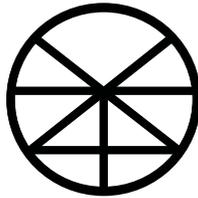


How to live with intention and actually achieve your goals

From setting it, to getting it

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Introduction

This mini book was conceived, written and designed in 7 days.

I sat down last week to blog my thoughts on how you approach end of year reviews, and how to set and achieve goals in the new year. And as I started to put my thoughts together, I remembered a friend of mine - Mpumi had asked me a few times about how I went about strategically planning my year, specifically how you organize your life around the One Thing. She had read the book by the same name, and I had written about the book earlier in the year.

Fun fact, we have an almost hour long interview we did together a while back talking about design, branding and personal development - [here](#).

To be honest, the question threw me off. At first, I was just going to talk specifically on how I set goals and translate that to the day-to-day actions that would get me there. Now the scope was a little bigger. Taking into consideration the concept of the One Thing, I quickly realized I had to take a few steps back to accommodate the new ideas that spring from that one question. What is the One Thing, how do you find yours, and how do you orient yourself toward it? Why have a One Thing at all?

As I wrote, I found myself meandering, getting to page 4 without even scratching the surface. For context, I usually write about 2 – 3 pages per blog post. I had two options, continue the blog route and make a 4-5-part blog series, or just write all the pieces and make it

into a book.

Hmmm. I released my [first book](#) in October. Could I really write two books in one year? Why not? It was a stretch but it was certainly doable. It could at the very least be a cool flex.

So, on this whim, I asked around, ‘what people would like to read, a series or a book?’ The book won by a margin of like 3:1. So here we are.

As I wrote and thought more about what I was trying to say in this book, it became apparent that I was really trying to write about the art of living intentionally. I believe the road to fulfillment – happiness, and success starts here. To be successful, you have to be able to set a north star and move towards it consistently. But how do you define your One Thing, and how do you connect the dots backwards to your day-to-day life?

This book is an attempt to answer these questions.

Live with intention

About 8 years ago, I created this document which was basically a goal sheet or a blueprint for my life. It covered multiple areas and I had high hopes. I was going to make millions. I was going to get fit. I was going to improve my relationships. I was going to have excellent grades. I was just going to be amazing all round. It was a great sentiment, but I was naïve, young, and honestly, really more interested in exploring what life had to offer at the time than chasing goals.

So, I made this document and then proceeded to stuff it into a folder, never to look at it again.

In the subsequent years, I fell into a pattern that is probably familiar to many. I would start, usually, at the beginning of the year, or at any point in time I felt convicted, and I would make decisions. I am going to work on this, I am going to create that, this is how I want to live. See, I have always had the intention to live a creative life, to do interesting things, to learn to live and thrive outside the traditional structures of a 9 – 5, and similar conventions. I had this intention of creating and doing amazing things, and then I would wake up months later, completely lost from that original intention. I would find myself swamped with projects, rushing from one client deadline to another. I was too busy helping and working to fulfill other people's agenda, I consistently lost sight of my own.

How many times have you experienced that? How many times have you started out a new year with all these things you wanted to achieve, and then ended up 12 months looking back and seeing that yeah, you were extremely busy, yeah you did a lot of things, you probably even made a lot of money. But you were so busy running around in circles, you did not make any real tangible progress. That was me most of the time. I would start ideas and projects and lose

steam and focus. I could be very productive for months or years but ultimately producing nothing of long-term value.

There is the idea in physics of speed vs velocity, the idea of distance traveled vs displacement. One refers to how fast you move, the other refers to the distance you actually traveled from your starting point. You can move very fast in a flurry of activity and still get to your destination slow because you are facing the wrong direction.

And that is our usual experience - getting caught up in the business of living that we never really live or make any real progress. Living intentionally is the art of living consciously. The masses live like zombies, essentially sleepwalking through life. You live as a slave to your habits, to your urges, to your circumstances. You make do with what is presented to you, as opposed to going for what you really want. How do you break the cycle?

Living intentionally means, being aware of your values, of your ultimate goal, of your purpose, and orienting your entire life towards that idea, so much that every step, every action, every relationship is a move towards that goal. You keep your goals set before you all the time, and even though life is still as busy as always, you keep your eye firmly on the prize and move steadily towards its achievement over time.

This time last year, I dusted off that document I mentioned earlier, and worked through it again, setting goals, setting my intention, and creating an updated document. Now, a year later, I'm actually actively working towards them. I set goals and I achieved them. I am still far from where I want to be. But the progress I am making gives me deep and fulfilling satisfaction.

I believe that lasting happiness comes from following your path faithfully. At that point, you don't envy anyone, you are satisfied with yourself because you know you are walking your path and tilling your soil. Envy comes from looking at what someone else has, and desiring it. We feel the emotion because we know that a version of that should be ours, but for some reason, it is not. It could be real obstacles in our way, but many times it is because we know subconsciously that we are not living up to our potential. We are not doing what we ought to do.

I write this in the month of December. Most people are wrapping things up for the year. Most businesses will close down for the break, and many will take time off to be with their families and loved ones. More still will be taking the time to pause, and reflect, to take stock of the last year, and look forward to the coming one.

I've noticed a trend for the past couple of years. We get to the end of the year, and many people talk about how hectic it has been, crying about how it has been one of the worst years ever. They complain about how tough things were, how bad the economy was, how hard it was to make money. They complain of all the misfortune, of the deaths, of the terrible things that befell them.

I half-listen amused. I reflect on my year and think, yeah there were tough times, there were hard decisions, there were moments that pushed me towards the breaking point. But all in all, it was a good year, I set my intentions and I moved towards them. That is the only metric that really matters. Of course, it is going to be tough, of course, the economy will be tough, we are probably on course for another economic and ecological meltdown. Life is hard. But this how I score myself. If I worked consistently towards my goals, towards what I really wanted - towards learning, taking action and transforming myself, then I succeed. Then my year was a good one. If I got busy and swept up in activities, even if made all the money, even if I got blessed with a lot of things, if I completely lost sight of my goal, then I count that year as a net loss.

If this year was bad, then next year would probably be the same. And that is because most times, people just move from year to year with vague ideas of what they want to achieve. And then they kind of just expect or hope for things to happen. "Oh, this year was a wash, but next year man, I'm going to do great things. Next year will be my year! I'm going to get that job, make that money, build that business, write that book, etc. the promise of a new year, is a fresh start and a fresh beginning." But like I've written before, if you have not been working according to a plan and steadily taking action towards your goals, next year is probably just going to be more of the same, or even worse.

The first step to living intentionally is taking a hard look at yourself. To sit alone in a quiet space and gaze inward. It can be as simple as an afternoon set aside to really ask yourself the tough questions. Do an honest audit of yourself, review your past and look towards the future.

An unexamined life is not worth living - Plato

Reflection is important because it reminds us, it deeply connects us to our stories and histories. It gives us perspective. It allows us to learn and to benchmark. The better you are at self-reflection, the better your life becomes.

How do you reflect? It can be pretty simple. I personally sit down at my desk, clear some space and break out sheets of A4 white paper. You could use a notebook, or a laptop (with the internet turned off). I just write. Sometimes it is just streams of consciousness, sometimes it is specific. But I ask myself broad questions – how has my life been? How did the previous year go? What did I do that I was proud of? What did I fail to do? What did I accomplish? What were the highlights? What were the low moments? What went wrong? Where did I falter or fail? Look at the good and the bad.

Then you start to gaze out to the future. Ask yourself – what do I want? What kind of life do I want to live? What kind of work do I want to do? What kind of money do I want to make? What kind of impact do I want to have? What do I want to achieve? What do I want more of? What do I want less of? Where do I want to be by this time next year? What do I want to change?

In doing this simple exercise, you look over your past, and you set your basic intentions for the future. And you could stop here. You can literally write these things down on a piece of paper, shove it into a drawer and forget about it for a year and then pick it up. You would be surprised about how much movement you have actually made towards those goals subconsciously. There is something remarkable magical about the act of writing your desires down.

But why stop there? You could go further. You can build more concrete, definite systems and techniques to properly set your intention for the coming year, breaking those down to actions,

checks, and balances that ensure you are steadily moving towards those goals.

So, we know the importance of living with intention and see how that can make for a happier, more fulfilled and more successful life. Which now begs the question – what do we aim at?

Give yourself a higher purpose

Our ambition, for the most part, is limited to what we are sold by media and society. We generally all want the same things. We want better jobs, more achievements, more money, more time, more leisure, more fun, really nice things. Nothing wrong with any of those. They are perfectly fine things to stretch for.

The problem is none of these things will make you happy. Sure, you will get a dopamine hit every time you get something. When you buy that thing you have been craving, or get that job, or that relationship, or make those millions, or take that trip. It will be phenomenal, it will be fun...for 5 minutes, maybe 10. At most a few days, and then it will begin to set in again. The malaise, the restlessness, and so you pick another goal, another achievement to chase. And so, you remain stuck on the hedonistic treadmill seeking happiness in achievement if you don't have it rooted in something deeper.

I offer an alternative. We are designed for more than just ticking items off life's checklist. Each of us is a unique mix of inclinations, interests, and environment that can birth a unique expression. You can deliver something unique and needed to the world.

What do you really want to do? When all is said and done, what do you want your life to account for? There are different mental exercises you can do to tease the answers out.

There is the funeral exercise where you imagine sitting at your funeral and think of what you would like to hear the people say about you and the impact you had on them. What do you want your eulogy to sound like?

There is also the billion-dollar test. Imagine you had all the money in the world, and you did not need to work for another minute to earn

money to fulfill your needs. What would you do then? Sure, the first thing that might come to mind might be leisure. You might want to just lounge around all day, having fun, partying on yachts and traveling the world. Whatever floats your boat. That's fine. But after all of that is done, after you have had all the fun, and bought all the clothes and driven all the cars and hung out with all the celebrities. What then? What would you like to do? What thing could you devote your time to? What impact can you pursue to make in the world?

Raise your sights a little higher than just fulfilling your immediate needs and fantasies. You have one life. What do you want it to count for?

The book, *The One Thing* by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan is one of my personal top 10 books of all time. In it, is a solid framework for identifying your main objective and orienting your life and your daily actions towards it.

The basic premise is that breakthrough success comes from focusing on One Thing. What that one thing is, is for you to discover and decide for yourself. It acts like a Russian Nesting Doll. There is the big all-encompassing One Thing, and then within it, subsequently smaller One Things that eventually boil down to the One Thing for today.

In chapter 11 of the book, Gary outlines the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, from Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol*. Scrooge lives his life solely in the pursuit and accumulation of money. He makes it and hordes it, treating everyone else like shit, paying as little as he can to his workers and not caring about anyone but himself. He is successful, but his existence is miserable, and he does not know it.

On Christmas Eve, he is visited by the ghost of his deceased business partner and later by 3 spirits who show him how his life got to that point, and where he is going, including the miserable end he is headed to. He wakes up from this dream visibly shaken and starts to turn his life around, becoming a more helpful, engaging and generous man.

Money, or achievement alone do not mark a good life. We must seek a higher purpose and live a holistic life. This purpose sets our priority

and our priority determines the productivity our actions produce.

We all want to be happy. But happiness happens on the way to fulfillment.

According to Dr. Martin Seligman, author of `the Secret to Authentic Happiness, there are five factors that contribute to our happiness:

1. Positive Emotion and pleasure
2. Achievement
3. Relationships
4. Engagement
5. Meaning

These are the various things we have to pay attention to, in order to build a rich life. But it first starts with a higher purpose, a reason for our being.

Purpose is the straightest path to power and the ultimate source of personal strength – strength of conviction and strength to persevere. The prescription for extraordinary results is knowing what matters to you and taking daily doses of action in alignment with it. - Gary Keller (The One Thing)

So, think about your purpose.

What is the One Thing you want your life to be about more than any other?

Think about your strengths, your natural inclinations, your passions, your curiosity. Try to hone down on one thing. Try writing it down. This One Thing will serve as the north star guiding you through the twists and turns of life.

Mine is ‘potential. Since I was a teenager, I have been obsessed with the concept. I fundamentally believe that everyone has almost limitless potential – the ability to be great and do great things. Barring real structural inequality, It is ignorance, limiting beliefs and bad habits that stand in the way and prevent this potential from

being fulfilled more often than not. I look at people, at businesses, at ideas, and I see what they could be, and that vision ignites my passion.

I want to help people and organizations reach their potential. That is my all-encompassing mission. It is narrow enough to be a guiding framework and it is broad enough to express itself in many ways. It is the reason I write and make content, to share the ideas and tools I have learned, so that you the reader may be able to take something you can use to make your life better. So that you can position yourself better to tap into the great potential within you.

It is also why I do the work I presently do – strategy, branding, and design. Organizations that have a strong sense of identity and mission build better brands, build better organizations and have greater impact. Good design can elevate the vision of founders and provide rallying points for teams to come together and achieve breakthrough success.

It is why my ultimate career vision is to do work across multiple disciplines. Good design adds value to the human experience and enables people to live fulfilling beautifully unfolding lives. Great civic spaces strengthen cities and provide social cohesion. Beautiful houses promote happier living, well-designed products bring joy in their use. Superb digital experiences bring delight into our lives. Design can help to solve ‘wicked problems’ and move us as a species to a more sustainable future.

That is my One Thing, that is my ultimate dream. And it has taken me years of soul searching and experience to understand and refine it. And it keeps evolving. Finding out your one thing takes time. It is both instantaneous, because if you listen, you can feel it deep in your heart, the thing you are drawn to. And at the same time, it takes years of refining and digging in to cause it to fully emerge.

For me to fulfill my vision of helping others reach their potential, I have to be relentlessly pursuing mine. I have to be working hard at being the best I can be and pushing the envelope of what ‘that best is’. I have to maximize my potential with the work I do, the kind of experiences I have, the impact that I have, and the people I connect with. If I am able to work and unleash my potential, then I am better

positioned to share those lessons and help others. It is my unrelenting passion and desire.

So now that you know this concept, how do you begin to orient your life towards it. You are here at point A, and at this point, you have habits, and a whole pattern of living that you need to upgrade from if you are going to move in the direction of this ultimate vision. How do you do it?

Set a ginormous goal

So, if you sat down and worked on finding your One Thing, well done. Now you just have to orient yourself towards it. Up to this time, you have been...well, you have been you. Running blind, fumbling in the dark, grasping for straws, now you see the light. You have found your North Star; how do you start moving in its direction?

Set a ginormous goal. A giant, enormous goal.

Your One Thing is usually something abstract. A thematic golden thread that encompasses all you are and all you do. But to make it concrete, you have to set a goal. The trick here is to think big.

When we were little children, and our lives lay ahead of us as limitless potential, our imaginations were also limitless. We could be 7 different things before lunch each day, including superheroes battling back the forces of evil. As we grow and learn to become productive members of society, we lose most of that spark. We lose that perspective, that creative will, and force. We learn to be realistic, to accept our lot in life.

The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark. – Michelangelo

In the One Thing, Gary has a whole section on dreaming big. He tackles the misconception that big is bad and small is good. We learn to live small because it seems more manageable, or more virtuous. That is simply not true.

Why dream small? Why limit yourself? Why not set a huge goal? Why not set a goal so huge it scares you? The benefit of setting a massive goal is not just in the achievement of the goal and doing something

you could never have imagined before. The benefit is the person you become while striving for the goal. That is the real treasure. It is not the mountain peak that is the reward, it is the journey, it is the climb.

A huge massive goal forces you out of your regular thinking patterns. Confronted with a huge goal, you are forced to question your basic assumptions of what you are capable of and what you need to do. You go back to first principles and build up from there. You are confronted with all the things you have to learn and understand. The skills you need to build to get to that place. You mentally envision the transformation you have to undergo to become the person you need to be.

And that is powerful alchemy. To change yourself. To evolve, to level up, to become more skilled, more powerful, more capable. Able to effect massive change in your life and ultimately the world around you.

When we think about 'Big', we tend to think it's hard, difficult, too complicated, too much stress. But that is not the case. It is simply different, but not necessarily harder to dream and think Big. It just requires a different mental disposition, a different framework for dealing with the world and taking execution. You will have to unlearn and relearn the way you approach the world. But it is very doable, not as difficult as you think.

Big...is about bold ideas that might threaten your comfort ones but simultaneously reflect your greatest opportunities. Believing in big frees you to ask different questions, follow different paths and try new things. – Gary Keller (The One Thing)

Step out of your self-imposed limits. Sure, there might be obstacles in your life – a harrowing childhood, the state of your nation, a disability, lack of a support system, but the key to getting out resides first in your mind. If you don't believe that you are capable of big things, and I mean truly believe it, you have no hope of getting there. Even if you were presented with the opportunity, you would sabotage yourself.

Many people talk about all the great things they will do, all the

money they will make, the places they will travel to, the life they will live. They say things like 'one day, I will be rich', I'm going to do so much. And it is great to say these things. It starts with the confession, the utterance. But often there is no belief, there is no conviction. In the deep recesses of their hearts, they do not really believe. If they believed, then they will begin to act, they will start to move because they would understand that they truly can be great, it is only just a matter of time, but they must begin the long journey to eventually get there.

Spend some time unshackling your mind, and dreaming new thoughts, dream bigger dreams. You accept that you can exercise your body. Realize that you can also exercise your imagination, your brain, and your guts on a daily basis. You might only be capable of a little right now, but over time, you can become more, you can get better at dreaming and executing big.

Your big goal makes your One Thing more tangible. It condenses this nebulous abstract idea into a massive vision that you can pursue. And this big goal becomes the mountaintop in the horizon, the one you begin to chase. It is huge and hard to pursue, but because it flows from your One Thing, it flows from a place of passion. You are connected, you are invested, and you have the ingredients it takes to do whatever it takes to get there.

Your ginormous goal keeps you accountable to your potential. As you spend time in the day to day, executing on your vision and working on your first steps, it is easy to fall into bad habits, to accept less than you deserve, to take on work that is small and comfortable. Remaining cognizant of your ultimate goal inspires you to keep stretching yourself and marching on towards the greatness that is within you.

In the book, *Scale or Fail* by Allison Maslan, she outlines the following exercise.

Sit somewhere quiet, and think about the perfect life 5 years down the line. What is your schedule like? What do you spend your time doing? How much money do you make? Where do you work or what company are you running? How are you affecting lives? Where are you traveling to? What are your relationships like? Paint out your

vision as clearly and as detailed as you can.

Then scale it even further. When most people do this exercise, they usually go only as far as stretching themselves 10%, maybe 30% of what they are doing right now. So, it is time now to bust through those subconscious limiting thoughts and think bigger than ever before. Close your eyes and imagine the absolute biggest vision of your life. One so massive it scares you. What is the massive change you want to bring about in the world? What would you want to change in people's lives? How can your One Thing impact people on a global scale? Hold on to that vision in your mind. What does it look like? How does it feel?

Now triple it.

Yes, you read that right.

TRIPLE IT.

Your blockbuster dream is now three times the size of your initial expanded thinking – Allison Maslan

Visualize this dream of yours, explore it in your mind. Step into the life of your dreams in spirit. See your offices, step up to the stage to receive awards, drive your dream cars, vacation in your dream spots. See the delight in the faces of the people you touch. Feel it like you are living it right now.

Now congratulate yourself for allowing yourself to dream so big. Write down this ginormous goal of yours. Don't worry about the 'how' just yet, just write it down, continue to hold the intention in your daily life, and visualize it regularly.

The chasm between our ginormous goal and where are right now is probably wider than the Grand Canyon, but it can be crossed. How do we begin?

Live your purpose today

You know your One Thing, you have set your Ginormous Goal. What next? You are probably wondering, how the hell do I get from here to there?

That is the essence of strategy, defining a huge goal, and figuring out a framework or a plan to getting there. You look at your resources and do an honest audit of where you are, what skills you have, what relationships you can leverage, the possible paths and options you could take. Most times you can draft one or three plans that could possibly take where you where you need to go. But ginormous goals are often so big that it is hard to parse a path from here to there. That big vision I have in mind, is so far off, I don't even know where to start.

You start by asking great questions.

Extraordinary goals require extraordinary actions and extraordinary actions require extraordinary insight. To get that great insight, you must ask great questions.

Great answers are never in plain view, nor is the path to finding one laid out for you. You have to begin by researching and studying the lives of the great before you. Study those who have done great things around the One Thing you are chasing. Find people to be your heroes. Learn what they know, and then begin to trend from there. How do they think? How did they achieve their success?

Anytime you don't know the answer, the answer is to look for the answer. And when you find answers, apply them quickly. They will need you to reinvent yourself and be different, be better. The new answers will require new behaviors. Embrace it. They will give you

the ingredients to craft and regularly update your roadmap to your ginormous goal.

Your first step is finding the answers you need.

But even so, even though your ultimate dream is so far ahead, you must begin to live your purpose today. What is the smallest, most manageable version of your dream, and how can you start on it today?

If your vision is to impact children all over the world and provide a safe place for neglected children, perhaps you begin by volunteering at an orphanage or a shelter. My vision is to help people reach their potential. I live my purpose right now by writing this book, by all the content I put out, and the conversations I have with friends. I live it in my work, helping clients look better than they have ever before and be inspired to expanding their vision and operations.

If you waited till you got to some magical place to begin to live your dream, you will never start. You have to begin now today. In doing so, you orient yourself more and more towards your ultimate dream. You start small and you tap into your purpose, your genius. You begin to enjoy deep levels of fulfillment, even now as you move on your journey.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. - Lao Tzu

What can you do today?

You might be far away from where you need to be. Perhaps you are stuck at a job you hate, but you are forced to work there to pay the bills. You would rather be doing something else, chasing your dream or building that business. Start today, start small. Spend an hour or two after work to work on your dream.

Set smaller goals, what would you like to achieve in the year ahead? How can those things move you towards your ginormous goal?

This is a good time to cut out things you don't need. What are those habits or time sinks that you have right now? Those things that steal

away your time and energy and move you further away from your goals. Identify them and begin to replace them with things that move you forward towards your goals.

You want to reach a million people. You can start with reaching one. Do not despise the day of small beginnings. Even the Great Wall of China was built brick by brick. It takes a million small actions to move you from point A to B. So begin now.

Your massive goal, your blockbuster dream will require you to be a different person, a more capable, skilled person. A big part of your job is to develop yourself to that person you need to be to get what you want.

“To get what you want, you have to deserve what you want. The world is not yet a crazy enough place to reward a whole bunch of undeserving people. – Charlie Munger

Do a self-audit. Make a table with two columns. List your weaknesses on one hand, and your strengths on the other. The things on the weakness list are things you must stop doing or work on. Your strengths are the things you must continue to build and leverage on. Start to work on that list immediately.

Maybe you can wake up earlier. Maybe you need to read more. Maybe you need to change your friends. Maybe you need to reach out to mentors and captains of your industry.

Whatever you need to do, start it now.

As you begin, sure you might have to pour everything you have into building and pursuing this thing. Your life might be unbalanced for a while as you spend all your time grinding and hustling or learning. It is fine to be unbalanced in the short term, but for a holistically happy life, you have to find balance over the long term.

How do we build a happy life while pursuing our One Thing?

The building blocks of a happy life

I alluded earlier to the idea that you can chase after things – achievement, material things, relationships, and actually succeed in getting them, and still not be happy. You get spikes of dopamine hits and enjoy excitement for a while, but eventually, it fades and then you are back on the hedonistic hamster wheel.

True happiness is born of fulfillment and fulfillment comes from purpose. That is why I advocate that you lead with your One Thing. It gives you a compelling long-term vision that helps you withstand the inevitable trials and storms that will come in the short term.

Through Martin Seligman, we encountered five major things that contribute to long-term happiness.

1. Positive Emotion and pleasure
2. Achievement
3. Relationships
4. Engagement
5. Meaning

As we move forward in living our purpose now and chasing our ginormous goal, we must also begin to cultivate our lives in each of these departments.

A life that does not have all these pieces in place is an unbalanced life. And true not every life must be balanced, there are many who pour all they are and all they have into one aspect to their lives and they give us remarkable things, they contribute to humanity in massive ways. Like Oprah says, you can have everything, just not at the same time. But over the long haul, we must cultivate our lives on every front.

Luckily, it is possible to combine the ideas, to live in such a way that each of the touchpoints is addressed while we follow our One Thing. In Tai Lopez's 67 Steps Program, I learned the idea of the integrated life. The more you understand that the components of our lives are connected in more ways than we give credit for, and this is a feature we can actually lean into and design, the more we are able to design a life that kills multiple birds with one stone.

You could build a fitness habit anchored to your work schedule. Perhaps every other lunchtime, you slipped out to the gym and put in a 30-minute session. Maybe you added a trigger to do 30 push-ups just before you took a shower, every time. Perhaps you could do a 10-minute meditation in your car just before you began work. Or you could invite a few people to join you in that new hobby, that way you learn new skills while improving your social network. There are many ways to combine goals to create a more interwoven, self-reinforcing life. Your imagination is the limit.

As you set goals for your life to achieve over the next year, keep the 5 major contributors to happiness in mind. Having a solid One Thing and ginormous goal in mind helps you move with meaning. Your goals are tied to something of great significance to you. And because you are pursuing this big ideal, this thing that fills you with purpose and passion, you are deeply engaged in what you are doing. How else would you survive the long haul?

Achievement is easy. Our culture and society reinforce it, and our goal setting systems are usually set up around the attainment of things, social position, or skills. Having something to aim at, focuses us, and makes us feel good when we do accomplish what we set out to do.

We are social creatures, and we live inextricably linked to the people around us, to our families, our neighborhoods, our friends, our cities, our industry or field. To succeed, we would need the help of others. But it is also these relationships and connections that make life rich and worth living. Some of our goals should help us maximize these connections and build relationships that improve our quality of life.

We love to be happy, we want to experience good feelings more and negative emotions less. We want to have fun, travel to exotic places, do cool things, buy lovely clothes, live in pleasant places. We do not seek these things merely to have them, we do them to increase the pleasure in our lives and make ourselves feel great about ourselves. It is good to have something selfish, something wholly for you in your goals. It is also key to remember that some of the best emotions you would feel, and the most fulfilled you would be, are tied to the things you do for others. Giving back and being a blessing to people who could never repay you is an incredible rush and source of joy.

Every person is different, each of us has different needs and desires, different things we aspire for. But as you set your goals and intentions for the new year, keep the above in mind, and make sure your aims cover the ingredients for happiness and well-being.

Personally, I rock a custom made 8-point Goal System with targets outlined for you guessed it, 8 different areas of my life – Business, Finances, Health, Lifestyle, Projects, Learning, Relationships, and Spirituality. I set intentions and goals for each of these areas and if I am steadily working and have things going well in each of these areas, I am happy and satisfied.

So now that we have set our goals, both Big and Small. How do we actually achieve them?

A framework for achieving goals

This chapter is actually what I set out to write about. Together we have taken a few steps back. We have considered our overarching purpose, we have exploded our thinking and dreamt up massive goals. We have also set our smaller, shorter-term goals, careful to incorporate ways to start living our purpose now. We are also careful to build our lives in its different areas.

So how do we actually achieve our goals? Let's get straight to it.

First of all, we have to adjust the way we think about goals. Usually, when we first learn about goal setting, we learn to do it the SMART way – to set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic, and Time-bound. The major feature here is that goals are specific and binary. You either achieve it or not, and the achievement is clearly marked by crossing some kind of line or attaining a clearly defined target.

This is an incredibly useful way of thinking about goals, but it also poses its own challenges. The problems with setting goals in this manner are linked to the way we behave and process things as human beings. As long as we haven't crossed that line and attained that goal we set, we perpetually exist in a state of failure or at best, pre-success. And once we actually achieve the goal, the dopamine hits we get don't last long enough, and then we are either left aimless for a while which can cause us to slip into a depression, or we set another goal and shoot off to the races.

There is a better way. What if we didn't exclusively look at goals and targets and how to achieve them. But we looked at intentions and how to build systems/lifestyles around them.

The problem with New Year's resolutions is that as well-intentioned as they are, they make the fatal assumption that we magically won't be the persons we have been up to this time. Eventually, our natural inertia, our habits, our coping mechanisms, and existing lifestyles overpower every cutesy little goal we have, and then we are stuck in the same old patterns and the same old results.

If we are to achieve anything, we have to carefully consider and design solutions around the place of greatest friction - where the rubber hits the road. We have to focus on the actual execution. If we are to accomplish any goal, we must install the equivalent habits and routines to get us there.

There is certainly a place for the specific and objective-based goal setting we usually do. But that is better suited for a system that is already in motion, as a way to stretch said system to hit new milestones. But there must be a system in place first.

Sometimes, I prefer to use the word intentions as opposed to goals. Where goals are too rigid and limiting, intentions are more of a spectrum, a general direction. Instead of setting a goal to be able to bench press a certain amount in 3 months or run a marathon, you could set an intention to simply do more physical activity and be healthier. The actual activity that fulfills the intention could be anything. It could mean hitting the gym, it could mean dancing, it could mean power walking down the street every evening or doing yoga routines at home. The intention is broad enough for you to learn and adapt your behavior around what works best for you.

The use of intentions is to foster acclimatization. Most goals fail because people try to do too much at once. With the adrenaline rush of the new year or the igniting spark of some unfortunate event like not being able to fit into your clothes, people set goals and start working furiously towards them. If your desire for change does not stay intense, your motivation is bound to wane, and you are bound to revert to your baseline state.

With intentions, you focus on changing your lifestyle slowly, becoming more and more the kind of person you need to be to get what you want. The key here is doing small things consistently over time.

Let's continue with the fitness analogy. What you are trying to do is make healthy choices a natural part of your lifestyle. Sure, they will still take some effort to maintain, but over time they become more automatic. And then eventually you can ramp things up and really commit to smashing specific goals, or you can relax and focus on other areas of your life knowing that your baseline habits are keeping you generally fit and healthy. But your initial focus is not achieving goals but establishing a consistent process and routine.

Form micro-habits. Maybe a short physical exercise immediately when you get up to get the juices flowing and blood pumping. Perhaps you start cooking at least three meals a week instead of eating so much take-out. The idea is to introduce small changes to your lifestyle that honor your intention. Over time you will become used to it, and it would be easier to make more investments in time and resources to expand that part of your life.

When I tackle my 8-point goal system as I outlined earlier, what I do is state my goals in terms of routines I should be running. I ask myself, what does the daily life of a person chasing this goal look like? And then I write about three statements describing myself as that person.

My health section looks something like this

- I am eating healthy meals (3 meals and 2 snacks) throughout the day
- I exercise 3 times a week, cycling through different kinds of workouts every 3 months
- I have good health habits and get checkups twice a year

As you can see, it's a combination of specific numbers to hit but placed in an ongoing context, not a one-time deal. And they are all written in the present tense to trick the brain into imagining that we are there now. When I do my weekly reviews, I can go through my checklist and rate myself on how I am doing.

The goals are guidelines, not harsh deadlines. I understand that life gets in the way. Maybe it is a hectic month with the business and there is a lot to do. I don't have to be eating healthy meals every

single day but looking through this checklist from time to time reminds me that I should eat healthily, and every time I have to make a choice around what to eat, I am more likely to go for the better option. Over time, I learn to plan better and establish things in my life that make living this intention easier.

My relationships section looks something like this

- I have good relationships with my family members and interact with them regularly (weekly)
- I seek out and build relationships with new people, especially high performers

Once again, they are a mixture of specific targets and vague intentions, and they allow me to gradually build a lifestyle that incorporates the steps required to actually move forward in this area of my life. It reminds me to call my parents more or check up on my brothers. It encourages me to send that email, reach out to that person I admire for coffee.

It can be hard to manage goals on multiple fronts, but in this way, you have low-pressure intentions as guides in each area, and every week you can grade yourself in each goal point. Then, when you want to focus on a section, you really can dig in and set specific concrete goals to really push in a short period of time, like running short sprints in the context of the larger marathon.

For this to work, it is important to have a review component in your life. For me, it is every week. I have integrated my weekly blogging time with journaling and planning. So, every week, I open up my goal sheets and I read through each section. In this way, I am able to gauge generally how I am doing, and what corrections I ought to make, but in a low pressure, lifestyle building way.

This has worked for me quite well this year. I didn't hit everything, and I did better at some things than in others, but all in all, I have been able to live with intention. Setting a trajectory for myself and keeping these guidelines in my day-to-day life allow me to connect my long-term intentions to my everyday actions. And I've seen marked improvements in each area.

I am not as consistent as I want to be in the gym for instance but working out is definitely a more pleasant experience now than it was when I started a while ago. And I don't even have to go to the gym to exercise, At least a few times a week, I'm engaged in something physical, my space and my routines are littered with triggers that encourage me to do something, whether it is a long walk or a couple of pull-ups as I enter my home office or push-ups before showering, I am generally in a better physical place, and ready to do more.

As I tackle the new year, the challenge for me is to go even deeper, to set more concrete goals and targets that build of the momentum I have built so far and level up.

And that is how you can approach achieving your goals – breaking them down to small habits and things you can do on a daily or weekly basis. Want to read more books? Keep a book on you at all times and pull it up every time you have time to kill – in waiting rooms, on the train or bus. Or keep a book on your nightstand and read a few pages as a way to lull yourself to sleep. You calm your brain down long enough to rest, and you get to build your reading habit.

There are many ways to do it, but the principle remains the same. To achieve your goals, break them down to the routines and actions you must consistently take and bake that into your daily life.

Conclusion

The creative process is an interesting one. Often times, you start off trying to make one thing and then you end up making another. The act of creating is as much a surprise to the creator, as it is to the eventual consumer.

While writing this book over the past week, I found myself making detours, and doubling back a few times to find a cohesive way to present the ideas I have here. Of course, there is still much to say, and a lot more to explore to thoroughly do justice to a book with this title.

But creativity is as much about the limitations as it is about unbridled imagination. Consider this a primer. Perhaps it will grow into something more.

I hope it helps.

Good luck and Godspeed.

Oto



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