic.



(Source: London School of Economics and Deutsche Bank's Alfred Heithausen Society: *The Endless City*)

More and more people want to escape their concrete habitat and farm their own food . . . and they're willing to wait to do it. If someone in Camden, London, had applied for an allotment when this book was first published a decade ago, they might have just started digging. But that's all changed.

(The *Guardian*; August 2020)

Allotments are more popular than ever – during the pandemic, applications shot up by as much as 300% in some areas.

The average time on a waiting list for an allotment in Britain: 3 years.

In parts of London the wait is 10 years.

Remember that Camden person starting to dig? Well, according to one survey, the London Borough of Camden now has a waiting list of 40 years.

(Source: Survey by LV Insurance 2009 quoted in "Allotment waiting lists: a barometer of our times," David Derbyshire, 15 February 2011. <http://allotmentblog.dailymail.co.uk>)

You've no excuse not to find your people!

A decade ago, the online network of social groups on MeetUp was taking the world by storm, making it easy for people to connect online and offline with others who share the same interests. Despite the drop in face-to-face meetings, the platform is still going strong:

193 countries and 10 000 cities worldwide

52 million+ members

300 000+ MeetUp groups

100 000+ MeetUp events per week

(Source: MeetUp)

Then the Covid-19 pandemic happened, and we found ourselves stuck online . . . on Zoom. The online meeting software provider Zoom was founded in 2011, but it didn't hit the bigtime until 2020. By the middle of the pandemic, Zoom was hosting the equivalent of 3.3 **trillion** minutes of meetings a year. Stretched out one after the other, that would make a meeting of about 6 million years.

You're not who you were

You might have heard the factoid that the body renews its cells every seven to ten years. That's not entirely true, but the idea is interesting. We are definitely constantly changing, not just our physical bodies, but our states of mind, too.

Studies have shown how much the people around us influence our decisions and even our personalities.

Are you being the real you or the person you think other people want you to be?

In the age of social media influencers, some people are more concerned with what other people think about them than they are about what they want to think about themselves.

This can really come into play when you want to make a change in your life: you might be concerned about how it will make someone else feel. In the end, this makes you play small, to keep you and other people feeling comfortable.

But if you start playing to your strengths, and really grow into yourself, you'll start to see what you are really capable of.

And anything is possible. If you're prepared to make a change.

Figure out what's holding you back and commit to moving forwards.



The **THIRD**
reason to start
something now . . .

**The Feeling of
Fulfilment**

Is this all there is?

Indeed. Technology has brought the world to our fingertips and helped knock down the prison walls of convention but, at the same time, it also threatens to suck the meaning out of life. The antidote is to take the initiative and start something yourself; something that has *purpose*.

Yeah, yeah, you've heard it before: *find your purpose*. But there's a reason you've heard it: this is what fills that feeling of emptiness.

What's making you feel empty in the first place?

1. **The "job."** The meaningless grind of the factory production line has now found its way into the world of the general worker. "Knowledge worker" jobs have been fragmented just like assembly line work and have had the satisfaction sucked out in the process. Rules and manuals have replaced autonomy and reserve initiative and decision-making for the computer and the head office. You become emotionally disconnected from your job . . . You get an itch.
2. **Long days.** The working day gets longer and longer. Patriarchal society has taught us all to sleep less and work more, but the macho pride in the hours you work, in the end, means what? It means you have less free time. So what are you going to DO with it? What's the point being cash-rich and bereft of time?
3. **The banks and the financial crisis.** The fruits of their labour, for an awful lot of people, have been the ability to maximize their debt and buy the best house they could afford. But now that there are a huge number of people who only need to commute into the office two days a week, the housing landscape has changed. They don't need to live in big expensive houses in the city. So, where's my job satisfaction if it isn't in the mortgage? Now the power of the banks is being toppled by things like the blockchain and cryptocurrency. You can take back control. What would you rather be doing with your free time? With your money? How are you going to change things? It's up to you.

If you know your purpose, you can avoid these traps.

Purpose overrides everything. It's your North Star, your guiding light. It has absolutely nothing to do with leaving billions to charity or solving world hunger, and everything to do with having an outward impact on the world by being who you are and who you always have been.

It essentially stays the same throughout your entire life.

But here's the thing: sometimes it takes a while to see because it plays out in different ways.

When you look back at your life, you'll probably start to see a pattern: that's your purpose. Imagine someone who was a babysitter, then a nursery school assistant, then a teacher, then that someone wrote children's books. The jobs changed but there was a common thread: building confidence in children. That's their purpose.

We all have a purpose. Mine has always been around empowerment. I broke down barriers as the only licensed female boxing manager, and I've championed women's causes and equity across gender and race through my entire career.

Passion is something else.

Passion is inward-looking. It's the stuff you love to do whether you get paid or not.

Passion doesn't have to be connected to your purpose . . .

. . . but if it is, you can make magic.

You can fulfil your purpose by applying one or more of your passions.

I'm passionate about not being bland. Or a watered down version of myself. I'm passionate about Whitstable and Barbados. I'm passionate about conversations that make me think and about not being the smartest person in the room. I'm passionate about equity.

Some of those things line up with my purpose to empower people.

If you can find the spot where your purpose and your passion intersect, that's where you're going to be most in flow. That's what will fill the void. And whatever your version of success is, that's where you'll find it.

What are you waiting for?

Purpose does not equal profit

There's a movement going on; a push back on the profit focus and a shift to make a meaningful impact. Social enterprises are taking on some of the world's biggest challenges, from gender equality to plastic pollution in the oceans, and they're doing it without the pressure to make a huge profit.

The people behind these social enterprises are what author Daniel Pink¹ calls

Purpose Maximizers – they're driven by something other than money.

Personally, I think we can be driven by both.

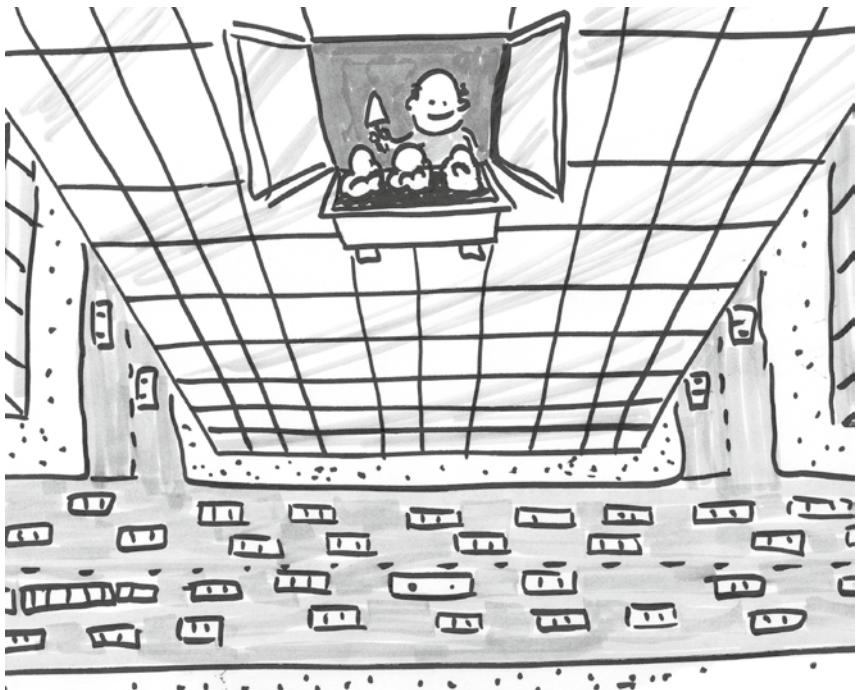
Better World Books – this US-based online bookseller has donated over 26 million books, raised over \$28 million for literacy and libraries, and reused or recycled over 320 million books.

Goodwill – by selling household items and clothing donated by people like you and me, this organization helped 126 000 people train for careers in 2020.

Habitat for Humanity – this housing organization has helped over 29 million people improve their housing conditions.

Toms – every time you buy a pair of Toms shoes, the company donates a pair to a child who doesn't have any. Toms has donated more than 100 million pairs of shoes around the world.

It's not that seeking profit is necessarily bad. Far from it. But this trend shows a growing appreciation of how people can be powerfully motivated and compensated by the intrinsic meaning of what they DO and not just by a financial bonus scheme.



Are you waiting for a plot of land before you can start growing vegetables?

Don't confine your dream to waiting. Grab a few pots and plant tomatoes in your window. Make yourself a mini herb garden. Or maybe even get a beehive for your balcony. There are nearly 8000 beekeepers in London alone.

Go get your hands dirty.



The **FOURTH**
reason to start
something now . . .

That Ticking
Sound . . .

Tick

One thing technology hasn't changed: you won't live forever.

Stoicism has some great insights here. Stoics use the phrase *memento mori* – remember you must die – as a reminder to inject meaning and purpose into their lives.

One of the most famous Stoics, Marcus Aurelius, wrote in his *Meditations*: "You could leave life right now. Let that determine what you do and say and think."

Or, as we might say, "You could get hit by a bus tomorrow. So what are you waiting for?"

That's another thing technology hasn't changed: cliches about life, death, and the passage of time. The thing is, cliches and truisms stick around through the generations for a reason . . .

And the sands of time are running out even as you turn the page.

 **Let's get moving.**

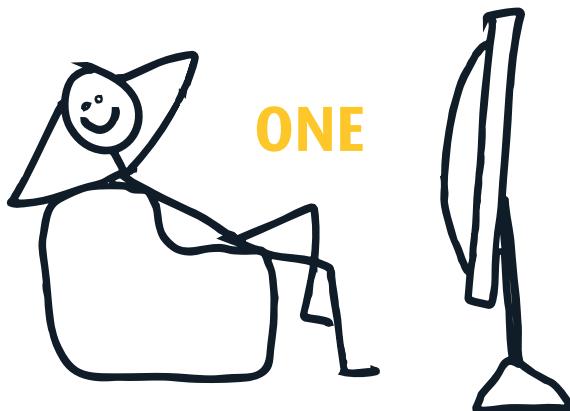
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117 BILLION
LESSONS WHY
NOW IS THE
RIGHT TIME
TO **START**
DOING . . .



117 billion The number of human beings estimated to have died in the whole history of the universe and everything. Ever.²

7.9 billion The total number of human beings alive today at the most populous time in the history of the whole world ever. So far.³



The total number of chances to live your life that you get in the history of the world, the universe, and all the space-time continuums visited in all the episodes of *Star Trek*, including spin-offs ever . . . ONE.

Question: Do you see yourself in this picture?



Inside the ropes, there are two guys fighting for their dreams.

Both dared mighty things and both have great stories to tell.

And outside the ropes there are a thousand faces watching other people fight for their dreams.

The point?

You don't want to be an anonymous face in the crowd of your own life story.

That's a life of regret.

You gotta face your fears and climb inside the ropes.

PART 2



THE ITCH

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

Barack Obama



You've been stung.

And now you've got an itch. A mosquito-bite-sized itch.

Or perhaps an itch the size of Mount Everest.

Maybe you will be forever restless until you write that novel, start that business, get that job, or work in that industry.

The first thing is to recognize the itch.

Recognize it and you're halfway there. Because then at least you know which way to focus your attention.

The train

The first step is to know what you want. What is it you want to start changing?

Is it about introducing something new into your life or is it something bigger?

There is no universal right answer. Just the answer that's right for you.

So, grab a pen and paper, pick up your phone, or uncap a whiteboard marker . . .

Write down the one thing you most want to do; the one thing that would make the biggest difference or bring the greatest joy into your life.

Keep it simple and focused.

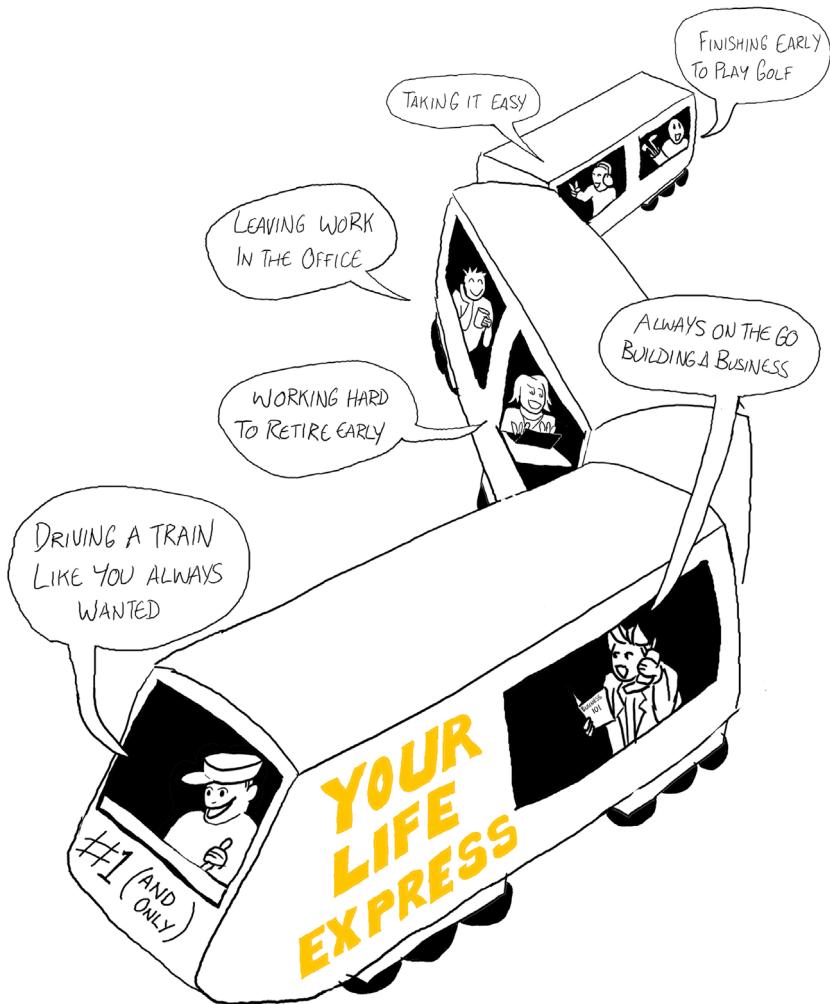


This won't work

This will

Do it now. Let's get this "doing" muscle working!

Where do you want to sit on the train?



All aboard your life express

You can have a happy life choosing a job path that allows you to finish at 5 p.m., every day on the dot, so that you can leave the office and play the odd game of rounders on long summer evenings.

But bear in mind that while such a lifestyle might seem like perfection to you, it might make someone else feel totally claustrophobic.

Their ideal might be found in constant change or, perhaps, manic deadlines (writers have been known to be like that, so it is said).

On a more pragmatic note, it might be that you require a predictable and relatively undemanding job so that you can plough your real energy into another project – a business of your own, or maybe your passion for cooking. Once you recognize the virtues of your job, you might find you've got less to be frustrated about.

And then there's the brightly lit, hard-as-concrete realities of your personal situation.

Most people are limited by obligations to family or economic constraints, others by physical or mental disabilities. These challenges are real, and naturally you have to marry your sky-high ambitions with some smart navigation around such obstacles. Your options can be as wide open as the seven seas, if you want them to be – rejoice and make the most of it!

“I’m not a
businessman,
I’m a
business, man!”

Jay-Z

Where are you scratching?

Observe yourself to locate your itch.

Alas, not everyone has an overwhelming urge to do a particular THING. Sometimes there's just a feeling that there might be more to life.

For those who are blessed with a “calling,” then it’s easy to answer the question: “What’s your passion?”

But for a lot of us it’s more difficult.

The writer Daniel Pink⁴ says this is the wrong question in any event. The right one, he says, is to ask:

“What do you do?”

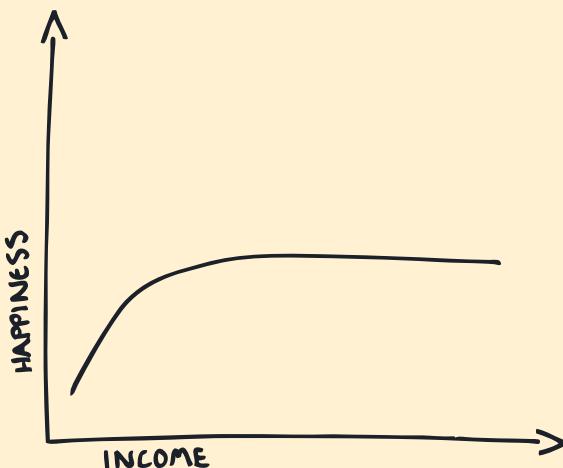
The answer you should be looking for is not necessarily what you do as a career – I’m an accountant/I’m a full-time mother – but rather it’s the other stuff that you do. In other words, Pink urges that you instead monitor yourself to see what it is that you do alongside your headline activity.

By this he means to examine what it is you do in your free time. Where does your mind wander when you have a spare moment? What do you make time for? In your quieter moments at work do you write poetry, doodle, scratch recipes and ingredients on a pad of paper, edit your photographs, check out the latest science on endurance athletes, or something else entirely? Where does your mind flow to? What websites and blogs do you gravitate to? What do you do even if you’re not being paid to do it?

There’s your answer. Or at least one of them.

“Wealth is not about having a lot of money; it’s about having a lot of options.”

Chris Rock



The economist Richard Easterlin argued that once your basic needs are covered, an increase in average income does not necessarily lead to increased levels of average happiness. His analysis showed that although wealth, or income per person, rose steadily between 1947 and 1970, the average happiness reported by individuals did not rise no matter how much more they earned. Some economists have challenged this recently, but most accept that the link between income and happiness is not straightforward.

Why are people driven to DO things other than make money?

Today's world is obsessed with wealth and celebrities, even more than it was when this book was first published. The rise of the influencer has not only changed the way companies sell us their products and services, it has also opened up new career possibilities and made us desire wealth and fame even more.

Do you love vintage fountain pens? You could become an influencer like Stefan Jackiw at Grandmia Pens, who's had millions of views on YouTube. I mean, would you ever have thought?!

Have you figured out how to keep your home functional while dealing with kids, ADHD, and life's stresses? You could help millions of people like Struggle Care influencer KC Davis.

Are you a dermatologist? Believe it or not, there's huge demand for skinfluencers – apparently, we love watching people like Dr Pimple Popper ... well, you can guess the rest.

But you don't need to be an expert – or even an adult. At age 10, Ryan Kaji had already racked up 30.5 million YouTube subscribers and nearly 48 billion views.⁵ In 2020, his videos earned him \$29.5 million.⁶ Add to that video games, a TV series, and his own line of toys, and the kid had built an empire before most kids even had pocket money. As much as I love the opportunities in this new world, I also wonder where we will all end up.

In reality, if you have something to say, and you're happy to say it, you can make a career online. Influencers aren't all about perfect contouring. One of my favourites, True Geordie, started an entire career by being opinionated about football. He branched out into boxing and MMA commentating and has hosted several podcasts. His growing audience is already, at the time of writing this, at nearly 2 million on YouTube, 600 000 on Twitter and 280 000 on Instagram. His interview with Teddy Atlas was, in my opinion, one of the best I've watched anywhere, including the "pros."

The world seems to be telling us to make a career (and loads of money) out of our interest, passion, skill, or opinion.

So why would I tell you that money isn't the answer?

Those who don't have it know it would make their life easier, yet those who are wealthy will proclaim earnestly: "Money by itself doesn't make you happy."

If money doesn't make you happy, what should you be pursuing?

How do you even know whether scratching your itch will make you happy?

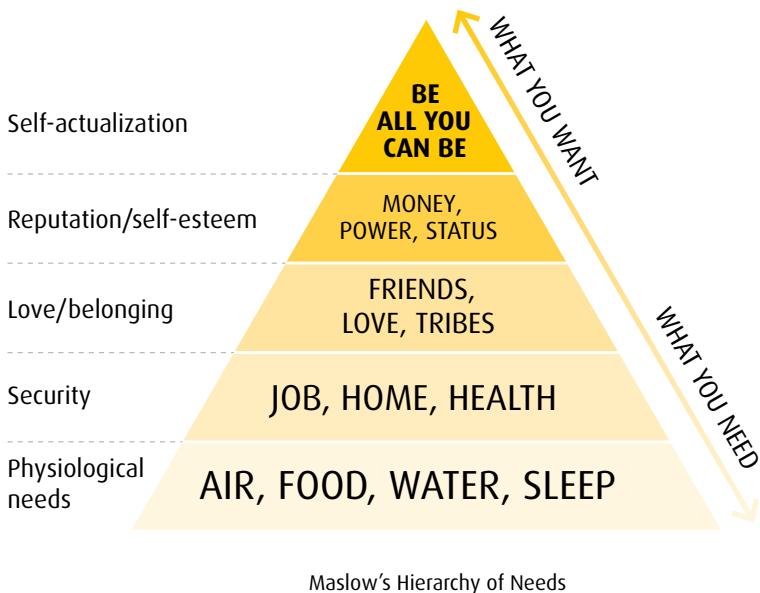
The psychologist Abraham Maslow⁷ argued that pursuing that which you are passionate about and driven by will make you happy because it fulfils your "highest needs."

A human being is driven by five categories of needs, he said: Physical, Security, Social, Esteem, and Self-Actualization.

Money will generally help you satisfy some of these needs but not all of them and most probably not the one that is most personal – Self-Actualization.

Maybe we should add wifi to that pyramid . . .

What you need to HAVE and what you want to DO



Toward the bottom of the pyramid are your basic needs. You need to deal with these first (who cares about your passion to sail the Caribbean if you're too tired to think?).

You need food to eat, you need to be dry and warm. Then you need to be physically safe, and you need security (including financial security).

These two lower-level needs guarantee survival and are a minimum requirement. Then you need a sense of belonging – whether it's to a family, a group of friends, or, for some, a shared passion through some interest group.

With these basic needs satisfied you are then driven, said Maslow, to seek comfort from having a good reputation and being held in high regard not just by others, but importantly, also by yourself.

And indeed, it's true that a fast car might be a way of gaining high esteem in some people's eyes . . . but so might doing charity work or being an expert urban beekeeper.

With all these four needs satisfied you can focus on your itch or what Maslow called "Self-Actualization." This is about realizing your full potential. "What a man can be, he must be," Maslow said.

Your strong need may be to be the best teacher you can be, the owner of your own business, a skilled photographer, or the person who can hold their breath underwater for the longest time.

Needless to say, the act of Actualization is in the act of doing . . . not talking about doing.

In defence of talking . . .

Don't get the wrong idea.

This urgency to turn talking into doing doesn't mean talking is bad. On the contrary, talking is good.

It's one of the best ways to explore your ideas and your options and hold them up to examination to see whether your plans make sense and your reasoning is sound.

The thing about talking is that it's a surefire way to know that something is bugging you. If you talk about something a lot, then the chances are that it's weighing heavily on your mind and that's a sign you need to do something about it. So listen up.

If you're serious about doing something, then it makes every type of sense to talk it through with people.

Talking is one half of one of the most indispensable commodities of life – and that is conversation.

But when you talk about what you're going to do . . . talk with purpose.

People will listen to you if they believe that when you say you're going to do something, you really will walk the talk.

You could call it the Ronseal approach, named after the famous UK advertising campaign for the no-nonsense DIY brand which:
Does exactly what it says on the tin



More inspirationally you might call it the Muhammad Ali approach. He was as spell binding a speaker as he was a mesmerizing force in the ring.

The Ali lesson: if you talk big and deliver big, then you truly are great.

Braggadocio

Brag`ga*do"cio (?), n.

[From Braggadocchio, a boastful character in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*]

1. A braggart; a boaster; a swaggerer.
Dryden.
2. Empty boasting; mere brag; pretension.

Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (G. & C. Merriam Co., 1913, edited by Noah Porter)

... Or as Mr T. from the *A-Team* might say:

"Fool, you're wearing my ears out."

Self-belief and big words – if they're not backed up by action – leave people flat. If you're saying the word "I" in every sentence, then you need to do something ...

... something like pipe down.



Unless . . . Well, here's someone who talked really big and delivered on it:

“I am the greatest. I said that even before I knew I was.”

“If you even dream of beating me, you'd better wake up and apologize.”

“It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen.”

“I figured that if I said it enough, I would convince the world that I really was the greatest.”

“It's not bragging if you can back it up.”

Muhammad Ali

Heavyweight champion of the world

And perhaps more thoughtfully:

“A man who views the world the same at fifty as he did at twenty has wasted thirty years of his life.”

“He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.”

Muhammad Ali

Heavyweight champion of the world

... and listening

(The other half of the indispensable commodity of conversation.)

You can't listen if you're too busy talking. And it's a great way to learn. Don't just listen to the top notes either; listen to the background noise too. Often, it's the small things that go unnoticed that provide the real clues.

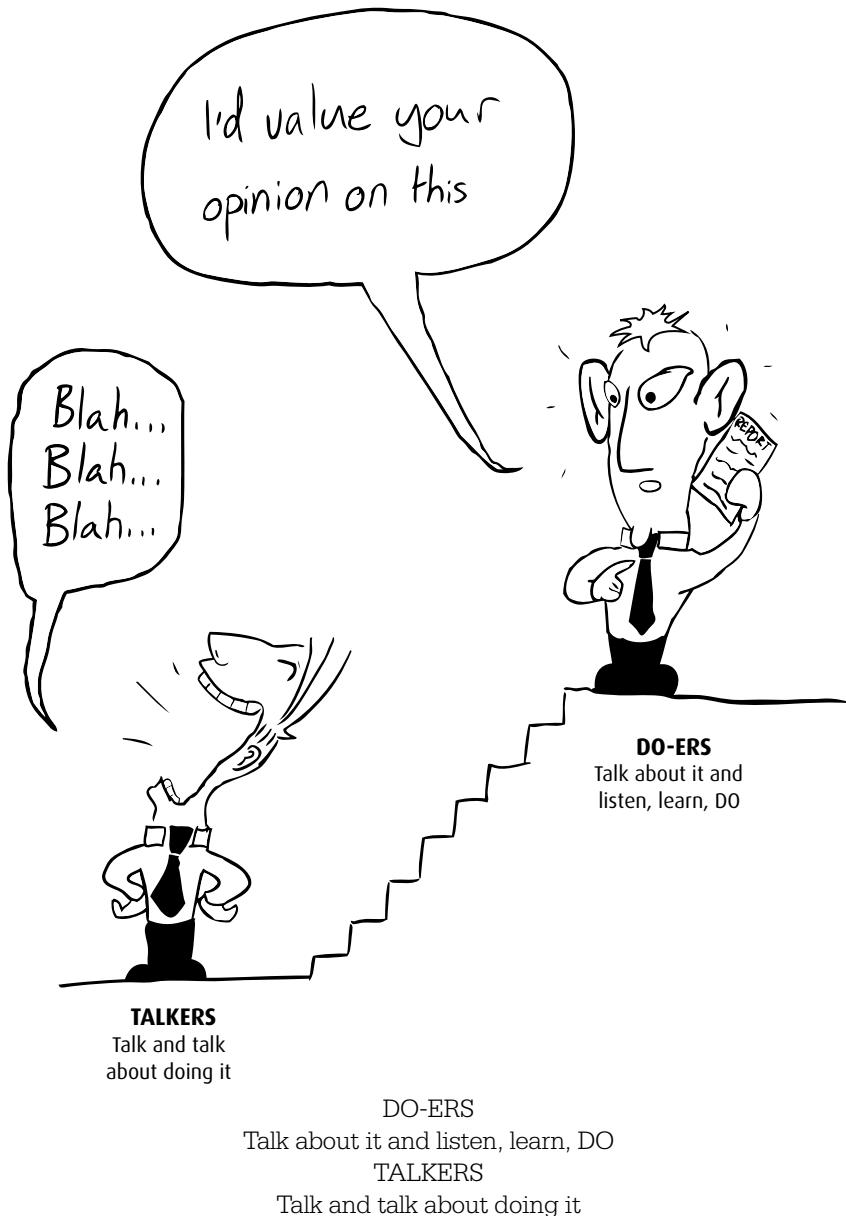
A rhetorical quiz to reinforce the point:

You meet someone smarter than you.

Do you:

- a. shut up and listen, or do you
- b. talk their ears off?

You know the one about the reason
you were given TWO ears and ONE mouth . . .





Two warnings . . .

Applause warning



Examine your reasons carefully. Are you doing it because it's something you want to do or are you seeking it for what it will say about you? Begging applause from a fickle audience is a dangerous way to chase your dreams. You are dependent on other people. This is not Self-Actualization.

Responsibility warning



If this thing you seek will have a significant effect on your life or those of others (particularly your dependents) . . . think carefully about the reasons why you are doing it before taking the plunge.

How doing attracts criticism and complaints for all sorts of understandable but wrong-headed reasons ...

**“To avoid criticism say nothing,
do nothing, be nothing.”**

— *Elbert Hubbard, Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great
Vol. 03: American Statesmen*

We all live interdependent lives.

We take comfort from seeing people in the office every day even if we don't talk to them or maybe don't even like them.

Seeing the usual things happen for the usual reasons means there are no nasty surprises. Routine is comfortable.

In a way, it's a confirmation that we're doing the right thing ... even if part of that routine is to get together around the coffee machine and moan about how awful everything is.

So, if you are about to do something different – by turning your intention into action and stepping into the ring – you will be upsetting the status quo and consequently you may find you suddenly create an army of critics. Or at least a few ...

Um. That's your fault.

YOU'RE BEING SCARY

When you change, your relationship with everything and everyone else changes too.

This really does scare people. Those people who are freaked out that you just turned talk into action will probably redouble their criticism of your ideas; they'll try to talk you out of it; they'll question your motives; and they'll generally do all manner of things to dissuade you. Not everyone. But enough to give you pause for self-doubt.

Do not listen to it.

Don't let it freeze you. Simply understand that when you step out of your comfort zone you make other people feel uncomfortable too.

That's okay. Don't get mad. Live with it. It's a human reaction. You never know – you might have done the same in their shoes.

But don't live your life by other people's limitations (thanks, Mum, for that life-changing lesson).

... and now also embrace the fact that you will also be criticized for the right reasons

Suck it up. I know this is easier said than done, but you gotta build that backbone. If you get constructive criticism about your business plans, your painting style, your dreams of promotion, your travel plan, don't dismiss it.

Weigh up the merits of that criticism; they might have a point. And this sort of criticism can make your plans better.

In other words, you need to distinguish between constructive criticism and that which comes from someone else's fear and discomfort.

But, be careful whom you listen to.

How?

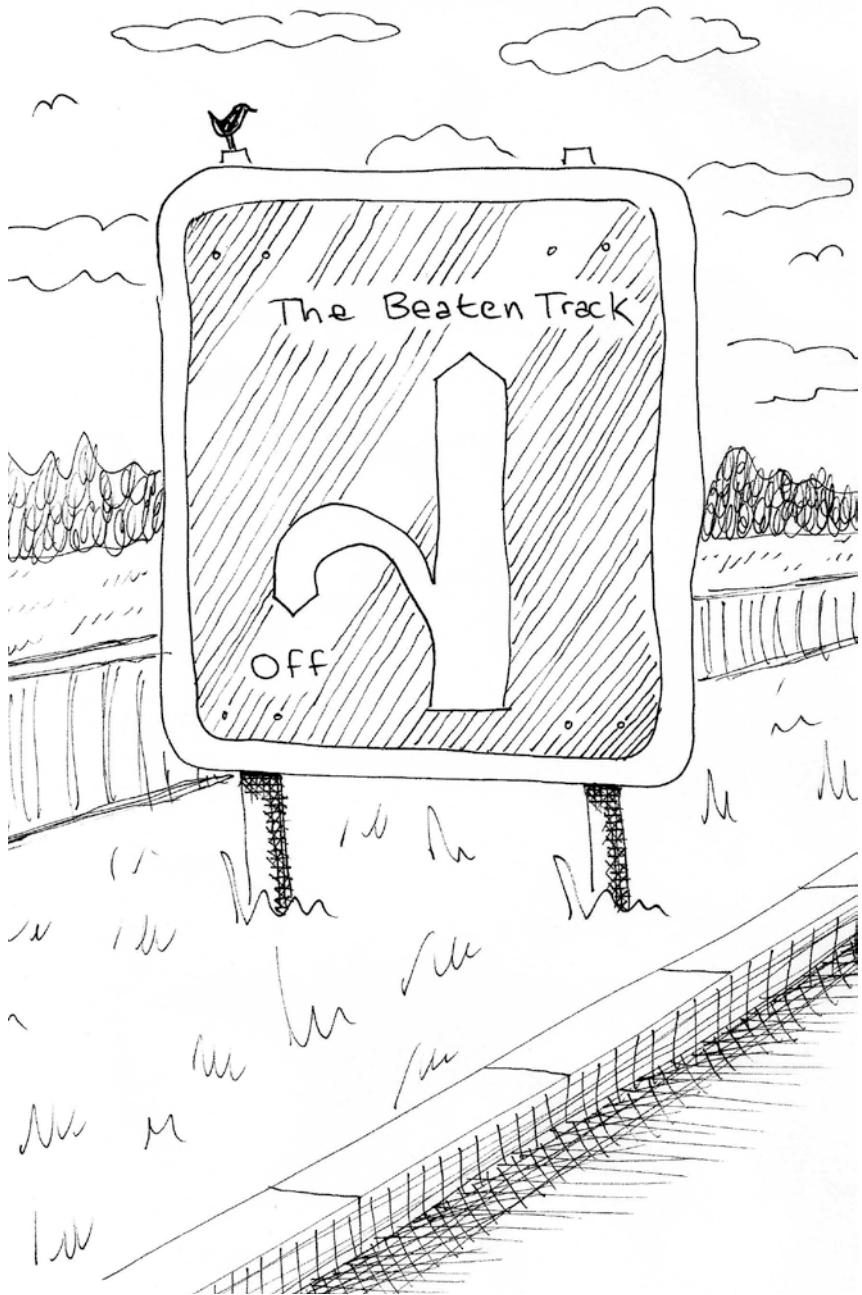
You have to take the emotions out of it. Imagine the criticism was about somebody else, not you. By doing that, it's no longer your situation – you can see the criticism from a distance and decide if you agree with it.

First, look at who is criticizing you. Are they an expert? And do they have your best interests at heart?

If you were in the gym with a personal trainer, about to deadlift a personal best, you'd listen to their criticism of your form. You value their opinion, you know they want you to succeed, and you don't want to get injured.

Compare that to the criticism of someone sitting on the sofa watching you.

I don't take criticism from the person on the sofa, and neither should you.



“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again . . .”

Theodore Roosevelt

The answer is not to avoid criticism. That's not healthy either.

The stronger your inner confidence, the easier this becomes.

We need to work on our self-belief and our self-worth first.

Think of it like building psychological muscle. If your inner confidence is weak, you will feel fragile and bruise more easily. But if you've built that muscle, if you're stronger, you'll be able to take a punch.

Build your inner strength and you'll see you're enough, even if you've messed up.

I've been working with a brilliant graphic designer for years. She's great at what she does. But on one project, she sent me a terrible design. I literally thought it was the worst design I'd ever seen. I told her everything I hated about it, and she asked me for 24 hours. What she came back with was phenomenal.

And you know what? It didn't hurt our relationship. She knew my feedback was about that one specific thing, not about her as a person. I love her. That one design in isolation was rubbish in comparison to her multi-layered brilliance!

This idea extends beyond work to any relationship. Keep the criticism, the disagreement, the argument about what it's about. When someone has constructive criticism, you are not in jeopardy. Your relationship is not on the line.

“If you give up every time you have a fight with someone, you’d never be with anyone longer than . . . oh.”

Monica to Chandler in Friends, S5:E3

“You can’t stay in your corner of the forest waiting for people to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.”

Winnie the Pooh

saddle up

The world is not conspiring against you. (It just feels like that. Sometimes.) Some advice for when you feel like a victim.

Since we're being honest, is feeling like a victim what's stopping you from scratching your itch?

Sometimes we think we can't do it because the world is against us. It isn't. (And when it is, it's kind of against everyone.)

But for some people this sense of victimization can be crippling. I say it's time we call bullshit on the self-beliefs that aren't serving us.

The philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell⁸ developed four rules that could help:

1. “Don’t overestimate your own merits”

Back to constructive criticism for a moment: Do they have a good point? If no one thinks your business plan is going to work, then consider they may be right. Especially, if they've run businesses themselves.

Admittedly, it is painful to accept that your merits are not what you hoped. But recognizing this now – rather than thinking the world is out to get you – means you can move on, rebuild, reframe your objectives, and start again with targets and achievements you can succeed at.

Lesson: if it feels like a dead-end road, sounds like a dead-end road, and looks like a dead-end road . . . it probably is. After you've seen a few signs, let's not waste time getting to the very end of the road before turning around.

2. “Don’t expect others to take as much interest in you as you do yourself”

You can pour your heart and soul into whatever you’re doing, but regardless of how great it is, nobody else will be as invested as you are. Don’t expect too much of other people. Everyone has their own needs. If others won’t bend over backwards to help you, it may be that you are asking too much of them and not that they are being too selfish. The problem might be your own ego. Just a thought . . .

3. “Remember that your motives are not always as altruistic as they seem to yourself”

If you believe your “itch” has a higher moral calling, you might be more likely to feel like the world is out to get you. After all, a mission with a higher altruistic component ought perhaps to command extra special support . . . not indifference or criticism. It might be true that you have greater altruism than your peers.

But maybe you should double-check your motives. It’s okay to have multiple reasons for doing something. If it helps other people, great. If it puts money in your pocket, bonus.

4. “Don’t imagine that most people give enough thought to you to have any special desire to persecute you”

Normal people do not spend their waking hours plotting how to thwart you or anyone else. They’re too busy trying to pay their mortgage and working out why their boiler is making a funny sound. In short, they are too busy doing their lives to worry that much about yours.



Bravo, this is your stop

Maybe you're quite happy to stick at being a big talker about the thing you want to start rather than being the sort of person who actually goes and does it.

That's okay. There's a lot of folk like that about.

There's no denying that it's fun talking about what you would do.

But bear in mind that you might start to wear out the patience of other people.

But if you want to start and don't know how?

You need momentum.

And to get that, you start small.

Want to run a marathon? Start with one mile, then two, then three.

Want to write a book? Start with an idea, then a plan, then a chapter.

Want to lose 20 pounds? Start with one the first week, then one the second week, then one the third week.

First you decide what you want.

Then you create a plan.

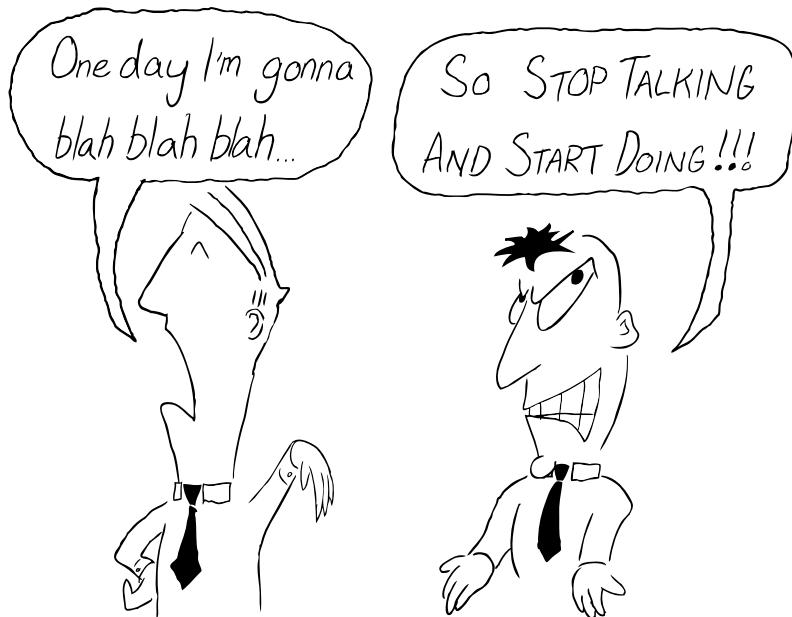
Then you take the first step.

As the saying goes: "Keep it super-simple!"



“Talk doesn’t
cook rice.”

Chinese proverb



Now then

The rest of the book is for those who want to convert hot air into action and demolish all the demons holding you back from starting what you want to do and scratching that itch ...

PART 3



FEAR AND
REGRET

“One of the greatest
regrets in life is being
what others would
want you to be, rather
than being yourself.”

Shannon L. Alder

When it comes to seizing control of your life and turning your talk into action, what stops most people is fear. But let's not get it twisted, fear has its place. Our ur-ancestors had a finely tuned sense of fear which kicked into gear the moment they heard a twig snap. That fear was designed for the day when the bad news was being eaten by something massive out in the wild.

Today, the bad news is you might not get promoted, someone might not buy from your online store, or you might even get sacked from a job you may or may not much care for.

Regret that you never sought promotion or showed anyone your paintings will hurt you more.

Embrace the fear and leave regret for some other sucker.

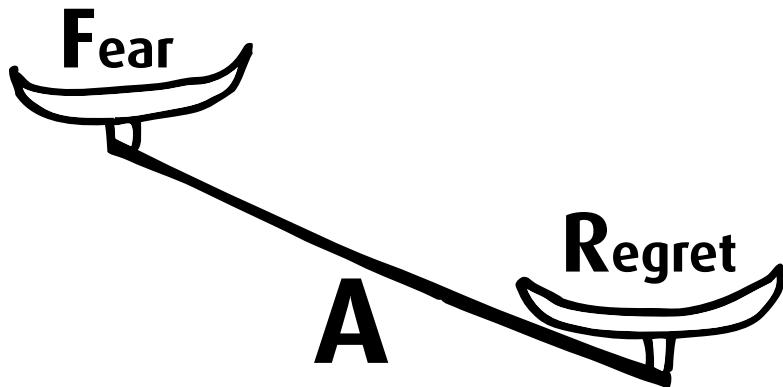


**“Embrace
the fear and
leave regret
for some
other sucker.”**

Sháá Wasmund

The scales that matter the most

Regret weighs more than fear. But fear looks bigger.



At the moment when we are doing things, fear can creep up out of nowhere. It stands there in your way – mocking you, taunting you. And it looks huge.

It holds you back from doing the thing: you don't ask the person out, start the business, publish the book, or do any number of things you want to do. But just imagine. Imagine if you could make the fear smaller, more manageable, or eliminate it all together.

Over time, when we look back at it, we feel the regret. It weighs us down, getting heavier each time we think about it.

It can sound like a cliche when we hear people say “you regret far more what you didn't do than what you did”, but how true has this been for you so far?

How has this played out for you?

Are there things you wish you'd done? Are there things you regret never having done?

Let's unpack that in black and white. Grab a pen and a piece of paper or a journal. Let's go old-school. No computers or phones. No distractions allowed.

Write down three things you regret not having done.

1.

2.

3.

Now, think about what stopped you doing them? Be honest.

How different could your life be if you had actually done them?

What were the consequences of allowing fear to rule the day?

Now to be clear, I'm not talking about regretting not buying that property when property prices in that location were cheap. I'm talking about, for example, when you had a specific property in mind, that you really wanted, and you had visions of how you were going to do it up and let it out for holiday rentals. You even worked out the mortgage and you could *just* afford it, but then something stopped you, something you couldn't quite put your finger on.

Not a lack of desire. Not even the lack of a mortgage. No, it was rather the presence of fear.

This is just one example, and I am sure we each have many more of our own. The key now is not to add to that list.

What you should really be scared of is regret. Regretting what you might have done but never did.

If you do the thing and make a mistake, there's always the opportunity to salvage things by taking a different course or more action.

However, regret is much harder to resolve. Regret reaches a long claw from the past and clamps a cold hand on your shoulder today. If you failed to do something in the past when you had the chance, then that remains the case forever.

You can't turn back time.

Once you appreciate how regret can haunt you and throw you off your game for years to come, then many or all of your other fears will diminish in proportion. You will start doing.

Fear regret . . . and by doing so, discover your courage to do your “thing”, whatever that might be. And yes, do it despite being scared – it’s what Londoners used to call “BOTTLE.” Get yourself out there and just do it!

“The only thing we have to fear is
fear itself.”

Franklin Roosevelt

The usual suspects

You're at the police station. The "doubt" officer comes up to you.

"Are you ready to face the identity parade? We've rounded up the usual suspects.

"We see them all the time. Little splinters of doubt that stop people chasing their dreams.

"Have a good, close look. It's our suspicion that several of these characters are responsible for stopping you pursuing your dreams.

"Take your time and be very honest. This is a serious matter. When you've identified the guilty ones, put a tick against their numbers. Are you ready? Begin..."

- I don't have time to do it.
- I won't be good enough. I don't know how to do it. I might fail.
- I'd have to give up my job.
- There aren't enough hours in the day.
- So many other people are doing it already.
- I'll start once the kids go to school.
- I'll start once the kids leave home.
- Nobody will take me seriously. People will laugh at me for trying.
- People will laugh at me for failing.
- I should just be thankful for what I have and stop being greedy. It's selfish.
- I've got too much going on in my head. I'm too tired.
- I haven't got a space to start my project. You don't understand what it's like!
- I went to the wrong school. I have the wrong accent.
- I'm the wrong colour/gender/height/shape/width/material/angle/consistency/...

And one of my personal favorites that I call the “if-then-when” syndrome:
If or when this happens, then I'll do this or that.

- When my kids go to school, then I'll be able to apply for the job.
- If I lose XX pounds, then I'll go out on a date.

With excuses like this, we put up hurdles that keep us from doing the things we really want to do.



**Here's what you should do
with all these excuses:**



Flush them away. Get rid of them. Demolish them or you won't ever get started. There will always be reasons not to start. Always. And for some people – whether by reason of location, financial circumstances, family situation, or physical challenges – the hurdles will be much higher than for others.

But the clock doesn't care. It's ticking at the same speed for everyone: the speed of *whoosh!*

The sands of time are running out for your dreams even as you turn the page

... so

... flush fast.

How to flush

Apart from “fast”, the way to flush away these fears is to recognize them for what they are.

Hold them up to the light and examine them. Excuses come in all shapes and sizes.

Be logical and rational, not emotional. What do they really mean? Is it enough to stop you in your tracks? Forever? Or are you seeing things that aren't really there?

“A black cat crossing
your path signifies that
the animal is going
somewhere.”

Groucho Marx

SUSPECT #1:

THE PAST

The prison you accidentally created.

You can think of the events in your life like chapters in a book: you finish reading the chapter and you move on to the next one. The previous one hasn't disappeared – it's a part of the whole book – but you're not reading it right now. You don't need to go back to it to move forward.

It's not about trying to forget. The more you try to forget something, the more you remember it.

Instead of trying to forget it, see what you can learn from the past. Think of the three regrets you wrote down a little while ago. That fear you remembered is in a previous chapter. You don't have to experience it now. Now carry on reading ... when you come across fear in a future chapter, try to look at it differently.

When you arrive at that fear, you have a choice. Will you let it affect your decision? Will you let the regret weigh you down? Or will you take a step back and see the fear shrink, be courageous, and take that step out of your comfort zone?

You might ask, what if I make a mistake?

Accept it. Don't dwell on it. The more you dwell on something, the bigger it becomes.

We all make mistakes. The only way to prevent those mistakes holding you back is to acknowledge them, learn from them, and move on.

Unless you're perfect (and truthfully, none of us are) you will have accumulated "baggage" in your life. Whatever it is, you need to deal with it because it won't disappear and no one else is going to deal with it for you.

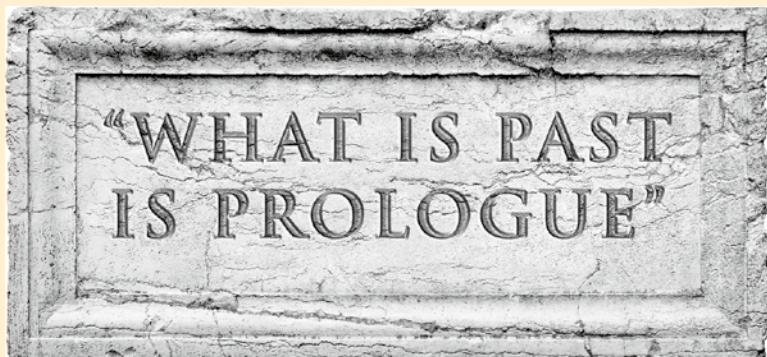
Running away from problems doesn't make them go away. The sooner you deal with them, the better.

If you don't do it, who will? It is, admittedly, much easier to bury our heads in the sand, but we have to pull them out at some point and when we do, the problem will just be a whole lot bigger.

“There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind.”

C.S. Lewis

C. S. Lewis wrote this in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, delighting over 100 million children in 47 languages. Wouldn't it be great if we could carry that reminder with us every day as adults?



“What’s past is prologue.”

Many of us will remember reading Shakespeare’s play, *The Tempest*, as young adults.

Two of the characters are about to commit a murder. Their past – every action they took and every decision they have ever made – leads them to the point of killing someone. Or not.

Needless to say, they cannot change their history . . . but their future is theirs to make.

The past, with its baggage and mistakes, is nothing but the lead-up to every current decision. If you're reading this book, then you probably believe in free will.

Every decision is yours to make. To do or not to do.

The past is past. The limit of history is NOW. The next move is yours to choose. . . .

. . . Be sure to understand the significance: don't let your past mistakes control your future.

SUSPECT #2:

FoPO

Do you worry people will laugh at you for trying to chase your dreams?

Forget FOMO, you might have FOPO: Fear of Other People's Opinions.

We worry about what other people think of us. We're scared they'll disapprove of us – or worse, laugh at us.

FOPO is like a magnifying glass for fear. The result is we don't take the chance, the leap: we don't get brave enough to start the business or publish the book.

The thing is, this is all completely natural. Thousands of years ago, FOPO was helpful – we needed to fit into a social circle so we would be protected from being attacked by lions. Now? Not so much.

So someone laughs at you.

Big deal.

If someone laughs at you for trying, then question whether this person deserves even a standing ticket in your life story. Let them go; show them the exit.

Although, having kicked them outside into the rain, the fact is they're doing you a favour. The good thing about people laughing at you is that it stops you from taking yourself too seriously. Actually, you should laugh, too.

It serves as a reminder to switch our perspective from "Am I good enough for this?" to "Is this good enough for me?"

"If you are not in the arena getting your ass kicked on occasion, I am not interested in or open to your feedback."

Brené Brown

People notice us way less than we think. In an experiment, a group of students were asked to walk into a room wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with Barry Manilow's face . . . yep, Barry Manilow.

They reported that they felt like half the room was staring at them. In reality, though, only about 20% even noticed the T-shirt.

And it's not just the negative things people don't see. The results were the same for people wearing T-shirts with images they were proud of wearing, like Bob Marley, Martin Luther King, or the Dalai Lama.⁹

The bottom line: we think the world is paying more attention to what we're doing than they really are. We're all egomaniacs, people!

The world is not standing by ready to ridicule us. They're busy trying to get on with their own lives.

SUSPECT #3:

YOU DON'T HAVE THE MONEY

... and that might not be a bad thing.

Sure, it's easy to say, but here's why: if you're earning a zillion bucks, shifting money around the world, no one is debating the fact that you can buy more.

It's clearly easier to buy that polo pony and start playing polo. But the old adage is true: money can't buy you happiness. Money is a double-edged sword and people become addicted to it. Having money makes it harder for people to quit their jobs and start doing what they really want to do.

High earners get trapped by their lifestyle. Banking jobs are teeming with folk who vowed to make a pile of money, quick and young, save it up, and quit to do something they enjoyed like pig farming, setting up luxury Airbnbs, acting . . . but then found themselves seduced by the lucrative day job.

This isn't to say you should shed tears for the wealthy. But you should recognize that there is a certain liberty to doing what you want when you have less to lose!

For example, if you're young, then you can (maybe) go sleep on a friend's sofa and work night shifts in a bar to fund your passion developing a business or an artistic career. That's not so easy to do if you think life's about paying off the loans on your Porsche and penthouse suite.

In her utterly brilliant book *Your Money Or Your Life*, Vicki Robin asks, "What price is all this money costing you?" Because when you really think about it, everything comes at a price. I'll ask it again . . . what is the point of being cash-rich, but time-poor? When we look back at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, beyond a certain level, I truly believe we face diminishing returns.

SUSPECT #4:

YOU WENT TO THE WRONG SCHOOL (OR NO SCHOOL)

A bit like money, the great schools help. And if you got a second-rate education, it's tempting to question whether the cards are so stacked against you it would be pointless to even start the fight.

That would be wrong.

Just ask Bill Gates, Richard Branson, Coco Chanel, or even Simon Cowell.

Bill Gates dropped out of college. Richard Branson left school at 16. Coco Chanel was an orphan from 12 and had no formal education. And after getting a handful of high school qualifications, Simon Cowell started his working life in a mailroom.

A quick Google search will deliver you hundreds of similar results in every industry and sector across the world.

Almost one-third of the world's wealthiest people didn't finish university. According to a 2016 billionaire census by Wealth-X,¹⁰ 739 out of 2473 billionaires did not have a college degree. Proof that your attitude, not your education, is what counts.

Sure, going to the "right" school may open a few doors, but it's you, not your education, that will keep them open.

SUSPECT #5:

YOU (THINK YOU) DON'T KNOW HOW

What if your fear is not having the skills or knowledge to scratch your itch?

What if you know what you want to do, but you don't know how to do it?

First you need to ask yourself if this is reality. If it is, it's time to get learning what you don't know. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to go back to school. (Although, if your itch is to become a doctor or a lawyer, prepare to enroll somewhere.)

There has never been an easier time to learn. You can do it all from the comfort of your own home if you choose. Education opportunities are everywhere: join a free MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) and take part in university modules; watch YouTube videos by experts; read books; listen to podcasts. In fact, you can do it all online.

Whatever you want to learn, the world will teach you.

The flip side is there's a good chance you actually *do* know how, but you think you're not up to it.

That's what we call imposter syndrome.

If you're skilled and knowledgeable, but you're questioning your capability, let's press pause and dig a bit deeper. It could be your fear of ridicule, or maybe you're holding onto a past mistake? Maybe you're scared of success or maybe you're scared of failure?

Take a step back and open the curtains. In the cold light of day, if you *do* know how, it's time to get moving!

SUSPECT #6:

YOU DON'T HAVE TIME

Ah . . . this is the one I use all the time, because often it's true. Or at least it really feels like it.

I'm sure you've heard it before: we all have the same 24 hours.

Actually, that's not entirely true . . .

If you have to spend two hours just commuting to work, you have less time than someone who works from home.

If you're running a business and taking care of your children and your house, you have less time than those with a nanny or a housekeeper. I know because I have been in both situations, and I know for sure which one gave me more time!

What if you're part of the generation that is "being pulled apart in the middle." You're looking after your kids and your parents (or grandparents), juggling careers, and you're in charge of the food shopping and your own sanity.

Your and my 24 hours might look different to that of an international superstar athlete, or a member of the royal family, or even Jeff Bezos, but it's how we use the time we have that matters.

This means you have to get smart about how you prioritize time.

Consider also that the aspect of time you ought to be motivated by is the part that you can't manage – and that's how fast it's flowing past.

So deal with the bits that you can.

To do that, you need to know what's on your plate. Map it out – literally put it in your calendar. Shift things around where you can to create space. Then consciously decide what to put in those spaces.

Want to watch the latest Netflix series? Go for it. Feel like relaxing at a spa or doing some yoga? Great. Want to set up a business? Do it.

Your time is there for you to use as you see fit. If you discover you need more of it, decide what changes you can make in your life. They might feel huge, daunting, even out of reach, but you only need to take the first step. It all starts in your mind.

Prioritize!

SUSPECT #7:

YOU'RE TOO BUSY

When you start to look at your calendar and all the things you need to do, you might conclude you're just too busy.

Believing yourself to be monumentally, eye-poppingly busy may well be an accurate reflection of your life. However, it may also be another way of hiding from the act of getting started.

Amid the cacophony of your busyness, you may have had time to hear the term “a busy fool.” As far as this book is concerned, this simply means you can be extremely busy doing the wrong thing, purely for the purpose of being too busy to confront and do what you really need to do.

By the same token, another well-worn phrase among business leaders is: “If you need something done, give the task to a busy person.” Someone who is already really busy doing important things doesn’t have time to prevaricate and delay. They have to prioritize the important stuff and get things done.

If this excuse is ringing bells for you, then you should stop and take stock. Make sure your busy behaviour is pointed in the right direction.

To paraphrase Stephen Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*:

there's no point busily climbing the ladder if your ladder's leaning against the wrong wall.



On the subject of being too busy, the lack of sufficient hours in the day, and the importance of planning how you're going to scratch your itch, consider the eighteenth-century life of Benjamin Franklin.¹¹

Franklin, one of 17 children, was the really busy one and he knew something about managing his time. One of the things he did in his life was inventing the lightning rod. Another was creating the first public lending library in the United States. He's also the face on the \$100 dollar bill, appropriately nicknamed a "Benjamin."

Perhaps he's more famous for being one of the founding fathers of the United States of America, which is to say he was one of the authors of the American Constitution as well as the Declaration of Independence.

Franklin was a newspaper editor, too. He was also the first US ambassador to France. He created the first fire service in Pennsylvania, invented bifocals, and he was once the Governor of Pennsylvania.

He charted and named the Atlantic sea current we know today as the Gulf Stream. Even when he toyed around, he was productive; he is a member of the US Chess Hall of Fame.

The overleaf shows his daily schedule as he described it in his autobiography. It is a great example of setting goals; planning your time, but not overplanning; measuring your goals; and getting things done.

The morning question,
What good shall I do
this day?

5 Rise, wash, and address *Powerful Goodness*; contrive day's business and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study; and breakfast.

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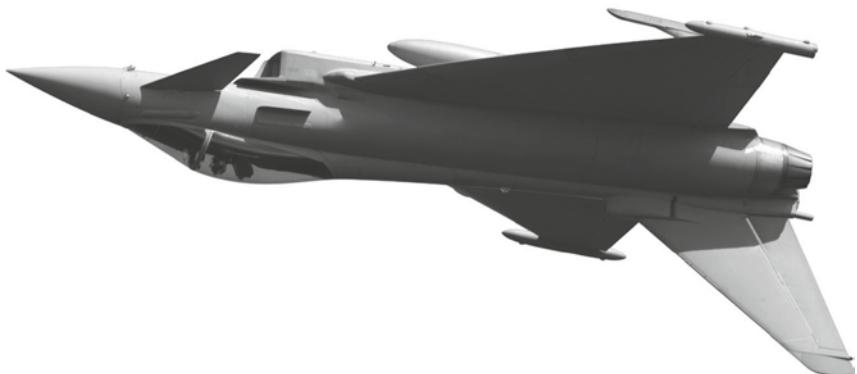
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If all this talk of confronting your fears makes you uncomfortable, then congratulations – you're in the right place.

It means you are toppling forward out of your armchair and into the world of action.

Deliberately aiming for the discomfort zone.

The discomfort zone



Hooded merganser ducklings are tiny, fuzzy birds that hatch in tree cavities some 50 feet high in the forest. A matter of hours after they hatch, their mother flies to a nearby lake and calls them.

One by one, they waddle and fumble their way to the opening in the tree, and one by one they launch themselves forward, out into the open air, and plummet to the ground.

Luckily for the ducklings, they're soft and fluffy enough to bounce on the forest floor. No harm done. They carry on their merry way to the lake.

It's the kind of thing you might imagine when someone tells you to get out of your comfort zone. The ducklings give up the comfort and safety of their tree cavity and leap into the unknown – into the danger zone.

The discomfort zone isn't quite like that. If we leap into danger, we run the risk of breaking something, or worse.

The trick is to find your discomfort zone. It's the area right at the edge of your comfort zone, where you can still reach back to safety while you inch yourself forward to something new.

It's like taking the first step into the pool rather than jumping straight off the top diving board.

James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*, calls this the Goldilocks Rule.

When you're in your Goldilocks zone, you can get all the benefits of the discomfort with minimal risk.

Take a step closer to the edge. How does it feel?

If those tiny fuzzy ducklings stay in the shaded safety of their tree cavity, and wait for their mother to return with their next meal, they'll be sheltered. They might feel safe. But they will die.

It's hard to step to the edge and peer over.

It looks like a long way down. You don't know what's ahead of you. You might even be scared of heights. But take the step.

This is where you win – outside the comfort zone.

The idea of the comfort zone is deceptive – it seems warm and pleasing. But really you're the frog in the proverbial boiling pot. It's the very thing that's holding you back, and it's not doing you any good.

The discomfort zone is a state of mind you'll need to get used to if you want to make a significant change in your life.

Look how this yogi has turned a bed of nails into an environment for relaxation and meditation.



Each to their own.

Dig deep

There's always a reason not to do something. The truth is for many of us, life can be hard at times, but this is when we have to dig deep and push forward. We have to move away from our comfort zone and create solutions where there don't appear to be any.

We are surrounded by people who pushed through their fear, endured hardship, and succeeded.

Oprah Winfrey endured abuse and poverty in her childhood before she became the youngest and first black female news anchor at what was then WLAC-TV – a local TV station in Nashville.

Now she's the "Queen of All Media."

Steven Bartlett was born in Botswana and moved to Manchester with his family at the age of 3; he didn't board another plane until he was 21. He dropped out of university at 22, and it took 11 requests for him to be granted a business bank account.

Now the Happy, Sexy Millionaire, he's been named on the Forbes 30 under 30 list and was the 2019 Great British Entrepreneur of the Year.

Halle Berry ended up living in a homeless shelter in New York City while she was trying to land her first acting role.

Now she's an Academy Award-winning actress, the first African-American actress to receive Best Actress in a leading role, and has starred in more than 50 films. She's reported to have a net worth of \$90 million.

"When I was a kid, my mother told me that if you could not be a good loser, then there's no way you could be a good winner."

Halle Berry

Sometimes life is harder. Being a single parent, living with a disability, having a disadvantaged background, being in a marginalized group. But there is a big difference between “harder” and impossible.

You have to do whatever it takes and not give up. Whatever you do, it might not be what you want to do, but it doesn’t have to be – it should, however, be a stepping-stone to get you where you want to go.

Many people have a different type of family commitment or obligation, if you will. Parents want the best for their children, but this can often mean pushing them down a path that isn’t for them.

How many people do you know who are in careers because at some point in their life they thought it would please their parents, spouse, career teacher, or society?

We have to be true to ourselves while managing these obstacles sensitively. Explain to those who love you that following your own path doesn’t mean a life of debauchery and destitution. Okay, so you may not do the PhD or become a medical doctor, but you’re going to be happy and fulfilled and, ultimately, that’s all any parent wants – even if they can’t always see it at the time.

Then there’s the age-old excuse of . . . age. Too young, too old.

Jordan Romero was 9 when he climbed Kilimanjaro.

Colonel Sanders was 65 before he started franchising one of the world’s most famous fast-food restaurants, Kentucky Fried Chicken.

The other one, with those golden arches . . . Ray Kroc was 52 when he started McDonalds. So please stop listening to all that nonsense. You’ve got plenty of time; just not enough to waste!

And this is true not just in business, but across the board. One of my favourite authors, novelist Toni Morrison, didn’t become well known until she won the Nobel Prize for Literature . . . at the age of 62.

You can always find an excuse, but you can also always find inspiration.

If people can land on the moon, there's not much you can't do once you've made your mind up and moved from talking about it to actually doing it.

So get resourceful. Accept the fact that you may have more challenges than most. It happens. But you have just the same chance of success.

Give up the TV. Wake up an hour earlier. Steal time from wherever you can. Enlist the help of all your family and friends. Make a public commitment to your goals; not only will it give you an extra impetus to achieve them, but it also garners support and momentum behind you.

And as we explain on page 171, holding yourself publicly accountable is proven to greatly increase your chance of success.

So keep digging, digging, digging, digging . . .



And dig deep.

“Some people are born with very little; some are fortunate enough to have it all. When I grew up, we didn’t have much. I had to hustle to get what I wanted . . . but I had that hunger for more. I didn’t always make the right choices, but I learned from my mistakes.”

Curtis Jackson aka 50 Cent

Final word on fear

There's a thin line between fear and excitement.

In pre-race interviews, reporters often ask athletes if they're nervous. The response is usually, "No, I'm excited."

Fear and excitement are closely related, but very different – bubbles of adrenaline that raise your heart rate and make you tingle.

If you're not feeling a little bit nervous – or excited – about what you're about to do, then it probably doesn't matter much anyway.

You *should* be feeling the tingle.

“Inside of a ring or out,
ain’t nothing wrong with
going down. It’s staying
down that’s wrong.”

Muhammad Ali

If only I had...

Regret

In 2012, palliative nurse Bronnie Ware wrote the book *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*. After years of helping people at the end of their lives, she noticed a pattern in their regrets – and I bet you share some of these already.

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.
2. I wish I hadn't worked so hard.
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.
4. I wish I'd stayed in touch with my friends.
5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

Since you're the sort of person who has chosen to read this book, there's probably no need to say more about regret. You get it. The utter horror of regret will be clear to you.

You can't change the past: once the moment is gone and the opportunity has passed by and been squandered, tough luck. That's it. If you didn't climb inside the ropes, well, then you didn't.

On the other hand, if you *did* surmount your fears and try to tackle your itch and things got smashed and spilled in the process, then you can deal with the consequences today. You did something.

Action is how you change things; fix things; get things done.

“Act. Or be acted upon.”

Anon

“To fight fear, act. To increase fear –
wait, put off, postpone.”

David Joseph Schwartz

Here's a simple example of how fear can be paralyzing and turn into regret:

Anyone who has ever wanted to chat with a speaker after a conference, or chat up an attractive stranger at a party, will know the best thing is to act immediately.

The longer you hang around waiting, the harder and harder it gets as the opportunity loses its momentum, the initiative evaporates, you get tongue-tied, and you begin to consider the other option: skip the whole idea and carry on as you were. That option begins to seem easier and more appealing.

Eventually you take that option. And what changes?

Nothing.

Don't kid yourself that you're doing when you're not:

... Shopping isn't doing.

But it feels a bit like it.

So does researching.

So does filming a video ...

And so does talking about it.

It's all just 'talk.'

In fact, you can kid yourself a thousand ways that you're doing when in truth you're not.

But you will be forced to see it eventually – when you get the pang of regret that you never did what you wanted to do.

Doing is the route to fulfilment – at least fulfilment of the goals that will stop that damn itching!

Sidestep regret: invest yourself in doing and find the route to happiness!

A study by psychologists Leaf van Boven and Thomas Gilovich¹² required participants to:

- a. Rate the happiness they received from experiences such as going to the theatre, the cinema, the ski slopes, travelling, and going out to dinner.

And

- b. Rate the happiness they got from buying things like TVs, stereos, computers, clothes, and jewellery.

Well, you know where this is going: the *doing* made people happier than the *having*.

So the question is ... why are we not doing more of it?

But wait, there's more . . .

It turns out that even when people were asked to think of an experience, they felt happier than when they were asked to think about having bought something.

Now imagine how much greater the satisfaction would be if the experience was something that had great personal value.

If it had been a mission. If it had been the scratching of a lifelong itch!

. . . oh, and in the words of Steve Jobs: "One more thing":

Gilovich and co. also found that when people listened to one person talk about something special they had done, and another talk about something special they had bought, the person who was liked the most was the doer, not the haver.

Amen to that!

So next time you're passing one of Steve Jobs' Apple stores or a shoe shop, and are about to burn up your precious cash, think twice. Tie yourself to the mast like Odysseus and fix your aim on DOING – not HAVING!!



Sample pictures of graffiti in a few adjacent streets in Central London. Another sign that the world is not what it was: take street art (or graffiti – choose your preferred word). Artists such as Banksy from Bristol in the UK or the Faile collective from New York can now command huge prices in art galleries around the world.

The idea that graffiti is the product of work-shy layabouts is outdated. A vast amount of the cynical “messages” contained in street art warns us not to be coerced by advertising into finding our goals in consumption but instead to go and DO.

We've been trained by generations of Mad Men and marketers to want THINGS.

We're convinced we don't just want, but *need* that handbag with the special logo. The car with the leather seats. The shoes with the red soles.

This is bad counsel.

And before you say, “Hold up Sháá . . . I've seen your shoe collection,” I admit that I'm just as guilty of falling for it, too, but I have got a whole heap better. That counts, right?

In an homage to Marie Kondo: “If it doesn't spark joy, I'm not doing it!”

Rebel.

Go against the grain.

Don't BUY; instead, DO.

At least DO first.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the sale of luxury goods around the world dropped dramatically. We started valuing things less, and experiences and people more.

So why not continue?

Invest in DOING – learning, training, experimenting, writing, travelling, helping, building businesses, realizing dreams!

But don't do *everything*.

Despite the pandemic, we still, however, haven't learned how to switch off.

The number of minutes we spend online creeps up by about 10 minutes a year on average – in 2021, it was 192 minutes. That's more than three hours of scrolling and messaging and emailing and watching videos. PER DAY.

If we're constantly filling up our brains like this, we're always at full capacity. We're compressed.

When you leave your laptop plugged in the whole time, the battery will eventually fry.

When do we unplug, sit still, and do nothing?

In his book, *Happy Sexy Millionaire*, entrepreneur Steven Bartlett reflects on his own connected life and asks why we've all "blindly accepted" the reality Silicon Valley has carved out for us.

While we're more switched on than ever before, we're also more depressed, more anxious, and lonelier than we've ever been.

In fact, many are calling it a "loneliness epidemic." A 2020 survey of 10 000 adults in the US revealed 61% of people surveyed felt lonely.¹³ And as it becomes more and more evident that loneliness is associated with a range of health issues, from depression to heart disease, governments are starting to take notice and put plans in place to help us reconnect – in real life.

According to Johann Hari, author of *Lost Connections*, real social contact could be one of the solutions to today's widespread anxiety and depression.

But we also need to take the time to reconnect to ourselves. Those moments of nothing – of sitting alone and letting the space in – let us sit with what's most important, focus on our values, and visualize our goals. They can also make our connections with other people even more meaningful.

“Let there be
spaces in your
togetherness,

And let the
winds of the
heavens dance
between you.”

Khalil Gibran

PART 4



START

“You will never win if you never begin.”

Helen Rowland

Let's get ready to rumble

It's impossible to overstate the importance of starting.

As it's the be-all and end-all of this book, you might wonder why we're just getting to this point now? Maybe it should have been at the START?

That's a fair question. So here's why:

Most people don't start until they realize:

1. they've got an itch;
2. it's natural and right to have fears, yet understand that reason can keep these fears in check;
3. everyone has their own unique challenges;
4. they'd rather tackle their fears than live for eternity with the regret of losing their bottle and not doing.

The good news is that the mere act of starting is what makes things change. Starting is itself a guarantee of success because it means you are already saying farewell to the status quo.

Time is the imperative. The *whooshing* by of time, like the rising and setting of the sun, is the one certainty we have.

Time is your spur to get up and act. And that's why you have to start now.

Climb into the ring.

The Elimination of Procrastination

Of course, you feel the urge to procrastinate. That's only human.

You see, scratching the itch – doing anything worthwhile – takes an investment in time and effort, and the rewards are in the future.

In the meantime, your vices are offering you immediate short-term satisfaction: put Netflix on, grab a flat white or a glass of wine, listen to music, scroll through Instagram, lie on the sofa, raid the fridge... I mean, why not do them all at once?!

This battle between your vices and your virtue is as old as the hills and the outcome is just as predictable unless you are determined and smart.



It's time to beat procrastination.

We've all got our reasons for procrastinating. I think a lot of them can be solved by making your goal clearer.

When you've got a list of 25 or 50 or 100 things to do, each one is lost in the crowd. Fixing the leaking tap, writing your business plan, pumping up your car tyres, and going to the gym all look just as important.

Prioritizing can help you beat procrastination

Choose just three things from your list. Three things that will make today a successful day. Doing the three most important things is simpler than tackling a mess of to-dos all at once.

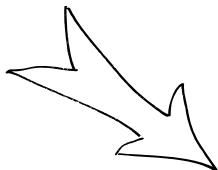
A five-step plan to beat procrastination:

1. Acknowledge that you do it and that it's okay. There's no point in lying to yourself.
2. Get ready to do something about changing it.
3. Ask yourself why you're procrastinating. Do you really want to do the thing you're procrastinating on? If no, then get it off your to-do list. If it's a yes, then let's shut down the limiting beliefs and crack on!
4. Hold yourself publicly accountable. Get people to motivate you from the outside.
5. Start, so you can build momentum. If you're training for a marathon, you need to build up to it – you start with one mile, then two. The more you build up, the closer you'll get and the less you'll procrastinate.

The legendary hotelier Conrad Hilton kept a photograph of the Waldorf Hotel on his desk to help him maintain his focus and avoid distraction and procrastination. The photo was there for 18 years . . . until he bought the hotel.



A picture on a desk ...



... helped provide unshakeable focus
and zero distractions for 18 years



... and this brought
Conrad Hilton the prize.

“Never put off till tomorrow, what you can do the day after tomorrow.”

Mark Twain

It's amusing, but, as advice goes, it's not great.



“You may delay, but time will not.”

Benjamin Franklin

Not so funny, but it's solid advice.

Your internal nagging friend

Here's some good news.

Once you start something, the subconscious brain won't let you stop. Like you've got your own internal tyrant pushing you on.

Have you ever felt like this at school, uni, work?

It's called the Zeigarnik¹⁴ effect. Bluma Zeigarnik, a Russian psychologist, was intrigued to learn that waiters could take complicated orders from a large group of students and remember them perfectly without writing them down.

But as soon as the bill had been paid, the waiters' memories of what had been ordered fell apart.

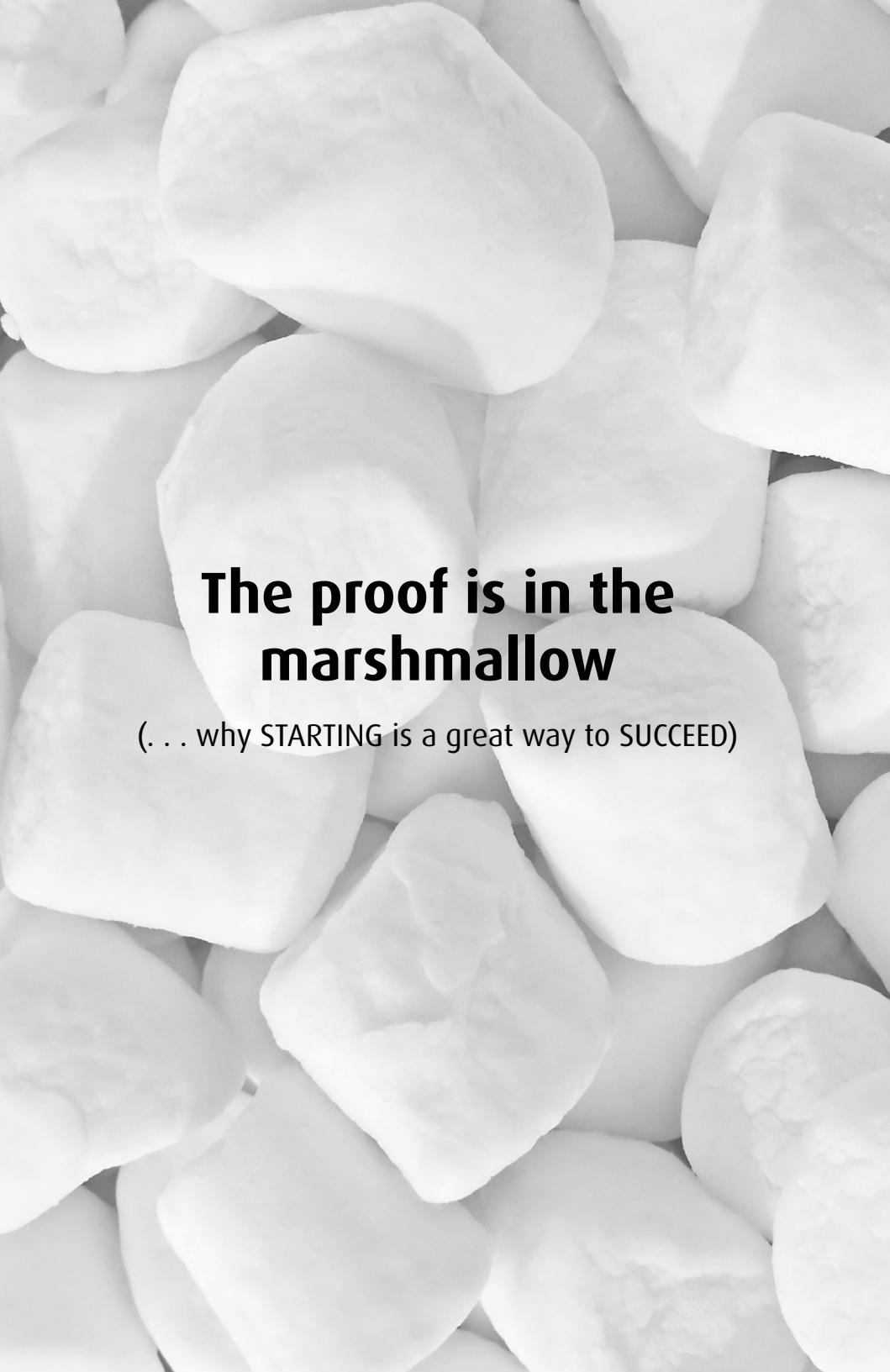
It was as if the order was put into a mental trash can.

Pretty much sounds like most of my academic life!

Her conclusion was that once a project had been set running, the subconscious was keeping constant track of it and would badger the waiter to make sure it got completed. It was as if any interruption to a task became a psychic disturbance that unsettled the brain.

What this means is that simply by starting and committing to your project you get a little help – in the form of your subconscious – to nag you and ensure you get “closure” in psychological terms. In our terms, it's ensuring you do the next big thing – finishing the task.

That's one to take away.



The proof is in the marshmallow

(. . . why STARTING is a great way to SUCCEED)

Some of the brightest and most successful people in business have tried this test. It's called the Marshmallow Challenge.¹⁵

This is how it goes:

- You work in teams of four.
- Each team is given 20 sticks of spaghetti, a yard of tape, and a yard of string.
- And one marshmallow.
- Each team has 18 minutes to build the tallest structure they can. The marshmallow must be on the top.

Simple, right?

The challenge was devised by designer Peter Skillman and it has since been used by innovation expert Tom Wujec in his studies of how senior executives collaborate and innovate.

But what's interesting to us doers is what the experiment has to say about the value of starting.

Q: Who did Wujec find were among the worst performing groups of people?

A: Recent graduates of business school followed closely by CEOs of large organizations.

Q: Which group of people were among the top performers?

A: Kindergarten kids. Their spaghetti and marshmallow structures averaged almost three times the height of the MBA grads.

The reason the kids succeeded while their older and more educated rivals failed was they just kept doing. The MBA grads discussed plans and roles and responsibilities and postured (and maybe wrote a mission statement, who knows?) and then finally, as time ran out, scrambled to build a tower of spaghetti and place a marshmallow on top only to find at the last minute – *ta-dah!* – that the weight of the marshmallow collapsed the structure.

Meanwhile, the kids – being kids – just went right ahead and got practical. Which means they simply started trying to build a structure right from the whistle and pretty quickly found out what worked and didn't work. No fear of failure. No hesitation. Just doing.

The professionals have a word for it

What the kids were doing in the marshmallow challenge was “rapid prototyping.”

And what’s good enough for kids with marshmallows is good enough for big business.

It’s a similar approach to that which has been widely adopted for many software and internet development projects. It’s called LEAN development.

Teams of software developers used to spend years locked in a bunker writing code so that one fine day they could come blinking into the sunlight and announce to the world: “Come, see! Here’s our new computer program!” At which point they might discover a flaw in the user experience or a slew of bugs. Dang!

Nowadays, teams try to get new versions of code written every week or even every day. That’s how they discover problems faster. And it’s how they steal the competitive advantage over their rivals.

They start doing and move their ideas from the hypothetical to the real as fast as possible.

They move from the stationary talking position to the dynamic action position. No fear. No regrets.

And, importantly, they move closer to success with every iteration.

Now give me the damn marshmallows and let’s go build a tower!

The history of accidental success

When you start you don't know where you'll finish. You could call that a type of risk.

This uncertainty of outcome is one of the reasons some people get paralyzed by fear at the thought of moving from the talking state to the doing state.

But perhaps it doesn't matter whether you go directly from A to Z. It might be that ending up at F is still a great result.

Or maybe you end up somewhere in a completely different alphabet.

The key to making the most of the opportunity that comes with risk is to have an open mind.

History is littered with great tales of people who began one thing only to discover another great thing, which they would never have done otherwise. And in retrospect, it doesn't seem like a failure.

In fact, what it tells us is that the thing is simply to start.

Tiffany & Co. started as a stationery store. Nokia made paper. Wrigley's sold soap and baking powder.

Coca-Cola was originally developed as a medicine that promised to cure anything from hysteria to headaches.

In 1968, Dr Spencer Silver, then a senior chemist at 3M, figured he had discovered something of little worth until one of his colleagues said the "low tack" adhesive was useful to bookmark his choir hymnal.

A few years later, the ubiquitous Post-It note was born.

I mean, hello!

Multinational cosmetics company Avon was started by accident in 1886. Founder David H. McConnell was selling books door-to-door. He would give women perfume samples to entice them to buy. When he realized the perfume was

more popular than the books, he changed direction; he even mixed Avon's first fragrances himself.

The multi-platinum-selling musician Jack Johnson wanted to be a professional surfer. In fact, he was a very good surfer but, at just 17, an accident put an end to his dreams and his future no longer looked so certain. Still unsure of what to do, he went to film school, and it was there that he started playing music and soon realized he was an even better guitarist than surfer.

To celebrate the World's Fair coming to Paris in 1887–1889, architects were invited to build a temporary structure. The competition rules required that the winning structure should be easily dismantled after 20 years.

Nevertheless, the Eiffel Tower is still standing over 130 years after winning the contest. More recently, the London Eye, the enormous observation wheel on the south bank of London's River Thames, was constructed to be a temporary celebration of the millennium in 2000, and this too is still around. The key thing here, of course, is that people with drive and vision got them started.

The actor Harrison Ford retrained as a carpenter in his early acting years when he was struggling to get acting jobs. While visiting the office of the film director Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas spotted Ford while Ford was fitting a portico. Whereas staying put didn't work for him, striking out in a new direction did.

Recognizing Harrison from his work in Lucas' *American Graffiti*, Lucas asked him to act as a foil for actors auditioning for parts in his 1977 film *Star Wars*. The rest is history. Han Solo and a superstar were born.

These people were observant and open, and they were willing to make a change.

Are you?

The solace of failure

Suppose you wanted to be the chef who started something like this:



And to do it you quit your job here:



But it didn't work out

And instead of doing:



OR



... you own this shack and work hard seven days a week:



Then did you fail? Well, it depends. None of these outcomes is necessarily a failure (or a success). They're just different answers to the question: Where do you want to be?

But if you didn't like where you were to begin with, then the act of pursuing your dream means wherever you end up, it will be somewhere different. Falling short of your target or changing direction can still be a success.



How to surprise someone

Simply do what you say you will. After 25 years in business, I am still surprised by how few people actually do this.

A bit of authenticity goes a long way.

We live in a photoshopped world where everybody runs perfect businesses with perfect employees; they're also the perfect employer with a perfect life and a perfect relationship and a perfect kid.

It creates the expectation that everything should be perfect for us too.

But none of it is true.

In reality, most people are hiding behind a social media mask. What they're portraying and what the reality is are worlds apart. They overpromise and underdeliver.

So it's refreshing to see nuggets of reality. And you can inject some reality with one simple commitment:

Do what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it.

That's it.

Be the type of person who's good for your word.

Most people don't do that. If you do – if you act with integrity and honesty – you'll give the world a far better version of you than Photoshop could ever manage.

And the person you will please the most will be yourself.

Spot the difference ...



Z Z z z z z z z



WHAKAMEN

'Nuff said?



A short sharp
reminder

... about that sting in the tail

If, having considered all of the above, knowing, as you do, that the worst thing is to regret the things you should have done – but you're still hesitating – then allow us to remind you of the speeding clock.

Tick Tock

Time slips by quietly; if we're not conscious of it, it disappears without a whisper.

Yet, we can see the effects of passing time all around us: the morning alarm that feels too early, the vanishing number of weeks until Christmas, the extra candle on the birthday cake each year, the kids going to college, the weddings, the births, the funerals.

Take a look at a photo of you from a year ago. And the year before that. And the year before that. How fast has that time flown by? Did you even notice it?

Time slips away before you notice it.

“Change your
24 hours and
you will change
your life.”

Eric Thomas

PART 5



THE ART OF
DECISION-MAKING

“Indecision is a decision.”

Anon

There's a natural order of things. It goes like this:

Decide.  Then act.

Doing comes after a decision. And like it or not, you are about to make a decision.

With every force of reason and emotion and the joy of life, you are about to decide to scratch your damn itch.

But even if you choose to put off making a decision, that is still a decision.

Indecision is a decision. And by default, you choose the path of same and not the path of change.

Not being decisive means you choose to stand outside the ropes and be a bystander of your own life.

The decision-making muscle

The decision-making muscle is like any other; the more decisions you make, the stronger and better it gets. Sure, it may seem easier to sit on the fence and hope things will change. They might; then again, they might get worse.

But if you are flexing your decision-making muscle, analyzing your options, and thinking creatively about the way forward, then you are in the driver's seat. And even if (okay, let's face it, when) you occasionally make the wrong decision, you'll achieve far more than those who don't.

Make a decision. Then act on it.

Voilà! You have propulsion.

“You write your life story by the choices you make. You never know if they have been a mistake. Those moments of decision are so difficult.”

Helen Mirren

The seduction of research

Contemplation. Research. Analysis. Consideration. Evaluation...Paralysis.

Aren't there just a million wonderful ways to put off making a decision?

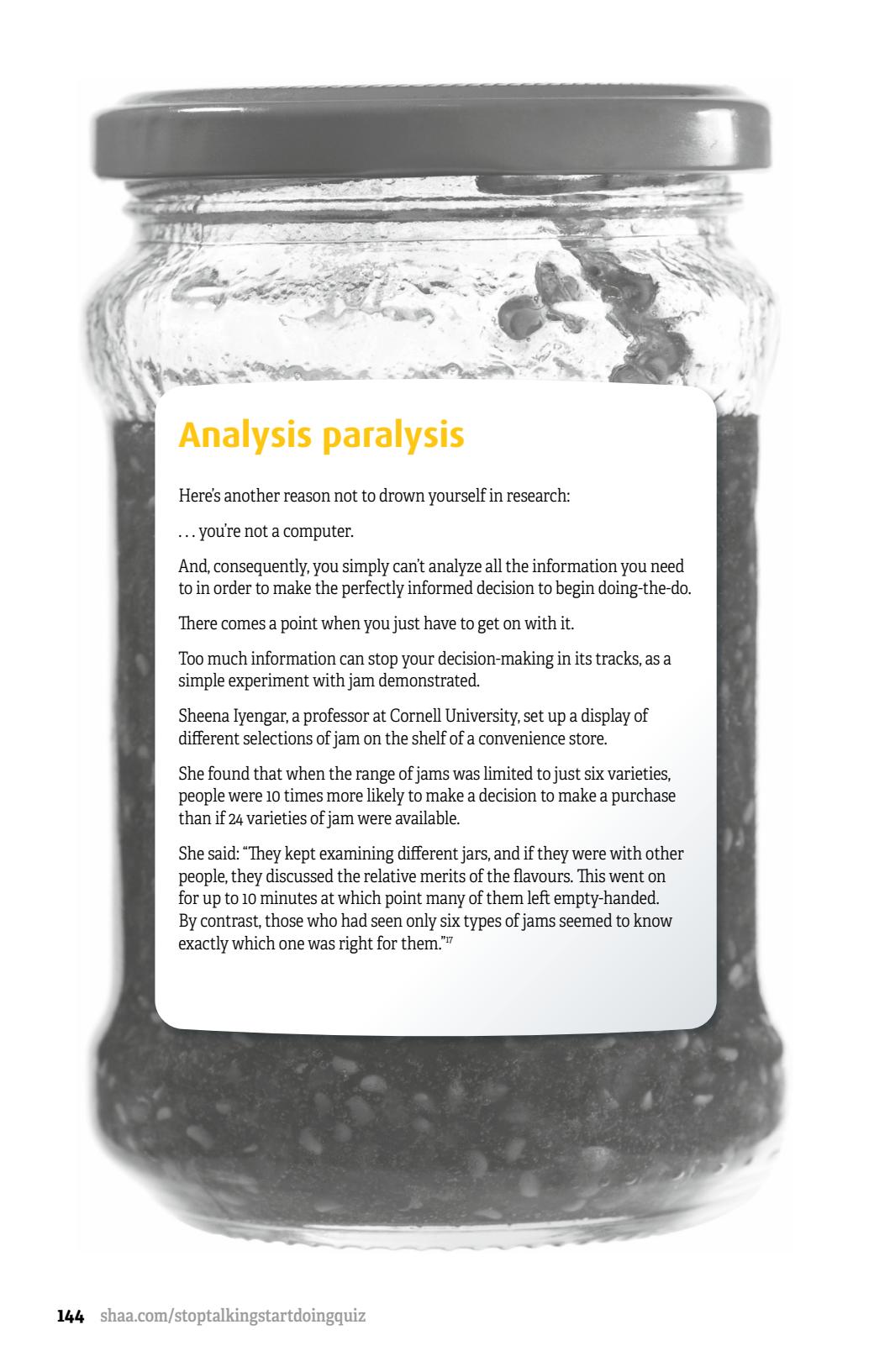
This danger of "drift" has been around since Stone Age man started navel-gazing but, as we said in Part 1, the internet has multiplied these possibilities endlessly. That's what makes action more urgent now than ever before.

There's such a volume and mass of information and opinion at our fingertips that hundreds of millions of us are hooked on the idle "activity" of finding out more information, on seeking ever more fascinating and entertaining "research."

The author Nicholas Carr, who wrote *The Shallows: What The Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, warned that tools like email caused people to become addicted to "mindlessly pressing levers in the hope of receiving a pellet of social or intellectual nourishment."¹⁶

If you add your DMs, PMs, and WhatsApp messages to the mix, you'll find yourself in a neverending rabbit hole!

It might feel fun, but it gets you nowhere. Fast.



Analysis paralysis

Here's another reason not to drown yourself in research:

... you're not a computer.

And, consequently, you simply can't analyze all the information you need to in order to make the perfectly informed decision to begin doing-the-do.

There comes a point when you just have to get on with it.

Too much information can stop your decision-making in its tracks, as a simple experiment with jam demonstrated.

Sheena Iyengar, a professor at Cornell University, set up a display of different selections of jam on the shelf of a convenience store.

She found that when the range of jams was limited to just six varieties, people were 10 times more likely to make a decision to make a purchase than if 24 varieties of jam were available.

She said: "They kept examining different jars, and if they were with other people, they discussed the relative merits of the flavours. This went on for up to 10 minutes at which point many of them left empty-handed. By contrast, those who had seen only six types of jams seemed to know exactly which one was right for them."¹⁷

I'm a big fan of listening to our instincts. Far from being "woo," I think our instincts are actually very scientifically driven. When we need to make a decision, we tap into our past experience and our knowledge and build a picture of the potential outcome.

We don't have to harness some mystical substance in the ether or ask the universe for help. It's chemical reactions and electrical signalling between our brain cells that run thousands if not millions of real and potential scenarios and compute the variables that are relevant to the decision. Our brains assess our experiences at lightning speed.

We look back at the innumerable decisions we've made in the past and how each of those decisions played out for us . . . for better or for worse. And then, very much like an online shop recommendation, "If you bought this, you might like this . . . , our brains tell us what they think we should do next.

Then we get to make a decision – to listen to it . . . or not!

Our instinct is built on real evidence. So why do we question it?

We've been conditioned to question our instinct – by society, by our parents, by school, by social media, and more.

If you're struggling to make decisions, you first need to find your instinct and let it out. Practise making a small decision: don't listen to what anyone else says. Let your brain mull it over for a while.

What comes up?

Practise this over and over until you start to hear your instinct. One day it'll come up with an answer before you consciously think it through.

That's your instinct. Trust it, listen to it. And continue to use it; the more it develops, the stronger it will get.

How losing yourself in the flow can help your decision-making

Does being “happy” help us make better decisions?

In Buddhism, one becomes happy by achieving peace of mind or “equanimity.” To do that, you need to understand the causes of suffering and detach yourself from life’s passions, needs, and wants.

About 75% of people in Bhutan are Buddhists,¹⁸ and they live in one of the most progressively happy countries in the world. In 1972, the 4th King of Bhutan, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, said, “Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product.”

Since then, Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness Index (GNH) has formed the basis for the country’s decisions across all areas from the economy to the environment.

Spiritual leaders throughout the ages have talked about the importance of meaning.

The Dalai Lama believes a “positive atmosphere” gives our lives meaning, and we can achieve this through closeness and compassion.

And you may recall that with his “hierarchy of human needs,” Abraham Maslow said what makes you happy is fulfilling your potential through the act of doing something with purpose or personal meaning.

In other words:

Doing + Meaning = Happiness

But we can develop this idea of how “*doing*” makes you happy even further. And this may help you ensure you are going to make the right decisions.

Because it turns out that the state of “*doing*” that makes you happiest is the one when you don’t even think about the fact you are “*doing*.”

By studying people who love doing what they do, the psychologist Mihaly

Csikszentmihalyi¹⁹ found that time really flies when you are so absorbed in an activity that you lose yourself. Singers, actors, athletes, and painters (and no doubt window cleaners, too) describe this as being “in the zone.”

Csikszentmihalyi called this state of being:

Flow.

FLOW is a state you can only reach through doing something challenging. When you come upon this happy state, you are so absorbed in what you are doing that actually you do not even notice the passage of time, how tired you are, or even if you're hungry.

You can't notice these things because you are totally focused on using your skills and experience to accomplish whatever it is you are “doing.”

Your brain is sometimes too busy to even notice it's dinner time!

And the reason for that is because what you are doing is above averagely challenging for you.

The addition to the mix, then, is that the activity is challenging (but not too challenging) and demands you to develop a skill or ability to accomplish it.

So now we can revise our formula to this:

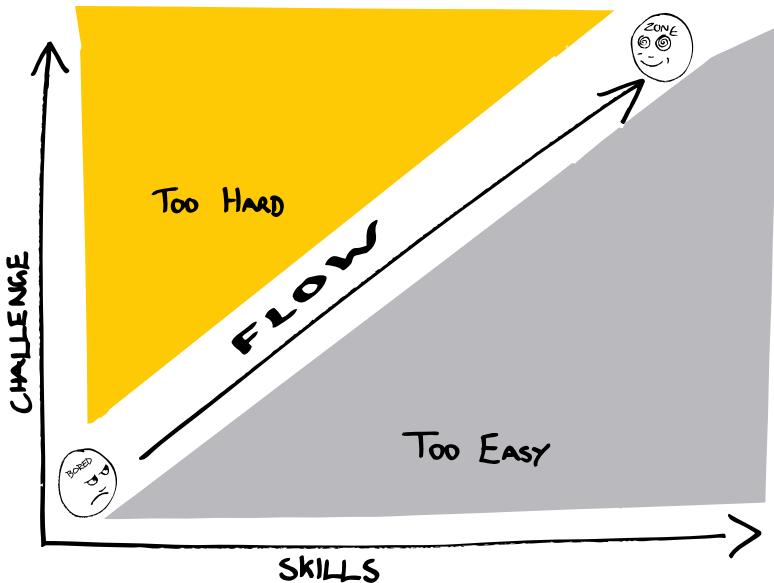
Doing + Meaning + Skill = Flow

Your nervous system can process 110 bits of information per second, Csikszentmihalyi said.

Listening and concentrating on what someone is saying takes about 60 bits per second. If your activity is so challenging and fulfilling that it is demanding upwards of 80 bits per second, then you have increasingly less capacity to process messages from your body like “I need the toilet” and you may fail to notice you are sitting in a funny position and your leg has just gone numb! Next time your leg goes numb and you fall over when you try to stand up, it may just be that you have found your state of flow.

The flow

You are in flow when you are engaged in the “optimal challenge.” This means you are using higher than average skills to do something which is more difficult than average for you.



In his research, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi²⁰ found that flow was experienced by 15–20% of people every day while 15% of people said they never experience it.

In the state of flow you experience:

- total absorption in the activity;
- loss of time awareness;
- loss of self-awareness.

The sort of activity that provides this feeling has these components:

- clear goals;
- matches above-average challenges with above-average skills;
- provides instant feedback as you go so that you know whether you are performing well or need to make adjustments;
- personal control – you have a direct influence on the outcome of the activity;
- a high degree of concentration is required.

As you make decisions about what you are setting out to do and how, check that it meets these criteria.

“Set your life on fire. Seek those who fan your flames.”

Rumi

What you ought to know about the surprising lives of maximizers and satisficers . . .

One of the many ways psychologists define and segment people is by whether they want “only the best” (in which case they are maximizers) or whether they will settle for “good enough” (in which case they are satisficers).

As you consider your next step it might be helpful to know that satisficers tend to be happier with their decision-making than maximizers . . . even though maximizers do “better.”

Take, for example, someone who gets back from work, falls back into their sofa, and starts surfing TV channels to find something to watch.

A maximizer will surf through hundreds of channels – everything available – in order to find the definitive “best” channel to watch.

Meanwhile a satisficer will look for the first programme that is “good enough.”

By the time the maximizer has found the “best” programme it is probably finished or it is 2 a.m., and it’s time to hit the sack.

Their only comfort is that they were pretty sure what the best programme would have been . . . Oh, if only they had watched it.

“Life isn’t meant to be lived perfectly . . . but merely to be LIVED. Boldly, wildly, beautifully, uncertainly, imperfectly, magically LIVED.”

Mandy Hale, *The Single Woman: Life, Love, and a Dash of Sass*

And you don't have to be a single woman to appreciate the sentiment of that.

A satisficer, on the other hand, will watch the whole “good enough” programme and go to bed happy that they watched something pleasurable.

The same goes for much bigger decisions, like choosing a job or even a career.

Sheena Iyengar²¹ (who carried out the jam experiment referred to earlier) and psychologists Rachael Wells and Barry Schwartz investigated how maximizers and satisficers got on with job hunting when they graduated from college and how they felt about their subsequent careers.

They found that while maximizers did better financially overall, they felt worse about their situation and felt more “pessimistic, stressed, tired, anxious, worried, overwhelmed and depressed.” They were always thinking of what they might have missed out on.

Personally, I’d trade some financial gain for overall happiness.

This might be ringing some bells. Maybe you know people with a maximizing tendency. Perhaps you recognize it in the behaviour of friends who are seeking a romantic match, or even something as trivial as someone squeezing every single avocado at the supermarket. Maybe you even spot a few of these tendencies in yourself…

It might seem counterintuitive, but you’re likely to be happier with an outcome if you give “good enough” a chance.

Want to make better decisions? Make fewer of them

Making decisions is tough.

One of the reasons it's hard to make decisions is because it's exhausting. Psychologist and neuroscientist Shai Danziger of Tel Aviv University²² famously studied the outcomes of parole hearings throughout the day.

He found out that first thing in the morning, a hearing was 65% likely to result in a prisoner's release. That probability sank to almost zero right before lunch. After the break (and with the judge's energy levels fully loaded) it went back to about 65%, then fell again to almost zero near the end of the day.

That's a pretty stark example of how making too many decisions can impact an outcome.

By reducing the number of decisions you have to make in a day, you can save energy and feel happier. That's why Moran Cerf, a neuroscientist at Northwestern University, always picks the second item on the menu at a restaurant²³ – one less decision to make.

He also suggests surrounding yourself with people who share your values, and letting them make decisions like where to go for lunch.

But in the end, there will always be choices only you can make. In those cases, you need to marry your ambition with pragmatism. Make a decision that you can stick with and then throw yourself behind that decision.

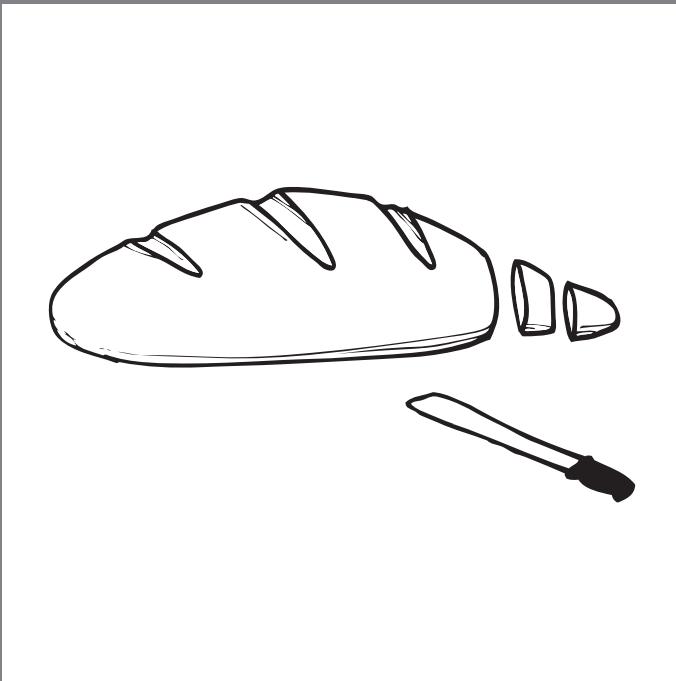
The best solution is always elusive. As many of us know – the grass is always greener in your head than the grass you are standing on!

As the brilliant mathematician, philosopher, libertarian, campaigner for women's rights, and controversial founder of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Bertrand Russell said – in typically precise language:

"When a difficult or worrying decision has to be reached, as soon as all the data are available, give the matter your best thought and make your decision; having made the decision, do not revise it unless some new fact comes to your knowledge. Nothing is so exhausting as indecision, and nothing is so futile."

Hear! Hear!

PART 6



. . . AND ACTION

“Wait!”

Winnie the Pooh

“How do
you eat an
elephant?
One bite
at a time.”

A well-used saying

This is the calm before the storm.

Just before rampaging into the world of doing, pause and take a breath – because a little bit of planning is called for right now.

Let's create a plan to help you create the right goals, goals that are meaningful to you. And then back them up with a plan of action so we'll make them a reality. It's not a question of trying to do all the things; it's about trying to do the right things for YOU.

I've created a little quiz to help you out... Head on over to shaa.com/stoptalkingstartdoingquiz to get started!

A bit of planning

Willpower alone will not get you to wherever you want to be.

You need a plan. Without planning the ascent on your personal Mount Everest, your chances of success are little better than they are of winning the lottery.

Making the right plan starts with defining the right goals. What's your goal?

But wait, you may be thinking, we've covered this already, surely?

The goal is the itch? Well, yes and no.

Setting a goal for the plan is about setting a goal that is reasonable and achievable. In other words, it has to be practical. Your itch might be to be a world-famous climber, to run your own business, to travel the world, to make art. But to make this a reality we need to get down to measurable specifics – to set up an organic farm shop in nine months' time; to purchase a round-the-world ticket by Christmas; to put on a summer show of your best 10 paintings.

So go take that quiz and let's get started, shall we?

shaa.com/stoptalkingstartdoingquiz



Keep It Real

The problem with fantasy goals

Keep a wary eye out for inappropriate goals. One trap that talkers fall into is to deliberately set a goal that is either impossible or such a long shot that it just about guarantees failure.

Which raises the question: Why would they do that?

Well, it turns out that the people who choose such fantasy goals are those who are most paralyzed by the fear of failure.

And the reason they choose goals that are self-evidently doomed to fail is that they pre-empt the fear of failure. The failure is already accepted. In this way, what they do by announcing they are pursuing a goal that neither they nor anyone else believes they will achieve, is to liberate themselves from failing.

Alas, the goal then lives in the world of fantasy and the talker is never held to account by real life.

In fact, they are freed from the burden of really starting.

I'm sure you've heard your goals need to be SMART²⁴ – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timed.

SMART goals were good for 1985, but now it's time to flip the script.

I'm all for setting goals. But forget about making them smart ... they need to be *meaningful*.

What's meaningful to you? What do you really, *really* want?

If you think about it, there's probably one big thing. Maybe two. Never more than three. We need to make space in our lives and our minds, and that means focusing on what's most important. There's no use in setting hundreds of goals for every little thing – you'll end up drowning in failure.

Choose the most important thing and make that your goal.



This won't work

This will

Set your sights high

Your goal must be meaningful, but that doesn't mean it has to be sensible, or even easily achievable. In fact, a really great goal should be slightly outside of your grasp – far enough that you'll really need to stretch to reach it.

Actor Jim Carrey was a struggling comic in 1990, when he wrote himself a \$10 million cheque “for acting services rendered.”²⁵ It was dated 23 November 1995 – Thanksgiving. He kept it in his wallet all that time, until he was cast for *Dumb and Dumber* right before Thanksgiving – for \$10 million.

Chicken Soup for the Soul author Jack Canfield made a \$100 000 bill and taped it to the ceiling above his bed.²⁶ Every morning he would visualize the lifestyle that came with the \$100 000 annual earnings he wanted. Within the first year, he went from earning \$8000 to \$92 000. He then tried it with a \$1 million bill. It only took a few years to receive a book royalties check for that amount.

I can only imagine the gross revenue he has since made from the *Chicken Soup* series.

Hollywood action superstar Bruce Lee wrote a letter to himself, in which he pledged he would become successful and possess \$10 million by 1980. Today, the letter is displayed at Planet Hollywood.

You can do this too.

Visualize yourself achieving your goal. Get excited about it. Obsess over it. Live it and breathe it.

Come rain or shine, you'll be driven to move towards your goal. It won't matter if you don't feel like going for that run or studying for that exam, you'll do it anyway.

Your goal is more important to you than your tiredness, your lethargy, your lacklustre performance.

A true goal isn't just smart, it's powerful. It will override everything.

What you see is what you get.

“A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at.”

Bruce Lee

My way of looking at it is that the journey to the goal can also be the destination . . . at least we'll make progress along the way.

Planning

Having successfully defined the goal, you need a plan.

The plan will break down the journey into bite-size achievable parts and provide a critical path.

Chunk it down.

This is critical. Viewed in its entirety, the journey from talking to doing can appear so overwhelming that it is paralyzing.

By examining the constituent parts of the whole, the project becomes less intimidating; it allows you to focus your energy on the most important elements and to do them in the right order.

For example, losing 2 pounds a month sounds far more focused than losing 2 stone in a year. It allows you to measure your progress, reward your progress, and react to changes as your plan bumps into real life.

And you can be sure that whatever your plan is it will be sorely tested as soon as it faces the intervention of real life.

As the impressively named nineteenth-century Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder of the Prussian Army said:

“No plan survives contact with
the enemy.”

This isn't to say that there's no point having a plan, but that your plan may have to be adapted from time to time once you start implementing it.

“Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.”

Pablo Picasso

And if that plan doesn't work . . .

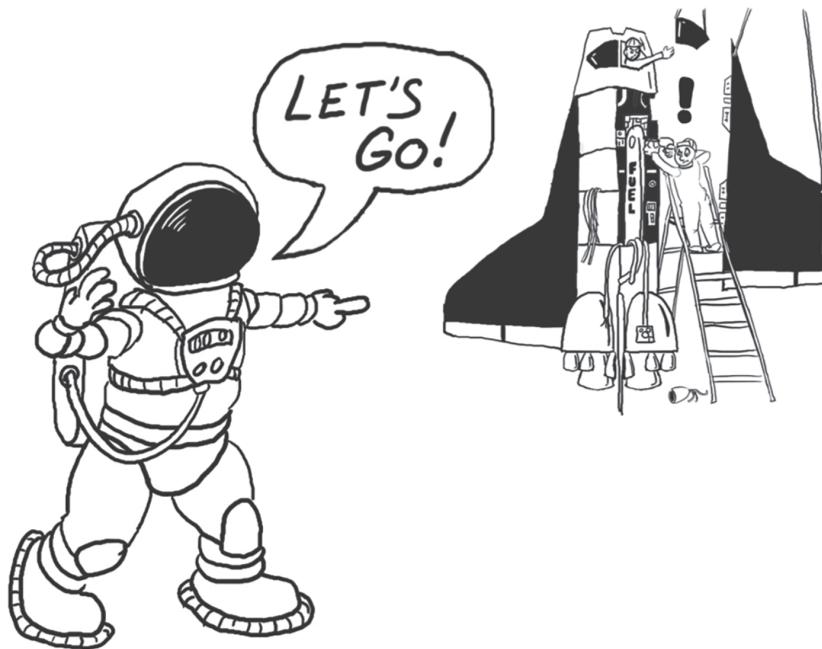
“I don’t believe in failure. It’s not failure if you enjoyed the process.”

Oprah Winfrey

The critical path

This is a project management term used in business to describe the sequence of events that a team must follow in order to deliver a goal in a certain time. If one event is delayed by a day, the whole project will be delayed by a day.

For our purposes, the critical path simply means you need to work out in what order your chunks of work have to be completed to get the result you want.



First Things First

The key is to make each little chunk of your plan – each step on your critical path – small and achievable. Then all you need to do is map them out and follow the directions.

The best way to do this is through reverse engineering.

I know it sounds a little bit of an odd concept, as we are so used to planning forward, but reverse engineering is far more likely to succeed.

Start with the end in mind. In order for you to achieve that goal, what has to happen? Work it backwards; then when you get to the start, you can knock the first domino over and watch the rest fall into place.

Let's say your goal is 12 months away. You can break that down into quarters and have a smaller goal for each 90-day period. Then break each quarter into 30-day periods. Then each month into weeks, and so on.

Eventually, you'll see really clearly what you need to do today to achieve your goal in a year.

So what does this look like? Well, let's take setting up a business as an example. What are the steps that you would need to take and in what order to give yourself the greatest chance of success? One thing's for sure, don't jump ship until you have a "critical path" in place!

Let's say you want to open up an organic cafe, but you're currently working in, say, HR. Your "critical path" would begin with research and planning – all of which will be done in your "spare time" – and here's what that path might look like:

Path to a successful organic cafe

Location: Where are you going to open up this organic cafe? A city centre will be a lot more expensive than by the coast. Or at least that used to be the case! Is this part of a whole life change or just a business one?

Cost: How much is it going to cost you? Are you leasing or buying the premises? How many staff will you need? Will you need to invest in equipment or furniture? How much stock will you need to buy? How much are you going to charge for your food? What profit margins will you need to make a profit? Etc. etc.

Business plan: Once you have a good idea of costs, you can start on a business plan. Not having one would be like crossing the seas without a compass. Not a very clever idea.

Raise money: Now you've decided on a location, have figured out how much it will all cost you, how to make a profit, and how much cash reserves you need to get there . . . you need to figure out where you are going to get that cash from. You might choose to use your savings or draw down equity from your home. You may downsize or take out a loan. You may even do a combination of all the above.

Jump: Once you've got your finances in place, you're ready to
. . . jump!

What if you're not starting a business?

Well, the same rules apply whether you are relocating to the coast, changing careers, running a marathon, or losing a dress size.

Simply put, you need to know the steps you need to take and in what order to take them in order to get there.

Once you've got that, your chances of success increase exponentially.

Things to help you on your journey and things to trash

Now that you are moving deep into the land of doing, you should use every tool you can to ensure you stick to the course . . . and be careful not to waste time or energy on thoughts and activities which do not help.

Fortunately, we can benefit from the study of 5000 people worldwide by Richard Wiseman, Britain's only Professor for the Public Understanding of Psychology.

The author of the highly recommended book, *59 Seconds*,²⁷ found five steps that help maintain motivation throughout the course of a project . . . and five that don't . . .

Five actions that help

All these actions will have a psychological benefit and are proven to help you scratch your itch.

1. Public commitment.

Tell people close to you – friends, family, work colleagues – about your plan and commit to them that you will see it through.

Human beings are far more likely to see a project through if they have made their ambition public. And, of course, you'll only get support in the difficult times from people who know about the battle you are waging.

2. Step by step.

Chunk the work into pieces as discussed. By making the work manageable, and bite-sized, you reduce the chances of being overwhelmed and therefore increase the opportunities for micro successes along the way.

3. Rewards along the critical path.

And as you achieve each success along the way – celebrate! Go out for dinner; buy yourself flowers; play some music; have a night off. Whatever works for you!

4. Keep track.

Marking your progress really helps. Writing a diary, drawing charts of your journey, drawing pictures . . . all these things help make the process real, remind you of what

you have achieved, and keep you focused on the next step. The same applies whether it is working towards your fitness goals or your career goals.

5. Do it for the right reasons.

Reminding yourself of the positive reasons why you are working hard towards your goal will help keep you on course. Whether it is the clothes you can wear having lost weight or the decisions you will make once you become your own boss – thinking about this helps.

Five actions that *don't* help

These actions are neutral. At best. Since they don't help; don't waste your energy on them.

1. Motivating yourself by hero-worshipping someone.

As Wiseman wrote in *59 Seconds* about the participants in his research: “[People who put] a picture of Elle Macpherson or Richard Branson on their fridge door did not tend to drop that all-important clothing size or achieve their business ambitions.”²⁸

I gotta be honest, I don't know how I feel about this one as I have a picture of JLo and her abs on my vision board!

2. Doing it for the wrong reasons – thinking about failure or how you hate what you're doing.

Trying to motivate yourself by thinking about how miserable you are because of the unscratched itch, or how terrible you will feel if you fail, will not work. Negative thinking such as this will not help you focus your energy and discipline on the goals you have set.

3. Suppressing unhelpful thoughts.

You can't diet by refusing to think about cream cakes. The more energy you put into not thinking about something the more energy you send in that direction. If I tell you don't think about a pink elephant for 10 minutes . . . what would you start thinking about?

4. Fantasizing about scratching the itch.

Those who daydream about how fabulous life will be once they achieve their goal are less likely to get there. Because they are focused on having achieved success and not about the process of getting to success, they are unprepared for bumps and hiccups along the way. They are probably also more likely to be disappointed by the distance between where they are today and where they want to be. The lesson is that while it's nice to fantasize about the goal – it won't get you there!

5. Relying on willpower alone.

Willpower isn't a plan and isn't a support structure. It's important but it doesn't get you the whole way there and trusting to it alone will lead to disappointment.

(Source: Professor Richard Wiseman, *59 Seconds*, PanMacmillan, 2009.)

The futility of using willpower alone as a way to achieve even a short-term goal was demonstrated once again by psychologists in possession of marshmallows!

The researchers told a group of 4-year-old children, in individual tests, that they would receive extra marshmallows if they could restrain themselves from eating a single marshmallow left on a table when the researcher left them alone in a room for up to 20 minutes. The kids who stared grim-faced and determined at the marshmallow and tried to get through this time period through sheer willpower failed.

Those who made it focused their energy on HOW they would get through the period – they sang songs, covered their eyes, or walked around the room. Many years later, researchers tracked down the kids – by then adolescents. Those who had lasted the 20-minute trial and demonstrated their ability to “delay gratification” and control their impulses had achieved happier lives as measured by being psychologically better adjusted and scoring significantly higher in their US high school Scholastic Aptitude Tests.²⁹

“Discipline dominates motivation.”

Shaa Wasmund



This won't work.

A personal slogan

Yes – listen up, cynics – you need one of these.

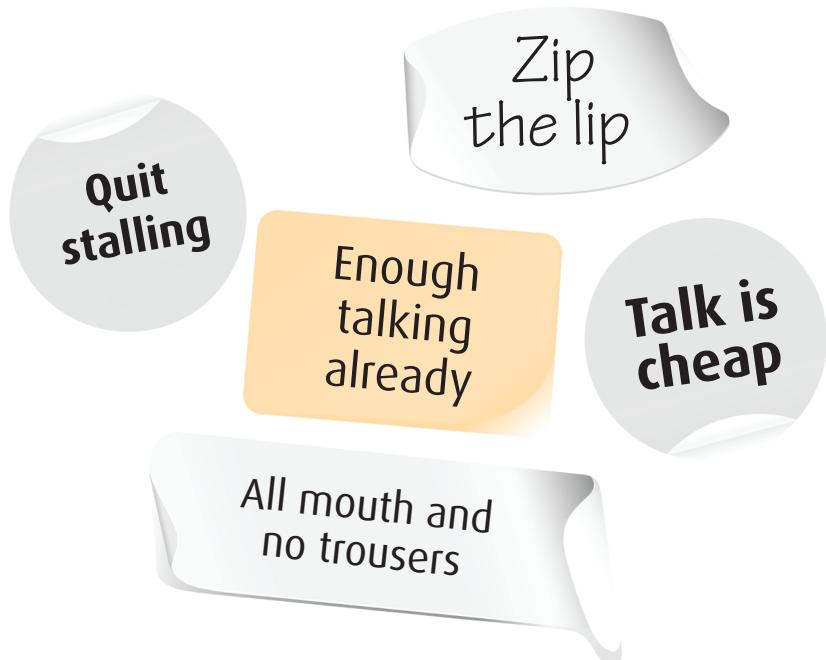
A slogan. A mantra. A device to help you get into the positive habits that will help propel you toward continued doing.

And it also serves as a thumping great mallet with which to bonk yourself on the head if you start slipping back into the noisy and directionless world of talking.

So choose a slogan. Make one up. Whatever works for you.

Let's say it's "TALK IS CHEAP" – stick it to your bathroom mirror, your desk lamp, your fridge – wherever you need it.

Or make it the wallpaper on your computer or your phone.





Time for action

Now what?

Now you grab life by the collar, shake it, shape it, and own it.



You know your itch. You have translated it into
a clear and meaningful goal.



You know yourself so you know how you will
commit to making this change a reality.



You know you need a plan.



You know what will help you and what won't.



You know regret weighs more heavily than fear.



You know for certain that the clock is remorselessly ticking.



You know that the sting in life's tail is how fast it flies by while
you're working out what's important and what isn't.

. . . and now it's down to you

As the Tibetan Lama said in the story at the beginning of this book:

"The point is that if you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all. What are your priorities in life?"

Everyone has unique challenges. You have to face your own demons and deal with the challenges of your personal circumstances.

Maybe your best path is to wait tables at night, live with your parents, and save your money to go travelling or run your freelance graphic design business during the day.

Perhaps you're too old, too proud, too alienated, have kids, or live too far away for that. Then this is your reality, and you need to make a plan that works with it.

Maybe you recognize that your itch is to express yourself by making art of some kind. Then you might question whether you should keep your day job and find the comfort that you can in knowing that your suboptimal job affords you the money and the energy to make art in the evenings.

The scenarios are as endless as grains of sand, and they are almost as plentiful as the excuses people create for not making their dreams real.

If you are going to do it, then by now you know it.

Start.



I GOT
KICKED!

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A graduate of The London School of Economics, **Sháá Wasmund's** entrepreneurial career had an unusual start. At 22, she won a competition to interview Super Middleweight boxing champ Chris Eubank and ended up helping to promote his next fight to a sold-out 48 000 live crowd and an 18 million TV viewer audience. Sháá remains an ardent boxing fan.

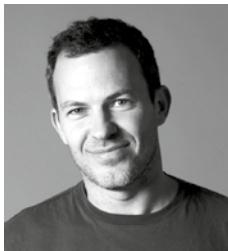
Shortly thereafter, she set up her own PR and marketing company and won the then relatively unknown vacuum cleaner company Dyson as one of her first clients. Working alongside Sir James Dyson, helping to establish Dyson as a global brand, taught Sháá more about business than any MBA. To this day, Sháá credits James as being one of her biggest sources of inspiration.

Sháá's love affair with the internet began after she became a founding director in Sir Bob Geldof's online travel company. A year later, Sháá raised substantial funds to launch mykindaplace.com – an early social networking site. The company was later sold to BSkyB.

Sháá is a prolific public speaker, digital native, and passionate champion of small businesses. Amongst other accolades, Sháá has been voted by the Institute of Directors as one of the UK's Most Connected Women, one of *Management Today's* "35 Under 35," and *Growing Business* magazines "Young Guns."

In 2009, Sháá launched Smarta.com, the UK's #1 resource for small businesses. Smarta is a highly innovative business platform providing advice, networking, and tools for business owners, backed by leading entrepreneurs Theo Paphitis, Deborah Meaden, and Michael and Kochi Birch. In 2011, Sháá launched Smarta Business Builder, a groundbreaking cloud-based toolkit for business.

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Richard Newton is an entrepreneur, consultant, and writer. After spending almost ten years writing about business for the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Mail on Sunday* and others, Richard decided to switch sides, walk the talk, and run his own business. He co-founded a software company that supplies brand management solutions for many of the world's largest consumer brands.

He is now a co-founder, director, board adviser, and/or mentor at a number of tech companies and start-ups including Screeendragon, Call Trunk, and Txt2Buy.

He runs the Newton Principals consultancy and writes about being creative in business, the importance of good language in business, and the urgency TO DO THINGS!

He writes at [richard-newton.com](#) and can also be reached at [@richnewton](#).

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