

Insight.



CLEVERNESS. POSITIVITY. MASTERY.



Mastery

Guide to learning, achieving goals
and developing skills

Introduction

In this part of the book you will find a collection of my tools, ideas and advices about learning and achieving goals. I assume that you are trying to achieve a long term goal that requires learning and achieving mastery at something. I will cover all the ideas on this topic if that is the case. However, you don't have to use all of them if your goal is smaller and simpler. Just take the basic ideas presented in this part of the book, learn the pattern and apply it to your situation.

Why Do You Need It

Since you are reading this book you already know why mastery is important, but I will tell anyway. Setting goals is an incredibly useful tool for guiding your actions and achieving what you want and need. With the cool and effective techniques I am going to describe, you will be able to achieve mastery at almost any field you have set your eyes to.

I believe that you don't want to aimlessly wander around in your life until you get lost or die. I trust that you want to be in charge of your life, have the control of it and a clear direction to move towards. Setting goals is the right tool for that.

I am saying this right off the bat. I assume that you already know what you want or at least have a general direction how you would like to lead your life. You are most likely looking for tools to clarify it, to create a strong and precise structure that will make your dreams come true, to become reality. I trust that after reading the previous parts of the book, you have no more doubt on what is that you desire the most, what kind of path to take in your life.

Because you already have a clear goal in your mind, there is no need for a long introduction so let's get straight to the point.

Setting Goals

First of all, you have to define your goals. It is impossible to have just a vague idea on what kind of mastery you would like to achieve. Make your goals as clear and precise as possible. Even if what you want is abstract, like "I want to learn painting, blogging or any other kind of skill", it is still better that it is vague and general than no goal at all. Without defining goal, there is no way that you could be defined as master of something.

The next part of defining your goal is a bit more complex. Your goal has to be measurable in a way, so you can always know whether you have achieved it or not. You have to be able to track your progress. In case of painting, you can set a goal to become

an artist whose works are represented in exhibitions. In case of blogging, you can set a goal to have a certain base of readers of your blog.

When you have decide what exactly your goal is, it is time to think of how and when you are planning to achieve it. At first this might sound hard to do, especially if you are trying out new areas in your life, but once you are sure of your passion for a particular activity and use the tools that I am sharing with you in this part of the book, it will become crystal clear to you.

5 Year Long Term Goals

Since you want to get the most out of your life, start with understanding what is that you want out of it the most. Choose few most important long term goals for yourself. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? What are the 3-5 most important things that you've achieved by then, things that changed your life the most? These few most important goals will give you the general direction to move towards. They will help you with creating smaller goals that will allow you to achieve the big ones. It is the best if they cover the most important areas of your life such as work, relationships, health, etc.

Once you've done that, see if your goals are smart. Check if they match the [S.M.A.R.T.](#) criteria. This is a simple, yet effective tool that allows you to improve and define your goals better.

So your goals should be:

S.M.A.R.T.

Specific

I have written this earlier, but I can't put enough emphasis on how important this is. Your goal has be specific, clear, unambiguous. There has to be no doubt on what exactly it is that you want to achieve. No matter what kind of situation you are facing, it is always better to know what is it exactly you want, try to create a precise image of the goal in your head as clear as possible. If you skip this part of goal creation, your success is doomed at the very beginning. It is like being blind with a blind dog as a guide dog. It might work out, but the chances of that are very slim. If you are to choose a guide in your life, make sure it is clear-cut and obvious.

Sum up your goal in one sentence. Think about what exactly do you want to accomplish and for what reasons. Possibilities in your life are almost endless. If you create a vague goal, it is very likely that you will lose the reins of your life carriage and follow directions that are laid out by someone else. Knowing your goal will help you to focus your efforts and be more clear in your intent. You will see the world differently. You will instantly know whether the opportunity that arises is helping you to reach your goals or will that

only lead you astray.

In order for a goal to be specific, you have to know not only what you want to accomplish, you have to know why you have chosen something as your goal. People face many temptations every day. Some of them help you with achieving your goal. Others help you with relaxing. Don't get me wrong. Even Einstein enjoyed a cup of coffee time after time, while he was working on theories that would change the way how people see the world. However, there are few people that have achieved as much as he has. It is much easier to give a careless life. That is how alcoholics and drug addicts have chosen to live their lives. They have no direction, no purpose in life. If they had a dream, a big dream to follow, they would probably give into temptation once in a while, drink a glass of wine or two, but their lives would be lead by their ultimate passion, a passion from which a big part of humanity could benefit like science, art or philosophy.

On the other side it is common in modern society to believe that having such ultimate life goal requires a lot of painful sacrifices. It is a sad belief, indeed, that if one is following his or her dream, it would come for a big price. It is not true. Not all great poets or inventors have suffered from poverty, not all great workers feel tedious while working. In contrary, the circumstances people are in are secondary, if they enjoy what they are doing.

So why you should choose something as your goal? Because of the benefits you get by accomplishing it. If you want to be a master of something, you have to choose a skill that you enjoy doing. It might not always be fun as playing a game or laying at the beach, but there is no reason to pursue mastery in activity you find dull or boring. It has to be something you love doing, that gives benefits you enjoy having. There is no need to pursue a career as an actor, if you don't enjoy public attention.

Now that you know what you want and why you want it, see if your goal is also measurable.

Measurable

You should always be able to tell whether you have achieved your goal or not and, if possible, how close you are to achieving it. You want to be able to see your progress towards your life goal. To know how close or far you are to achieving your goal, it has to be measurable. It is not possible to know how you have progressed towards your goal, if it is not measurable. You can't know even if you are actually moving towards your goal or away from it if there is no concrete criteria on how to measure its progress.

A measurable goal will help you stay on the right track, reach your smaller goals and feel the joy of achievement once you reach them. Later in this book I will give you tools that

will help you with splitting your big goal into smaller parts so the measurements would be easily tracked.

All measurable goals are goals that have a definite way how to know if they are accomplished. If you want to be an accomplished painter, for example, you can set your big goal to have at least three personal exhibitions. If you have set your goal like this, you can easily track your progress. Once you have had your first personal exhibition, you know exactly how far you have gotten in reaching your goal.

Attainable

Your goal should be possible to achieve. It has to be reasonable, within your abilities, and you need to believe that you can do it. The best goals are challenging, but possible to attain, they are not extreme. It is important that your goals are within your reach, otherwise setting them would be meaningless.

When people are specifying the goals that are important to them, it is natural to look for ways how to make them come true. There are some attitudes, abilities, skills and financial capacity one can work on developing in order to reach the ultimate goal. However, there are also limitations that can't be overcome regardless of how much passion or money one has to make the dreams come true.

If your goal has to do with your physical attributes such as health, ability to sing or getting at better shape, there are genetic limitations which could possibly prevent you from reaching your goal. For example, it is possible to learn to sing, a lot of people are good at singing, and some of them even perform for big audiences in opera halls or rock concerts. However, it is very unlikely that a tone deaf person could master the skill of singing.

When it comes to physical shape, there are a lot of limitations too. All people can gain or lose weight to certain extent, but the body shape usually remains more or less the same. It is impossible for a tall person with big bones to look like a tiny Christmas elf. On a side note, I'd like to mention that if you set your goal to lose weight, think of how to maintain it too. It is a common mistake to starve oneself for few months, lose some weight only to get it back month later after quitting diet. If your goal is to have healthy weight, regardless if you want to lose or gain it, it is important that you find a diet that you could enjoy for the rest of your life, a diet you wouldn't want to quit at all.

When you are certain that you have the capacity to reach your goal, see if it really is important for you or the society you live in. This means that your goal has to be relevant.

Relevant

The goal that you are pursuing should matter to you. It should transform your life in the way that you want. If you have consciously chosen the 3 most important 5-year goals in the previous steps, it obviously won't be a problem. If you feel that the time, effort and resources you are investing in reaching your goal will pay off, the goal is relevant and worthwhile. It is worth pursuing.

Sometimes you might need support from others to accomplish your goal. If you want to be an accomplished painter, it is not enough to create a lot of paintings. You will need either a manager to help you with selling your artwork or create good relationships with people who might be interested in displaying or purchasing your art. If your art, or your blog posts, or your books match the needs of contemporary society, it is relevant to them. It is worth doing things that give benefit to both you and society. If you are an accomplished artist, you can earn living by making art and bring joy to the souls of people that love your paintings.

For a goal to be relevant, make sure that you are the right person to do it, and that it is the right time to make your goal true.

Time Bound

Set a particular date, a strict deadline by which you want to achieve your goal. According to the Parkinson's law "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." In order for you to be able to plan and be motivated to move forward, you want to know the date or at least an approximate time, by which you will achieve your goal.

If you ground your goals within a time frame, your efforts on completion will be more focused if you have not set a certain time limit for yourself. A deadline or a milestone will give you a sense of urgency. Once in a while life happens and you have to give up your goal to focus on things that need immediate attention. If your goal is bound in time, it will be much harder to abandon it. If you set time frames for smaller goals, you will know that you have to get this or that done this week, this month or within six months.

Correcting The Course

Once in a while you may be in doubt, whether the goals that you have set are good

enough, you may worry that you will change your mind, or that circumstances may change, or that it won't necessarily work. Don't. It is important to understand that the goals that you have picked are needed to give you a general direction, a point to move towards from now on. The closer you will get, the more experience you will have and the better you will understand what is it that you want and how it is done.

As you are going towards goal, you will be correcting the course. I love the following plane metaphor: when a pilot is navigating a plane, he just starts moving in a general direction, and the closer he gets to the point of destination, the better he can adjust the course to end up in the right place. Pilots aren't be able to set a perfect course in the beginning, and if they would try, they wouldn't eventually lose the right track somewhere in the middle of flight. It is too hard to know everything that you are going to do from the start. However, the further you go, the clearer it gets.

Gather all the necessary information that you need for the start, then go. At the very beginning you just need the information that will allow you to take the first step. By the time you are done, you will already have an idea what to do next. That is way more productive and simple than trying to predict everything you can encounter on your journey before you have even started.

Trust your judgment, believe that you will be able to correct the course and make the right decisions as you go, be flexible when needed and find other ways in case something doesn't work. Often you may not have all the information needed to accomplish the goal, but the interesting thing is that you don't always have to. Get all the necessary information for starting, and believe that you are able to figure out the rest as you go.

Get On With It

Once you have put a reasonable amount of thought into setting your goals, get on with it, start working on it as soon as possible. Don't doubt yourself too much, don't get stuck in the indecision. There is a point where trying to think and plan more is counterproductive. Don't confuse planning with procrastination. Sometimes the worst choice and action is better than making no choice and continuing to be stuck. So make the best decision based on the information that you have, and get on with it. Remember that you can always course correct later. The sooner you start, the closer you are to reaching your goal.

Commit To The Goal

Commit to the course of action that you have chosen and have faith in yourself. You can consciously set a certain time (every week or month or even every evening) to reevaluate

your goals and correct the course, but the rest of the time **align your thoughts, feelings, and actions** towards achieving the goal, and remove all the doubts. Make the 5 year commitments. It may be hard for you to figure out all of your life goals right now, but you can commit to the most important goal for 5 years, and then figure out what to do next.

Creating The Plan

After you've decided on your major goals - create the plan of achieving them.
How do you do that?

Breaking Down

This is a simple yet amazing tool that I'm always using - breaking down. You take your complicated long term goal, and break it down into 3-5 pieces, 3-5 major steps that this goal consists of, without worrying about the details. And then focus on achieving the first of these steps.

That let's you to stop worrying about how to achieve the one large and complicated goal, instead you can just figure out how to achieve the first part of it(which is 3 times simpler and faster), and by the time you've done that(and get a lot of experience and understanding from it) start to figure out how to achieve the 2nd part.

But the first step will be also kind of complicated, so - you break it down one more time. Pick the first step, break it down into 3 most important steps needed to achieve it, and then break down the first of these steps again.

Do it until you've got a very clear and manageable task that you can accomplish in about one month. This task will be very easy to understand and solve, yet at the same time it will be the best thing that you can do to achieve your goal, and by the time you've done with it - you'll move on to the next, then to the next, etc.

After achieving 3 smallest goals you'll have achieved the first larger goal, after achieving the 3 larger goals you'll have achieved the first step on the path to your big ultimate goal.

If the big goal was supposed to take you 3 years to accomplish, on goals of the first level of breakdown will take you 1 year, 2nd level - 4 months, 3rd level - slightly longer than a month.

Micro Goals. Pomodoro Technique

And, of course, after you've got your daily goals you may break each of them down into 3-5 small 20-30 minutes tasks.

The great technique that may help you with that is "[pomodoro](#)".

It's a simple, yet very effective time-management technique.

The idea is that you're setting a small task, work on it 25 minutes nonstop, then take a break, then get to another one.

This helps you to focus and really upgrades your productivity, and also encourages you to see any goal as a series of a very small and understandable tasks that are easy to accomplish.

Developing Habits

30 Day Challenges

Now that you know your goals, from the largest ones to the smallest - you know exactly what to do.

The best thing to do now - is to develop habits.

Achieving goals is a long term process, so after you know what to do - you want to develop a daily routine, set of tasks that you get used to. So that achieving your goals becomes a part of your life, so that every day you're getting one step closer towards what you want.

The best way to develop habit's is a 30 day challenge.

Brain readjusts and gets used to new behaviors in about a month, so if you'll keep repeating the same thing every day for 30 days - it becomes natural and very easy for you.

Gradually Implementing 1 by 1

I have a several tasks that I've decided to do every day. It includes exercising, blogging, freelancing, learning physics, etc.

It's hard to start doing all of them at once, so it's a good idea to start with getting used to doing one of them every day, and after it gets easy - add another.

That way I developed a habits to accomplish 5 daily goals every day, and each of them contributes to my monthly goals, which then will combine into yearly goals, which will lead me to achieving my dreams.

Principles Of Learning

Now that you know exactly what to do, have goals, clear plan, and daily habits to support it - there's almost 100% certainty that you will succeed.

Here are the major principles that you might wanna to use in the process that will help you very much with that:

Massive Action.

First of all – take massive action. Learning without doing – it's like reading books about body building without ever going to the gym. Your knowledge about the subject is like a map that shows you how to get to the goal. Action – is actually moving forward and walking a way towards it. Find a minimum of necessary knowledge to be able to start acting – and then act. Don't procrastinate by reading tons of books before you start. You will learn all the information that you need along the way. Come up with a practical challenge, figure out the first little step that you need to take – and then take it. If you're reading information for a good practical reason you will learn it so much faster. This is the main force behind progress, this is the source of real experience.

Deliberate Practice.

Second, and equally important principle. Deliberate practice means consciously setting challenges for yourself and solving them. Constantly pushing forward instead of just going through the repetitive motions. You can practice twice as hard. Deliberate practice to action is

Cultivate Your Passion

Enjoying what you do is crucial. You *need* to love what you do to get really good, it is not optional. If you don't love what you do – you're doing it wrong. Getting mastery at anything is a long process, it's a marathon, not a sprint, and you won't get too far relying only on your will power. They say that you need 10000 hours of practice to become a pro, nobody can put so much effort into something if it's not fun.

And also life is too short to do things that you don't like.

But if you don't feel a strong passion now – don't worry. Passion is not a preexisting quality that you either have or don't have. It is something that you can learn and develop. Look for ways to do that. [This](#) post may help you with that.

Understanding First, Then Speed And Efficiency

This concept is similar to deliberate practice. Don't rely on your subconsciousness. Don't

expect to get good by mindlessly doing something over and over again, without understanding how, hoping that you're "training your subconsciousness", hoping that mere repetition will make you better. Start with doing things slowly, understand each step. And *then* your brain gets used to it and automates the process, which enables you to do it faster or focus on more precise details. But don't try to skip to this part, don't hope that you can get good without detailed understanding of how you're doing it, understanding always comes first.

Get In The [Flow](#)

[Flow](#) is a state of being completely immersed in what you're doing. When you're in flow you're completely focused, present, and very efficient. This state feels incredibly good, I believe this is a reason why people enjoy doing complicated things like science, art, or music.

Read more about it [here](#).

Consistency

Getting good at something is a long term task. Getting better consistently is a lot more important than getting better fast. Approach everything you do with that idea in mind. Do not rush, keep in mind the big picture. Make sure that you're not stressing yourself out so you won't quit. This is a reason why drinking coffee or taking nootropics is not a good idea. You need to keep steady pace, you need to be able to keep doing what you're doing in a month, in a year. Health matters. Develop habits that you can do every day that will naturally lead you to where you're gonna be in a long term.

Inner game

Every activity has "outer game" – things that you do physically, your 'technical' skills; and "inner game" – your attitudes to what you do, your mindset, everything that happens in your mind. Inner game is equally important, so learn it, pay attention to it. It includes your ability to focus and deal with stress, your state of mind, your emotional intelligence, your fears, etc. If you're stuck or unable to move forward – it is possible that your problem is not in knowledge or in technical execution, but in your inner game.

Know That You Can

If you'll do anything for 10 years straight – there's no way you won't become a master (of course, some level of brain usage required). Understand that if you won't quit – success is inevitable. Don't let anybody mess with your confidence, to tell you what you can't do. There's a difference between intelligent course-correcting and irrational fears/doubts.

It's a cliché – but “believe in yourself”. Once you have made a decision – don't doubt it. If failing is not an option for you – you won't fail.

Shortcomings Are Irrelevant

If there's no way in hell you'll give up something in your life, if you've decided to accomplish your goal no matter what - that means that this IS happening. Therefore your shortcomings can't stop you. It doesn't matter how hard it gets or how long it takes - if in the end you'll achieve your dream that you're not willing to give up.

If you're afraid that you're not clever enough, or not pretty, of whatever else - you will become as clever as you need to be in the process, you will find a way around any other shortcoming that you have.

Other advices and tips

Using Pomodoros

As I've said it's a great technique, you can read more about it [here](#).

Managing Expectations

Manage your expectations. You need to clearly understand what you can and can't do. If you'll constantly expect from yourself something impossible, something that is way beyond your abilities - it will just screw with your state(mood), and be counterproductive(because you're less productive if you're unhappy and unsatisfied).

And, of course if you'll expect too little - you'll just get lazy and move slower than you can, you don't want this either.

Manage your expectations of yourself and make sure that your tasks are interesting and challenging, yet at the same time - perfectly doable.

You Are Not Your Skill

Action Is The Only Criteria For Success

Make action your only criteria for success. You can't directly control your skills or results,

what you can control is your actions. As long as you're following your goals and doing your best - be happy and satisfied about that.

You can read more about it in my post about the [flow](#).

Canai

Canai is a word made up by Tony Robbins, it means "Constant And Never Ending Improvement". It means that you commit to getting better at what you do every day, that every day you set some little goal that makes you better in some area.

100%

Be 100% engaged in what you do, use all your powers, all your capacities. Always try to do your absolute best.

Never do anything half assed, if you've decided to do something - get the most out of it, and do it in the most efficient way.

Consistency vs Long Run

Achieving mastery at anything is a long term process. Don't expect to use hard and fast rules or tricks to get it, remember that you don't have to get good at what you do in a week, or a month. You need to get good at this **eventually**. And rushing will not speed up this process, it will only mess with it. Therefore - choose tools and make decisions that will work in a long run, do sustainable things that will keep you healthy, happy, and moving forward in a year, in 5 years, in 10 years.

Set out for the long run.

No Rules Just Tools

Understand that all the ideas are just tools designed to help you, they're useful, but not obligatory. Use whatever works, abandon or change as you think is best everything else.

Do Whatever Works

This is simple. Do whatever works best. Don't get confused by emotions, or social conditioning, don't do or feel stuff if it's counterproductive, just because it's easier/more "natural" response.

Don't get distracted, don't fall into "auto-pilot" reactive mode, when you're just reacting on the situation around you, when you're being the effect of the things that happen around you, not the cause.

Use your logic to figure out what works best, what's in your control, come up with the plan of action, then - execute, and feel good about it, be proud that you're doing the best thing you can do. Remember - doing the best thing that it's in your power it's all that matters and all you *can* do.

Conclusion

Follow these principles, and I believe that they will help you to achieve your goals. Good luck)