

# How to Change Your Life

Let's start things off with a simple question: Are you living the life you want to live?

If the answer isn't an immediate and enthusiastic, "Fuck yes," then something's wrong.

This course is designed to help you answer this question and **take action** towards changing your life for the better.

This may seem a little daunting, but we'll break it down into more manageable parts so you'll be able to work towards a better life over the coming months and years.

And then, a year from now, you'll ask it again, re-evaluate, and begin working towards it again. This is an annual process—every year; we need to re-evaluate where we are and where we're going.

I've done some form of this exercise every year for over a decade now. When I started, I was broke, struggling with a new business, living on a couch with a very unhealthy lifestyle. Now, I'm living the life of my dreams. In fact, I can unequivocally answer the question above with an immediate, "Absolutely." And I think that's a pretty astounding success.

This system is an adaptation of a similar exercise a good friend of mine has done every year for well over a decade now too. I've modified it over the years and it's been influenced by some other **goal-setting techniques** I've come across. So you may recognize parts of it. It's not revolutionary by any means.

But it works. And that's what's important.

## The Foundation for a Better Life

Before we dive head first into this, I want to you to consider what you think would **make you a happier**, more fulfilled person. What would make your life better than it is right now?

Is it **more money**? More sex? More love and adoration and respect from your family, friends, and peers? Would **traveling more** and trying “new things” make you happy?

Is it all of those things?

Whatever it is you think will make you a happier person, I’m willing to bet it falls into one or more of the following categories: freedom (financial or otherwise), **relationships**, and health. That’s because these are the three major components of happiness. And if you seriously lack one or more of these in your life, it’s virtually impossible to be content and fulfilled.

If you feel like you lack freedom, like you have little control over how you spend your time, you’re not going to feel very happy most days.

There’s that cliché saying that money can’t buy happiness. And that’s true. But when used correctly, it can buy you freedom. When used incorrectly, money can actually make you *less free*.

This why people with high-paying jobs who work 80+ hours a week to keep those jobs are often **miserable**. They have no freedom, no sense of control over how they spend their time.

Conversely, this is also why people with more flexible careers who make more modest incomes are often happier.

To an extent, the way you make your money is more important than how much money you make.

And then there are the relationships in our lives. I can’t even count how many stories I’ve read or heard about the three-times-divorced billionaire who tears up in an interview and says he’d give his fortune all away for just one good relationship and children who actually talk to him.

It might seem obvious, but if you have few or no **close relationships** that enrich your life, or if the majority of your **relationships are toxic and unhealthy**, well, it’s not going to be too hard for you to be miserable all the time.

Of course, all the freedom and fulfilling relationships in the world don't mean much if you don't have your health. Here's another cliché example: Go down to the cancer ward at your local hospital and ask someone on their deathbed if they'd rather have a zillion dollars or not have cancer anymore. Be prepared for some serious glares and maybe a bedpan or two thrown in your direction.

Now, we've all heard these clichéd parables repeatedly throughout our lives. But many of us don't really put it all together and see that it's not just one of these things that [makes us happy](#).

You really need some degree of all three – freedom, fulfilling relationships, and your health – to feel a sense of contentment and happiness in your life at least some of the time.

The point of all this is that I want you to keep these three areas in mind when going through this course.

You may find that you have solid relationships and that you're young and healthy, but what's really draining your enjoyment of life is a [lack of freedom because of your job](#). That's good to know. Work on that.

But not at the expense of your relationships and health.

The beauty of this "happiness triangle" is that getting one of these areas of your life in order can create a positive feedback loop with the others.

Finding a job or starting a business that doesn't strap you to a desk against your will for 50 weeks out of the year can free up time and energy to focus on your relationships. Cultivating and contributing to [healthy relationships](#) in your life – romantic or otherwise – has an enormous positive impact on your health and general well-being.

If all of these areas of your life are a mess and you have to pick one to get started on, start on your health. Having a healthy mind and body can give you the confidence and energy you need to be present and contribute to your relationships. And it goes without saying that doing your job well or running your business is much easier when you're healthy and clear-headed.

So, with that in mind, let's do this.

## How to Use This Course

For now, I will spare you all of the science and information behind [goal-setting techniques](#) and why writing things down seems to have a “magical” effect on your brain. I'm just going to tell you flat out: Do these exercises in a quiet place without distractions.

Take your time, don't rush through it.

You'll work on the exercises and your progress will be saved here as you go along (don't forget to hit the save button!). Then at the end of the course, you'll have a PDF document that you can save and/or print out. This is important. Periodically check back and review this document throughout the next year. (Or check back [here](#).)

And remember, life changes. Things happen that are out of your control or that you didn't see coming. Be flexible and adapt as you go along. Don't be hard on yourself if things don't go as planned (they very rarely do anyway).

I'll be giving some brief examples of each step of the exercise but it's important that you make this your own process.

Be creative.

Be bold.

Good luck.

## Step 1: Brainstorming

The first step is the easiest and probably the most fun. You'll take 20 minutes to yourself, and write down everything you would like to do in your life before you die. Everything. No matter how big or small, how trivial or important.

Just because you wrote it doesn't mean you have to do it, the point of this step is merely to get our mind exploring.

Write down anything that sounds even remotely cool, remotely possible (or impossible). Anything that sounds like it'd make you excited to wake up in the morning.

This should start out very easy but get harder as the time goes by. Hold yourself to 20 minutes! Chances are the last 5-10 minutes you'll be straining your brain. But keep going anyway.

Example:

- Things I'd like to do before I die...
- Experience zero gravity in outer space
- Get a graduate degree
- Learn French
- Complete a marathon
- Live in China
- Go to the north pole
- Visit the pyramids
- Play chess in the park
- Take a trip somewhere
- Take a trip somewhere nice with my mom
- Have kids
- Volunteer for underprivileged youth
- ...

As you do this first exercise, you may feel yourself get self-conscious or start judging some of your answers. Stop doing this!

This list is just between you and yourself. There's absolutely no reason to be ashamed of anything you write. And if you do find yourself hesitant to write too much, perhaps you should ask yourself why you're so scared of accepting many of your own impulses. On the other hand, chances are, when you're writing your list, 2-3 entries are going to pop out at you, like giant strobe lights on your page. The specific entries may surprise you as well. This is good.

If you have a lot of surprises on your list, or if a lot of your entries have got you thinking or reconsidering some things already, even better... In fact, if you feel like you're already processing a lot, you may want to take a break for a few hours before the second step.

## **Write down everything you want to do in your life before you die**

Eat at a really fancy restaurant

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Visit the Canadian North

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Lucid dream consistently

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Learn how to play jazz piano

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Get married and have kids

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Start a non-profit for humanism

---

Get better at sex

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Take LSD

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Learn advanced math

---

Develop an app

---

Get off psychotropic medication

---

Become an early riser

---

---

Experience virtual reality

---

Augment myself with AI

---

Celebrate my 100th birthday

---

Produce and write my own song

---

Live in a large house

---

Write a book

---

Kick my porn and masturbation addiction

---

Learn Mandarin

---

Have more friends

---

Have better social skills

---

Become an early riser

---

Become a millionaire

---

Become famous

---

Fix my posture

---

Not get divorced

---

Take care of my parents when they're old

---

Have a good relationship with my brother

---

Make money from the stock market

---

Learn how to sing

---

See my kids become successful

---

Get good at art

---

Find a mentor

---

Become a mentor

---

Maintain my fitness

---

Learn how to cook

---

Meditate regularly

---

Achieve self-transcendence

---

Share my life philosophy with others

---

Become a philanthropist

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## Step 2: Ideal Life, Long Term

Now that you've got your brainstorm list and you've come up with more ideas of things to do than you'll ever need, it's time to start honing in on what your ideal life should look like.

This is where things start to get interesting – and a little bit real. But you'll still have to use your imagination quite a bit and tap into some desires that you may not have known were there.

This time, spend 20 minutes writing down the following:

Describe your ideal life five years from now. Describe it in as much detail as possible. Describe where you would live, what you would do each day, what job you'd have, who you'd spend your time with, what you'd spend your time doing. Take your time and be as specific as possible.

Keep in mind, anything is possible with this exercise. We're still fantasizing here. Doesn't matter how possible you feel this life is or isn't, write it down.

Chances are, once you finish this, your mind will already be brainstorming ways to connect the dots from now to then. This is good. We've now got your mind working actively on figuring out ways to achieve your dreams. This is a fundamental first step. You're now motivating yourself from your own desires and not simply by pleasing others!

### **Describe your ideal life five years from now below**

- In a long-term relationship with the girl I'm sure I'm going to marry - Have a steady stream of income from entrepreneurship, teaching piano, and/or stocks - Still living in Toronto - Have large network of friends - Good mental health - Youthful appearance

## Step 3: Ideal Life, Short Term

This exercise is exactly like the last one, except instead of projecting your ideal life in five years, you are going to project it for one year.

This time, make sure your choices are realistic and attainable, but also that they are a step towards your answer for Step 2.

### **Describe your ideal life one year from now below**

- kicked porn and masturbation habit for good - exercising regularly - finished coding bootcamp - developed my own app - in a long-term relationship, after going on many dates - have more friends - learned jazz piano - made more money from stocks - started teaching piano again

As you'll notice, this projection is getting far more actionable. In fact, after you've written it, it should be pretty obvious many of the steps you can start taking towards it.

But wait, we're not done yet...

## Step 4: Passion/Time Ratio

Now it's time to really dig into your life and what you're spending your time doing and root out the activities that aren't serving you or moving you toward your ideal life.

This exercise is a three-parter. First, write down everything you spend your time doing each day. Ignore the small things like brushing your teeth or showering or sleeping. Focus on the big ones.

Once you can't think of anything else, scroll down and in the second column write down how many hours per week you generally spend doing this activity. If it's something larger like traveling or seasonal like going to White Sox games or something, then just specify that in this column — "two weeks per year," or "10 Saturdays per year," or whatever.

Finally, in the last column, give each item a rating, from 1-10 based on how much fulfillment you get from that activity. Basically how happy that activity makes you.

Example:

activity	time	value
Watching TV	15 hrs/week	4
Work/Commuting	50 hrs/week	3
Watching movies	4 hrs/week	6
Hanging out with friends	5 hrs/week	8
Browsing the internet	20 hrs/week	6

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And so on...

Finally, once you've got your lists finished, go back through and look at how the numbers line up. Activities which you spend a lot of time doing should have high numbers. Activities you don't spend much time doing should have low numbers. What we're looking for are mismatches.

For instance, in the example above two big mismatches pop out at you. The first is that this person really doesn't enjoy their job and they work long hours. That sucks. It's hard to be happy and motivated and confident when you're dropping 50 weeks on something you only value at a 3.

The second mismatch is that they're spending two hours a day watching television, but it doesn't deliver much value. Meanwhile, they're averaging less than an hour a day hanging out with friends, something they really value and enjoy.

The answer for this person is clear: ditch the TV to spend more time with friends (or invite your friends over to watch TV with you) and get the job situation figured out.

All this is just from a short, very basic list. Chances are your list has a lot more going on in it.

## **Write down your daily activities, and time spent and fulfillment rating per activity**

activity	time spent	value
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## Step 5: Goals VS Habits

In step 4, you looked at how you currently live your life. You probably noticed that you spend much of your time on activities that aren't very fulfilling.

Our goal, as I'm sure you've guessed by now, is to turn this upside down so you're spending the maximum amount of time possible doing things that make your life awesome. So we should just design our perfect life and start doing that, right?

Well, not quite.

This is where a lot of people go wrong. They think of a bunch of new year's resolutions or whatever, but before long they're back to their old behaviors and have forgotten about their goals.

The problem is that most of our behavior is governed by habits. Habits are behaviors that are performed automatically, and changing habits is hard. Research shows that trying to change too many habits at once practically always fails.

Instead, in this step you're going to think of one positive, new habit to install in your life. It takes 1-2 months of conscious effort for a habit to become ingrained. Once you've created your habit, you can create a new one, until your life is full of awesome, life-improving automatic behaviors.

## How to Create a Habit

If you haven't already, read my [Guide to Habits](#). This guide goes in-depth on what habits are and how to break old habits and create new ones.

In this guide, I explain:

"Habits form when you engage in a behavior *repeatedly in the presence of consistent stimuli*. That last part is important. Habits are “automatic” responses to familiar environmental cues. You save mental energy by developing habitual

responses to familiar cues, situations, and even people that you encounter on a regular basis.

Countless studies have shown that habits are comprised of three main parts: an environmental cue, a behavioral response, and a reward (or the removal of an unpleasant stimulus).

### **CUE → BEHAVIOR → REWARD**

For example, if you're a smoker, your cravings are typically triggered by a cue that you associate with smoking. For instance, finishing a big meal, drinking a beer, or seeing someone smoking a cigarette on TV.

This cue then triggers your desire to perform the habituated behavior. Then you smoke, and your brain rewards you – you feel more relaxed, calmer (and of course, the nicotine helps as well).

**Habit researchers have found that in order to create new habits (or break old ones), we should NOT focus on the behavior but rather focus on the cue.**

The “reward” component of the habit equation above is used to reinforce your target behavior after you've successfully completed it."

The first month or two, you consciously have to repeat the behavior. After a while, the pattern will become ingrained in your brain and eventually you will perform it practically automatically.

## **Exercise**

Think of a new behavior you'd like to make a habit. Then think of a cue for that behavior, and a way to reward yourself after performing the behavior. If the behavior itself is already rewarding for you, then the reward isn't necessary.

### **Examples:**

- As soon as commercials start on your favorite TV program, do some stretching.

- Each morning after brushing your teeth, do a minimum of 10 minutes of meditation with [Calm](#) or [Headspace](#).
- Right after waking up, write a minimum of 500 words for your book. Reward yourself with a snack you love.
- When you get home from work, pack your gym bag and go straight to the gym. Reward yourself with your favorite TV show afterwards.

## **Write down the habit you want to create below**

Make sure you specify a cue, a behavior, and a reward.

## Step 6: Your Action Plan

From the previous steps in this course, you should have developed a pretty clear idea of what you need to be doing different, both in the short-term and in the long-term. Hopefully you've been made aware of things that you'd like to be a part of your life which currently aren't. And hopefully you've identified some things that are part of your life, but you'd prefer they weren't. You should also now understand how goals are best leveraged as part of a system of habits.

The final step will be to develop a system that will help you bridge the gap between where you are now and where you want to be in the long run—that is, your ideal life.

### Exercise

Review what you wrote in step 2 when you envisioned your ideal life 5 years from now. Identify 3-5 of the broad, long-term goals in your description.

Let's look back at the example I provided in step 2:

*My ideal life in five years would be me living in California, probably Los Angeles. I'd have my own place near the beach. My work hours would be flexible so I could go surfing often. I'd be focused much more on freelance coding and programming rather than stuck to any individual firm, so I'd have a lot more control over my workload and pay. I'd have a couple kids who would go to a good school. I'd have a lot of time to read and I'd be in the best physical health of my life. I'd get back into painting, and do it from time to time each week, maybe even sell a few of them. Etc....*

Notice how you can pick out broad goals from this description:

1. More professional freedom (flexible work hours through running a business)
2. Start a family (kids)
3. Improved health (best physical shape of my life)
4. Etc...



We're going to create a system that will get us closer to these broader, longer-term goals. The way we do this is by breaking each goal down into smaller, more manageable parts across more manageable time frames.

So, what's *one thing* can do this year to get you closer to one of these five-year goals? Then, what's *one thing* you can do this month to put you on track to achieving your yearly goal? What's *one thing* you can do this week to put you on track to achieving your monthly goal?

And finally, what's one thing you can do today to put you on track to achieving your goal for the week, which puts you on track to achieving your goal for the month, which puts you on track to achieving your goal for the year, which puts you on track to achieving your goal for the next five years?

## Example

Sticking to the example I provided above, three broad, long-term goals I identified were:

1. More professional freedom (flexible work hours through running a business)
2. Start a family (kids)
3. Improved health (best physical shape of my life)

I'll break these down to give you an example of how I'd do this.

Long-term goal	Run a profitable business and be financially independent
1-year goal	Earn \$25k+ from my coding side business
1-month goal	Get 2 new clients
1-week goal	Pitch 10 leads
Daily habit/action	Research and call/email 2 leads per day

Long-term goal	Start a family
1-year goal	Get a girlfriend
1-month goal	Go on three dates
1-week goal	Hang out with a new group of people for one night
Daily habit/action	Start a conversation with at least one stranger every day: face to face, dating apps/sites, social media, etc.

Long-term goal	Be in the best physical health of my life
1-year goal	Lose 20 pounds
1-month goal	Lose 4 lbs
1-week goal	Workout at least 5 days this week
Daily habit/action	Minimum 30 min daily exercise: gym/kickboxing, pushups/situps/pullups, bike ride, jog, etc.

When you're done with this exercise, you should have the backbone of your system with 3-5 goals to work towards over the next year. Remember, start with *one* goal-habit combination and after about a month or so, you can reevaluate and adjust. Move on to the next habit if it's going well or adjust your daily action if it needs some fine tuning to keep you on track.

## Create your action plans

## Congratulations, you're done!

If you've completed everything in this course, you now have a clearer long-term vision of what you want your life to look like, some definable, actionable goals to complete within the next year, and you now have starting places to begin moving towards those goals.

Like I said in the beginning, I recommend repeating this exercise each year. In my experience, it's normal to meet most, but not all of the goals you set each year if you keep on top of them. Maybe two out of three or so.

If you do these exercises consistently for a few years, you'll realize a couple things: Your priorities change with time, and what you may consider very important today, may not seem as important a year from now.

The more of your goals that you achieve, the easier it'll become to achieve subsequent goals.

Because that's the beauty of all of this. Discipline is a skill. If you exercise it, it gets stronger. Achieving goals based on your internal desires and motivations builds self-esteem and increases your motivation into the future.

Doing this sets off a chain reaction, that if you follow it long enough, implementing change into your life will become easier and easier. And one day, years from now, you'll look back, and maybe you won't even recognize the person you are now.

And that'll be a good thing...