



Book Mojo

How to Get It, How to Keep It, and How to Get It Back If You Lose It

Marshall Goldsmith and Mark Reiter
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Recommendation

“I got my black cat bones all pure and dry, I got my four-leaf clovers all hanging high, I got my mojo working,” says the happy refrain of “Got My Mojo Working,” a 1956 song by Preston Foster, later made famous (with slightly different lyrics) by bluesman Muddy Waters. “Mojo” originally referred to a magical charm bag used in hoodoo, traditional African-American folk magic. The term mojo now connotes the idea of a positive life filled with meaningful activity. Is mojo working for you? If not, executive coach Marshall Goldsmith, in collaboration with author Mark Reiter, knows how you can get it going. Goldsmith, whose mojo is performing overtime, is an easy-access writer. In this cheery, if not terribly original, self-improvement book, he uses “mojo” to mean a happy sense of purpose. He tells you how to boost yours with some upbeat philosophy and good, uplifting case histories. *BooksInShort* recommends this guidebook to anyone who seeks a reboot – and you won’t even need a four-leaf clover.

Take-Aways

- “Mojo” means positive engagement, a feeling of happiness that radiates from within and exuberantly emanates outward.
- This sense of joy and meaning leads to a purposeful life in the here and now.
- Mojo is not a natural state. It is something you must work to develop.
- “Nojo” is mojo’s exact opposite: bitterness and dissatisfaction.
- Mojo has four aspects: “identity, achievement, reputation and acceptance.”
- Successful people build the identities they want, not the ones their past or other people might have dictated. A sense of identity and achievement is the essence of mojo.
- Mojo concerns both your personal identity (“you”) and your life situation (“it”). To achieve balance, sometimes change the “you”; other times change the “it.”
- Use the “Mojo Scorecard” to measure the joy and meaning you derive from each activity you do based on 10 criteria.
- The “Mojo Toolkit” helps you reject negativity, deal with problems you can change and set aside the ones you can’t change.
- You can enhance your mojo alone, but it’s easier if you ask for help.

Summary

How’s Your “Mojo”?

Is your mojo working? Mojo is a sign that you’re at full speed. It’s your good fortune and drive, the element that’s working when you’re doing something optimistic and good. It’s the spark that others recognize. For athletes, mojo means being “in the zone.” It is a “positive spirit toward what we are doing now that starts from the inside

and radiates to the outside.”

“Mojo plays a vital role in our pursuit of happiness and meaning because it is about achieving two simple goals: loving what you do and showing it.”

The elements of this definition each have meaning:

- **“Positive spirit”** – Clear for all to see, it signifies “happiness and meaning.”
- **“Toward what we are doing”** – This concerns the joy your activities provide.
- **“Now”** – A vital distinction. Mojo is about the immediate moment, not the past or future. Great professionals with mojo exist in the here and now, fully involved in – and happy about – what they are doing at the present.
- **“That starts from the inside”** – You know mojo if you have it.
- **“And radiates to the outside”** – If you have mojo, others know it too. You emanate joy.

“Mojo...is the moment when we do something that’s purposeful, powerful and positive, and the rest of the world recognizes it.”

The opposite of mojo is “Nojo,” meaning “no joy.” People burdened with nojo are flat, listless, bored and bitter – and they let everyone know it. They’re “zombie-like,” laden with negativity, victimization and resentment. But people with mojo relish each day, look forward optimistically and “take responsibility” for their lives. When you have mojo, you are happy; life has meaning.

Building Your Mojo

Mojo is not a natural state; people must develop it. As the “mojo paradox” explains, humans are programmed to live without meaning, and to function with almost irresistible inertia – the tendency to continue mindlessly doing what you’re doing now. Inertia paralyzes people and prevents growth, since personal development disrupts the status quo. Enhancing your mojo – learning to build yourself up – requires making an effort to change and having the commitment to stick to that goal. Use consistent follow-up to prevent sliding back into old patterns. Coaches or managers can perform this crucial follow-up, but you also can do it for yourself if you learn how.

“What is the one quality that differentiates really successful people from everyone else?...Truly successful people spend a large part of their lives engaging in activities that simultaneously provide meaning and happiness...[they] have Mojo.”

To build your mojo, analyze all your daily activities by asking yourself these two questions:

1. **Meaning** – What does this action deliver in terms of purpose and long-range reward?
2. **Happiness** – How much joy and contentment does it provide in the short range?

“Do you want your children to be happy? Do you want your parents to be happy? Do you want the people who love you at home to be happy? Do you want the people at work who respect you to be happy? You go first. You be happy.”

This review becomes a constant assessment of the activities that make up your life. Once you routinely evaluate each day’s events for meaning and happiness, you will naturally optimize those activities. Decide in advance if you should engage in an action or not.

This will build your mojo, which depends on four components:

1. **“Identity”** – To increase your mojo, you first need to understand who you are. Successful people forge the identity that they want, regardless of how others perceive them. That’s what mojo is all about. Your identity does not need to be something “predictable” from your past. It can be your quest for and attainment of the admirable “future self” you envision. Think of this as the “created identity” you craft for yourself.
2. **“Achievement”** – You need to recognize what you have achieved – and can achieve – in your life. When you see the real worth of your personal and professional accomplishments, even if others are unaware of it, you’re still doing lots to sustain your mojo. Your personal ambitions are what counts, not goals that others deem important.
3. **“Reputation”** – You cannot maintain adequate mojo if your reputation is sullied. You must do all you can to restore it, though that isn’t easy. Altering the way people regard you takes firm, consistent effort. If you have become known as someone who is sloppy in your work, changing that opinion requires being careful in every work activity. Even one instance of sloppiness could ruin months of hard work on repairing your reputation. After all, people have come to expect carelessness, so they look for it. Use repeated, positive action – and careful work at all times – to stage your comeback.
4. **“Acceptance”** – Try to tolerate things you cannot control; live with the consequences. Free yourself from “toxic emotions.” Don’t rail against those who may have harmed you directly or surreptitiously in the past. Move past their behavior and forgive them. Work to change the things you can affect and “let go” of the elements in your life that you cannot fix. Pay attention to finding joy now. Don’t focus on the past or future.

“The Mojo Scorecard”

People have two kinds of mojo: “Professional Mojo,” which concerns their talents and temperament, and “Personal Mojo,” which involves the benefits they derive personally from their activities. Your mojo level will vary depending on how your work-related and personal activities affect you and how you see them. To detect that variation, grade each activity from one to ten in each of the 10 categories listed on the mojo scorecard. Each task has the potential to score a maximum of 100 points, 10 for each category. Once you tally the total score for each task, use your scores to determine which activities are increasing your mojo and which ones are not.

“There are plenty of people who demonstrate great Mojo and are not trying to change – they are finding happiness and meaning in their lives.”

The first five areas assess professional concerns; the second five measure personal reactions:

1. **“Motivation”** – Are you just passing time in this activity (low score), or are you enthusiastically involved (high score)?
2. **“Knowledge”** – If you know exactly how to do the skills this activity demands, give yourself a high score for know-how. If you are unsure, assign a low score.
3. **“Ability”** – If you have the skills to do this activity with style and efficiency, tally a high score. Use a low score if you don’t.
4. **“Confidence”** – If you have no doubt about your ability to do this work well, you get a high score. If you feel shaky about it, mark it down.
5. **“Authenticity”** – If you genuinely like doing this activity, rate it high; if not, rate it low.
6. **“Happiness”** – Assign a high score if the activity brings you joy; if not, score it low.
7. **“Reward”** – Is the activity worth it, financially or otherwise. Yes gets a high score.
8. **“Meaning”** – Does the activity fulfill you? Score high for yes and low for no.
9. **“Learning”** – If this activity helps you grow, it gets a high score. If not, it doesn’t.
10. **“Gratitude”** – Are you glad to be doing this? Appreciation garners high points; drudgery does not.

“Your Mojo Toolkit”

Mojo concerns your personal identity (“you”) and your life situation (“it”). To enhance your mojo, sometimes you must change the “you” aspect of things; other times you must change the “it” aspect. Figuring out which one needs fine-tuning isn’t always easy.

“Many successful people have a tendency to overestimate their strengths and underestimate their weaknesses.”

Use these tools to diagnose problems and carry out alterations to keep your mojo cooking:

- **“Establish criteria that matter to you”** – What are your ambitions? For clear direction, set goals that are meaningful to you, and that fit the personal and professional criteria that meet your standards and let you move ahead.
- **“Find out where you’re living”** – Are you happy doing what you do? Does it supply meaning? You cannot sustain your mojo if your answer is no.
- **“Be the optimist in the room”** – Most people fail to improve their lives and increase their mojo because they give up on self-improvement. This happens for several reasons: Change does not come quickly enough. It is difficult. People get sidetracked. Early efforts do not result in tangible rewards. Individuals wrongly assume that they have reached their goals and they quit too early. Change requires constant dedication and adherence to a new regimen. Once people slip out of their self-improvement programs, they become pessimistic and quit. Don’t make these mistakes. Be aware of how challenging change is. Accept the obstacles as part of the process. Fully account for them. Be optimistic that you will eventually overcome them – and you will.
- **“Take away one thing”** – Often, mojo dissipates because of something external in your life that robs you of happiness, passion, enthusiasm and hope. It may be a negative person who brings you down, a problem that fills your life with unease or even an exhausting commute. Set aside such negative influences the way John Madden, former National Football League TV commentator, circumvented his dread of flying. During football season, he crosses the U.S. to get to football games in his own bus, the “Maddencruiser,” a luxury vehicle that his corporate sponsors underwrite. Where there is a will, there is a way.
- **“Rebuild one brick at a time”** – Regaining your mojo will seem daunting if you think of all the work and effort ahead. Don’t adopt this depressing viewpoint. Instead, take care of one change that you can handle, then another and another. Step-by-step. Make “serial achievement” your goal. Adopt the attitude of novelist E.L. Doctorow: “Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.”
- **“Live your mission in the small moments, too”** – Management guru Peter Drucker always asked his clients, “What is your mission?” Ask yourself, “What do I want to achieve and how do I want to achieve it?” Prepare your answer. Once you know precisely what your mission is, pursue it in everything you do every moment. Your mission dictates the route your life will follow. Don’t swerve off track.
- **“Swim in the blue water”** – Heading out in a new direction sends your mojo rocketing through the roof – and gets you where you want to go. Be inventive and imaginative.
- **“When to stay, when to go”** – Sometimes, just knowing whether to remain in your job or strike out for newer pastures is very troubling. Use the mojo scorecard to grade your primary job activities and determine if your job is still the one you should be doing. This “mojo analysis” can show if you need to change your job (“it”) or yourself (“you”).
- **“Hello, good-bye”** – The way you leave a job can be just as important as how you enter it. If it looks as if you may lose your job, create a planned “pre-exit strategy” to handle this tricky – and potentially reputation-damaging – situation.
- **“Adopt a metrics system”** – Amass sets of data about situations that affect your personal or professional life. For example, are you worried that your clients no longer rely on you for advice as they once did? To check, track the number of calls you get from clients each week soliciting your counsel. A lack of calls may indicate that you do indeed have a problem you need to fix. Register negative results as well as positive ones. They are just as important, maybe even more so.
- **“Reduce” the time you waste** – Do you squander hours discussing unimportant issues or talking about nothing? Survey results say most people spend 65% of their interpersonal communication time in fruitless discussions. If your conversations feature mostly bragging about yourself and critiquing others, cut back on the chatter and refocus.
- **“Influence up as well as down”** – Businesspeople learn to be solicitous of their clients and customers, and to handle them with deference and respect. But sometimes they do not treat their bosses with the same degree of concern. Instead, they are cavalier, often realizing too late that it is crucial to treat your boss with great respect.
- **“Name it, frame it, claim it”** – To get a handle on a challenge, assign a name to it. For example, if your child gets a no from you and then asks your spouse the same question, the child is practicing the “divide and conquer” maneuver. Once you recognize it and label it, you can end it. If you nickname a salesperson the “Closer,” you are providing praise, focus and reinforcement.
- **“Give your friends a lifetime pass”** – If you find that you sometimes accept behavior from family members that you never would condone from others, give your friends the same break.

Ask for Help

Mojo enhancement involves self-improvement but, in this case, you also can turn to others for help. Having support significantly increases your chances of making substantial life changes. Don’t be too proud to ask for aid. You’ll benefit and you may be able to return the favor. Start now by letting your friends and relatives know that they are important to you, and that you feel good when they’re around. Remember the definition of mojo: a positive spirit that starts from the inside and radiates to the outside. Exhibiting joy around others proves that your mojo is rocking.

About the Authors

Executive coach **Marshall Goldsmith** has written 10 books and sold more than one million volumes, including his bestseller, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. **Mark Reiter** collaborated with Goldsmith on this book. He is also Goldsmith's literary agent.
