Intro

We are approaching the end of 2023. Are you excited for 2024? Or are you feeling tired and living without clear intentions? Many people go through life on autopilot, meaning they don't live with clear intentions; they live in a state of inertia. The problem? They lose motivation to wake up early, they lack the energy to work hard, they constantly feel tired, and they're always waiting for the weekend to relax. Are you one of them?

The solution? You need to gain a sense of your life by first reviewing it. Without knowing where you currently stand and where you're headed, how can you make improvements or set new

goals? I believe that reviewing your life at the end of the year can be incredibly beneficial.

- You can evaluate various aspects of your life and goals on a larger scale.
- You can plan your next steps effectively.
- You can take a moment to celebrate your achievements.

However, you may not know where to begin. That's why I created this guide.

Today, there are three primary points I want to discuss:

- How to review your life across different areas.
- How to set clear intentions or goals.
- How to keep your promises.

What & How to review?

Reviewing your professional life is straightforward. You have a history of records and figures to compare. For instance, if you're a salesperson, you can easily track how many deals you've made. However, it's not as clear-cut when it comes to your personal life. So, the first step is to determine which aspects of your life you want to review. Most people consider the following areas:

- Career
- Health (physical or mental)
- Financial well-being
- Education
- Hobbies
- Various relationships (marriage, dates, friendships)
- Childcare

You can ask yourself at least these questions:

- What did you do well?
- What didn't you do well?
- What did you learn?

Example: To assess how you manage your health:

- I exercised regularly, about three times a week.
- I ate out less frequently, maybe once a week.
- I drank 2 liters of water every day.
- However, I indulged in junk food whenever we ran out of groceries.

- I learned that I need to plan meals better to avoid resorting to junk food.

Action: Repeat this process for each area of your life that you want to evaluate.

Tip #1: Use Data

Secret: If you haven't been keeping records this year, I highly recommend starting a digital note-taking journey. Without documenting your actions, how can you properly review your past self? Your notes will be invaluable.

Humans naturally have biases, which have served us well. They help with quick decision-making and save energy by avoiding repetitive analysis of similar situations. However, biases can hinder us from reviewing our actions with precision. To avoid this, we need data.

For example, at the beginning of the year, I wanted to track my efforts in health, finance, and education. So, I wrote weekly, monthly, and quarterly reflection notes for each category. These notes became crucial data points.

Not only do they help me see what I did, but they also provide insights for setting goals based on my actions throughout the year. So, I recommend a data-based review. If you don't have data readily available, spend a day or so writing down everything you consider significant. Then evaluate how you've done this year.

Action: Review your areas of interest, but do so with data for a more objective assessment if you have it.

Tip #2: See Both Sides

We tend to focus on the positive aspects during retrospectives. Celebrating wins gives us a sense of achievement and is uplifting. On the other hand, acknowledging our mistakes and failures can be painful. We often try to avoid facing them. However, by doing so, we miss out on important lessons.

Remember the quote I love: "[Failure is not the falling down, but the staying down](#)."

Consider that mistakes and failures are actually steps toward your goals. They represent effort, not shame. Think of it this way: You learned how to ride a bike after stumbling hundreds of times. Falling wasn't a mistake; it was just another attempt to figure it out, right? So, don't view your setbacks as something to be ashamed of. Instead, see them as opportunities to improve for next time.

Example: What I did: I wrote notes while listening to YouTube music. What was the outcome: I ended up watching random YouTube videos whenever I felt like it.

Action: To view the negative sides constructively, think about:

- What you did
- The outcome of your approach
- Which parts you could have done differently

Use this feedback to make better plans and execute them. Remember, mistakes are not failures.

Tip #3: Be Kind to Yourself

We often try to be as nice as we can be to people around us. Yet, we are often too hard on ourselves. Be gentle with yourself. Give yourself a hug. No matter what happened this year, you made it through. Even if this year was tough for you, remember that life is a marathon, and a brighter future awaits. While it's important to assess what you did well and what didn't go so well, having a healthy relationship with yourself is even more crucial in the long term.

Plan for the Next Stages

Once you finish your review, it will provide insight into how you can adjust your steps for your goals in the future. Here are a few useful thoughts:

Think About Your Pace

We tend to overestimate how much we can achieve without sustainable consistency. Let me illustrate with a common scenario among those who aspire to make changes:

Step 1. They want to write every day. Step 2. They set an ambitious goal to write 1,000 words every day. Step 3. They start writing for the first few days (often less than a week), and some even publish their work. Step 4. But then, nobody responds. They wonder, "How can people ignore my powerful messages?" Step 5. Frustration sets in, and they stop working for a month. Step 6. After a month, they muster the motivation to start again.

If you find yourself in this cycle, I want to tell you this: you might be focusing on the wrong keyword. Consistency is what truly matters. However, to be consistent, you need to find a sustainable approach. If you can't write 1,000 words a day, start with 200 words. You'll likely be more productive if you don't give up. Many people quit because they set unrealistically high standards for themselves.

Action:

1. Everyone has a different pace. Please, avoid comparing yourself to others. Instead of asking, "How can I achieve this as fast as someone else?" think, "How can I achieve it in

my own way?" That's what truly matters.

2. Give yourself a buffer. For instance, if you can write six articles per month at your peak, aim for writing four posts. Having a buffer allows you to consider more realistic scenarios and provides mental space, reducing stress in case unexpected things happen. Trust me, this isn't lowering your goals; it's about balancing your expectations with reality. Fewer frustrations lead to less stress. Remember, publishing four posts is far better than publishing nothing.

Think about your approaches

While working on your goals, did your strategies prove effective? If not, what other options can you explore? I'm not suggesting that you should change your tactics every time things don't go well. However, if your methods haven't yielded the desired outcomes over the course of a year, it's reasonable to consider that they may not be the best fit for you. Everyone may have a different path to achieving their goals, and it's essential to find the one that works best for you.

Example: I've always aimed to write effectively. For years, I attempted to write after work, but I found it exhausting and lost interest in writing. This year, I decided to change my approach. I tried writing in the morning before starting anything else, and it turned out to be one of the best decisions I made all year. I wrote significantly more than in recent years by making this simple adjustment.

Action: Take some time to document your strategies for achieving your goals and evaluate their effectiveness this year. If they didn't work as expected, consider what changes you could implement.

- Your environment? For instance, working in a cafe instead of at home.
- Your schedule? Such as working out in the morning instead of after dinner.
- Your methods? Like trying different software or purchasing new books in your field, among other options.

Compound effect

The outcome you expected

You stop here
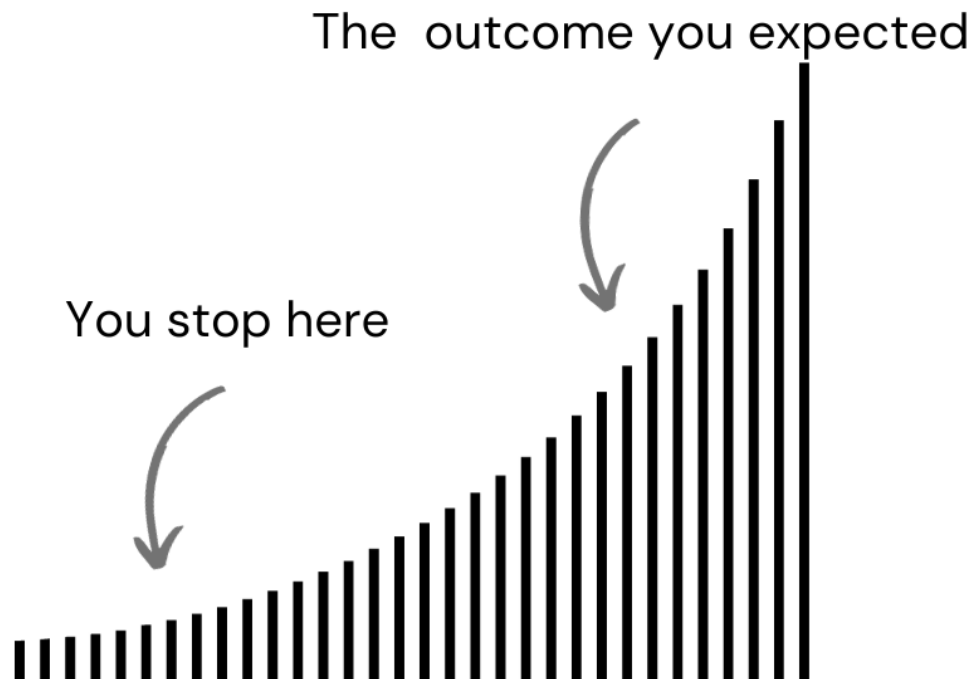
Secret: small choices + consistency + **time** = significant results

Life is all about choices, isn't it? Eating junk food for a day doesn't result in health issues. However, if you consume unhealthy foods for 20 years, you will probably face some health problems. Similarly, overspending a few times doesn't lead to financial issues. But if you consistently spend money without saving for 20 years, your life may not be easy after retirement.

The essence of the story is that everything compounds over time. To achieve significant results, you need to persist for an extended period.

So, I'd like to share a quote from Austin Kleon today: "Never quit the show." Regardless of the area you aim to improve, keep pushing yourself until you see results. It's important to recognize

that we're often accustomed to seeking instant gratification, which can lead us to quit when we don't see quick outcomes. This is akin to farmers harvesting crops before they fully mature or pilots ending their flights before their planes safely land. It might seem irrational, right? So why do you expect rapid results in your own journey?

Action: Reflect on the choices that can help you achieve your goals. Write them down and consistently follow through. Most importantly, give yourself the gift of time for growth. Enjoy the process, as achieving all your goals won't guarantee everlasting happiness, as I mentioned earlier.

Ignore unnecessary things

**Secret**: Unnecessary tasks will not lead to success.

More often than not, we become fixated on trivial matters. We get triggered by them and find it challenging to let go, even when we know they're not significant. For me, it was all about note-taking. I've always aspired to be a writer, and I naturally became obsessed with taking notes and meticulously organizing them throughout my life. As you can imagine, I tried countless software options—Notion, Evernote, OneNote, to name a few—believing there had to be the 'RIGHT' tool to facilitate organization and writing effectively. After years of fruitless pursuit, I came to the realization that fixating on tools wasn't the key. What truly mattered was cultivating a simple habit of taking notes and writing daily. So, I made the decision to let go of these minor details and instead began writing at least one article since October. Finally, I started channeling my energy and time into the right place—writing.

Action: Identify tasks and activities that consume your time and attention but don't contribute to your goals. For example, excessive note-taking, preoccupation with organizing tools, or intricate desktop setups.

Then, release them. Focus on what truly matters. You'll be amazed at how much energy and focus you can save for the things that hold significance to you. Keep in mind that our mental capacity is limited, and we can't do it all.

How to not break your promises

[Use inversion thought](#)
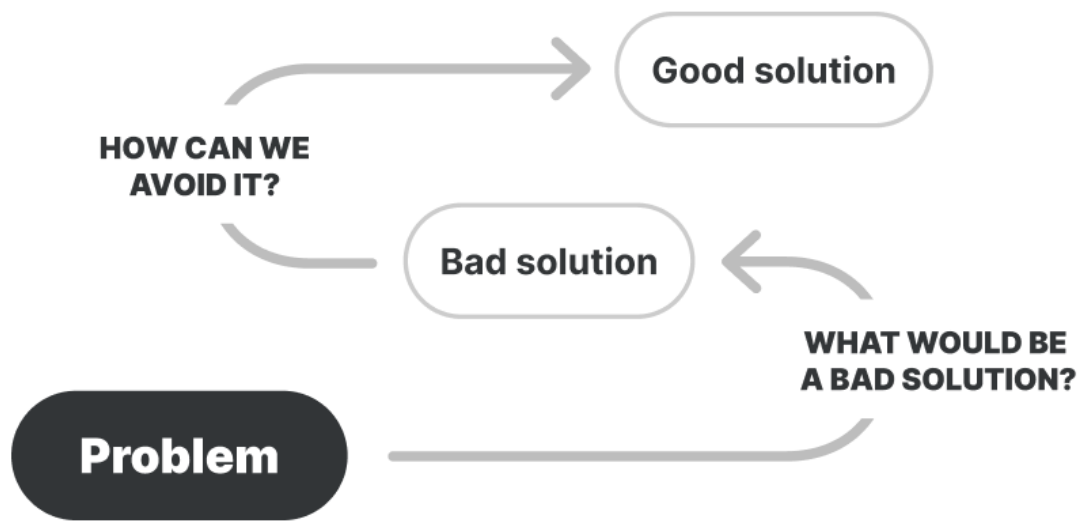
If I were to choose the best advice I learned in 2023, this is probably it. Thanks, Alex. Inversion thinking is a strategy where you solve a problem by examining it from the opposite perspective or by considering what you should avoid rather than what you want to achieve.

To provide you with an example, instead of asking, "How can I create a successful business?" you might ask, "What could lead my business to failure? Write these down and steer clear of them.

Example: Let's say you want to lose 10 lbs in 6 months. What could prevent you from achieving this goal? It might include frequent dining out, exercising only when you feel motivated, and indulging in sugary foods. Now, reverse the approach. Don't dine out unless you have a plan. Exercise consistently, regardless of your mood. Cut out sugar.

Action: As demonstrated in the example, jot down your goals and identify factors that hinder your progress. Eliminate them from your path.

Pause for a moment and enjoy what you have

Secret: gratitude is a superpower.

"Hedonic adaptation" explains that we often desire new things without fully appreciating what we currently have. For instance, after receiving a promotion, we might still yearn for a larger

paycheck. Having strong desires is beneficial, as it motivates us. However, if we become insatiable, we risk pushing ourselves too hard and feeling disappointed if we don't achieve what we desire. Expressing gratitude serves as an antidote to hedonic adaptation. Engaging in an annual review allowed me to reflect on my journey so far, appreciate my accomplishments, and contemplate how I can improve in the coming year.

Conclusion

I found the annual review super beneficial when done throughly like this.
A few key takeaways (TL;DR)

- Reflect on your life at a macro level, considering various aspects of it.
- Be nice to yourself
- Plan for next stages while treating your review as feedback.
- Avoid burnout by finding a manageable workload that works for you.
- Compound effect is REAL!
- Ignore things that don't really matter
- Inversion thinking is the THING

I hope you find this information useful and that it serves as a helpful tool for planning your upcoming year.