

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

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17 18 19 20 21 22 23

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16 HABITS

YOU SHOULD DO

EVERY DAY

by FERGUSON ROSS

“Written by a junior accountant this manifesto documents a massive 700 day experiment, the creation of a digital database of daily habits, and the subsequent analysis that provides statistically significant insights into the relationships that exist between our daily choices, productivity and fulfillment.”

Cowlick



a MANIFESTO

Quotes on the following page have been pulled from reddit and [KratosGuide](#) reader comments where an early version of this text was posted.

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“IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO YOU ARE, OR WHAT YOUR GOAL IS. THIS IS A FANTASTIC REFRESHER COURSE ON LIFE. BEST OF REDDIT”

“This is arguably the best article I have ever read on the internet. Thank you so much for this”

“Epic post man. The spreadsheet idea is brilliant and I'm definitely using it now :D”

“This is the best article I have read in a while; this is just the inspiration I've been needing.”

“This is fucking great. Every person that is into self-development should definitely implement this.”

“I've been on this forum for a long time - and this is one of the best post I've ever seen on this board. I've been constantly thinking about this for a while, and I couldn't have summarized/explained it better to myself. Thanks OP.”

“Best post on self development, thank you so much for sharing!”

“Best article I have ever read.”

“So clear, extensive and devoid of any bullshit! I also routine myself everyday, but that's going to help me do it way more efficiently.. Thanks for the insane amount of work you probably put into this.”

“This post is incredible”

“Fucking incredible”

“This is an incredible article. Very inspiring, it has given me a positive kick in the pants to organize myself. The meta meta cognition really hit home, defining that out-loud helped a lot of things fall into place that were aimlessly floating around my head. Good work and thank you!”

“dude this is an amazing post and am grateful you shared this.”

“My God. I'm going to bookmark this page, this is truly an inspirational post. I just relapsed (again..), so this is a perfect post to help me start over for 2013. Thank you so much!”

“Wow. This is the single best read I have maybe done online in the last 5 years. Excellent work mate. Thanks a lot, I have incorporated all of these techniques and habits now. I made a nice Google Drive/ Document form that I can fill out every day with the tracking and so on.”

“Seriously, probably one of the best posts I've read, ever. I've been into self development only for about half a year now and I've thought a lot about many things you pointed out. This really encouraged me to stop this daydreaming mode and take massive action. Thank you!”

“Are you F-ing kidding me? This is HUGE VALUE, thank you very much. You deserve a cookie.”

“INCREDIBLY useful and AWESOME post! Probably one of the most beneficial posts ever..”

“ Life changing post. Our habits define us.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part 1: Introduction	1
Part 2: Paradigms	5
Habits - A lifetime approach	
Mastery - The “S” curve	
Exponential Growth and Spillover	
Meta-meta cognition	
Part 3: The 16 Daily Habits.....	13
Exercise	
Meditation	
Reading	
Creative Recreation	
Nutrition	
Financial Awareness	
Lateral Thinking + Current Events	
Social	
Personal Management	
Asynchronous Project	
Expert Coaching	
Language	
Plan the Next Day	
Sleep	
Professional Development	
Journal + Research	

APPROXIMATE READING TIME

90 MINUTES

If you'd like to skim through this text quickly I'd recommend this reading order:

- Skim the 16 habits and read the ones you're most interested in
- Take a close look at the charts on pages 38 - 40
- Finally, read pages 56 - 67 where I share my most valuable discoveries

Part 4: Implementation	36
Charting habits in Microsoft Excel	
Common Pitfalls & Falling off track	
Apathy	
Sickness	
Living Life	
Consuming Commitments	
Cyclical Disinterest & Recovery	
Streaking	
The Anxiety response	
Part 5: The Palace of Wisdom	52
Open vs. Close minded	
Productivity & Daily Habit - The most important lesson you need to know	
Productivity & Daily Habits - The Pyramid of Productivity	
Pyramid of Productivity - Level 1 Responsibility & Intent	
Pyramid of Productivity - Level 2 Freedom from carcinogens	
Pyramid of Productivity - Level 3 Habits of rejuvenation	
Pyramid of Productivity - Level 4 Meditation	
The Bulb of the Pyramid	
Conclusions	
Part 6: Final Words	69

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

POTENTIAL IS ACTUALIZED IN YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

For two years I have been ruthlessly attacking the question of what it is I do with my days. I began a project where I tracked my daily endeavours to see what I was doing with my time (see part IV). After tracking nearly 20 metrics for over 700 consecutive days I discovered that a large portion of my time was, regrettably, wasted away. I also evolved a system of growth that I want to share with you today. (See Part V for a summary)

Your daily habits are *highly* correlated with success or failure. Potential is actualized in your daily routine – it is the key to achievement and prosperity, but also the cause of mediocrity, dissatisfaction, and failure. People often attribute success to ingenuity, luck, genetics; they source the cause of achievement to factors outside their own control. **This belief system stops you before you even start – if success is outside your control then why would you ever strive to achieve it?** We live in the digital age – we bombard ourselves with outliers and extremes. We only watch top performers, athletes and artists, never average ones. *We want the best* – and with the internet we source our inspiration from a pool of millions – we press three buttons and we *get the best*.

**THIS IS MIDDLE CLASS
THINKING – IT STOPS
PEOPLE FLAT AND GIVES
THEM NO REASONS TO
BELIEVE THEY CAN ACHIEVE
THEIR DREAMS**

A childhood friend of mine was deep into mixed martial arts. As we grew up his fascination sadly ended. He transitioned to a full spectator of the sport; passive fandom the only relic of his dreams. I asked why he stopped participating in the sport and he pointed out to me that world class fighters were *the one percent*. Superhumans with a perfect combination of upbringing and genetics. He told me there was no way he could ever compete on their level.

He was stopped before he started. He believed success took luck combined with a perfect upbringing and genetics. He reinforced his belief by exposing himself to the very best at the peaks of their careers. He studied their rise to the top and pointed out all the 'lucky breaks' and insurmountable obstacles they'd overcome. This is middle class thinking – it stops people flat and gives them no reasons to believe they can achieve their dreams.

You'll never play like Hendrix so you put down the guitar. You'll never throw punches like Ali so you sell your gloves. You'll never climb Everest, speak native Italian, or grow a billion dollar business – only the gifted or lucky will do those things so why even try?

GENIUS IS ONE PERCENT INSPIRATION, NINETY-NINE PERCENT PERSPIRATION

- Thomas Edison

Don't look at the billionaires – instead look at the millionaires. The self made started with nothing - and often even less (think of immigrants - broke, middle aged, and unable to communicate in English). This unsung demograph had no lucky breaks, no head start in life, no unique genius – the common denominator of the self-made is self-discipline. That you *do* have control over. You may never become a billionaire but don't let that stop you from becoming a millionaire - because that is certainly under your control.

This applies to every discipline in your life. Success is the compounding effect of your daily energy. I proved it. In two years I proved it over a dozen times in disciplines including health, money, music, happiness, dating, and more. I'm not Casanova, Hercules or Hendrix, but I have an exceptional dating life, I'm extremely fit, and I'm an excellent guitar player.

**SUCCESS IS THE AGGREGATE
OF HARD WORK**

Success is the aggregate of hard work. Success is compounding and success is certain – *if* you follow the recipe. That is the root inspiration to this writing. My experiment tackled nearly every area of life people seek improvement, and in each case I achieved gradual and compounding success.

The key is what you do today, tomorrow and the next day. I propose 16 things that anybody can do to begin changing themselves and their lives. I've gone through quite an evolution and am sharing the results of my experiment with you here. It's a long read, but I encourage you to work through it – you will likely find some value in it.

- Clayton Ross Ferguson

“WE ARE WHAT WE REPEATEDLY DO. EXCELLENCE THEN IS NOT AN ACT BUT A HABIT”

- Aristotle

PART II: PARADIGMS

Before I get into the specific rituals I've integrated into my life it's important to understand the paradigms I'm operating under. The epiphanies and understandings I've arrived at have allowed me to implement these habits and take massive action. If you're starting from scratch, I'd guess it'd take about *six months to a year* to develop the self discipline required to sustain the regiment of habits I'm proposing. The first paradigm and concept you need to understand is *the lifetime approach*.

HABITS – A LIFETIME APPROACH

When considering doing something every day quantify both the short and long term effects. Consider, for example, exercise:

**THIS IS THE BLUEPRINT
TO A LIFE OF YOUR OWN
DESIGN**

In the short term what gives? Well exercise makes you feel pretty good for one - a runners high, a sense of pride and accomplishment. It rolls over to other parts of your day too; you never get a big mac then hit the couch after the gym. Generally you convert a momentum that carries on to other tasks. The benefits of exercising on any given day are obvious and realized immediately.

Consider also the long term effects. As you maintain a regiment of exercise your body fat percentage drops, your flexibility and strength increase (less chance of injury) your lifespan extends, your immune system is bolstered, you maintain your youth longer, you carry over a sustained vigor to other parts of your life, your resting heart rate goes down, and you maintain a general feeling of well being. Pretty sweet. Clearly exercising is important; given both its short and long term benefits. Taking the lifetime approach, it's a clear win.

This is the algorithm I've used to proactively construct my life. Take an activity, consider the long and short term effects, and then make an evaluation based on your own criteria. This is the blueprint to a life of your own design.

**DRINKING SQUANDERS
THE TWO MOST
VALUABLE RESOURCES
OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT
– WILLPOWER AND
MOMENTUM**

This method bluntly presents the consequences of your behaviour. I quickly realized that many activities I regularly engaged in had wonderful short term effects but terrible long term effects on my health, well-being and prosperity.

For example; drinking alcohol.

Short term effects *can* be great (mild euphoria, perceived social benefits, it can bring you out of your head) but a little inspection awakens you to drinking's detrimental contingencies. Health-wise this is obvious. Drinking is bad for you, especially binge drinking. But it's easy to overlook what else is going on... it's not just the alcohol it's the partying. The inferior sleep when you drink, the havoc'd immune system, the wonderful food you eat drunk, the increased likelihood of smoking cigarettes, doing drugs, or having unprotected sex, and finally the compounding long term damage (think: at 26 many people are approaching a **decade** of binge drinking). Financially it's obviously detrimental – drinks at the bar can crucify a student budget. Your productivity takes a big hit as the next day is typically a write off. Drinking squanders the two most valuable resources of self-improvement – willpower and momentum. Go at it a couple of days in a row and you set yourself way back. There are books to be read, weights to be lifted, laundry to be done... but no... hungover = DURR state.

**PROGRESS WITH REGARDS
TO ANY SKILL IS NOT A
LINEAR EQUATION**

You have to consider the ecosystem of consequences that follow your behaviour. If you want to live *your life*, then look at what you do through the lens of *your lifetime*.

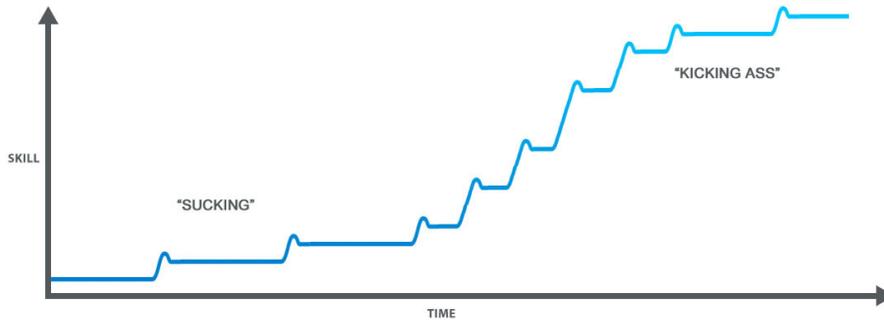
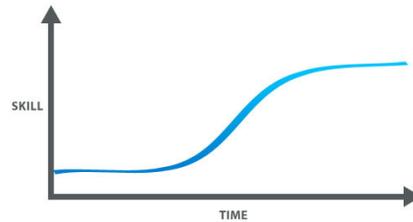
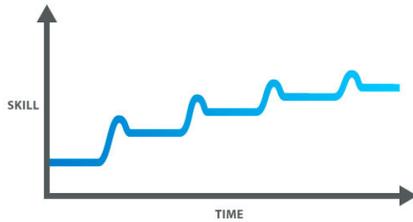
MASTERY – THE “S” CURVE

The next concept is derived from George Leonard’s book “[Mastery](#)”. The idea is that progress with regards to any skill is not a linear equation. i.e. results do not directly correlate with effort. Progress is not linear. The effort you put in does not directly correlate with what you get out. The reality is that you spend most of your time on plateaus. You put in effort seemingly getting nowhere, until eventually you break through emerging better than before. I agree with Leonard’s model but I’ve extended it to include an exponential S-curve. The diagram on the following page is fairly autobiographical.

In my limited time on Earth I’ve found this to be true. Lifting weights, laying bricks, learning calculus, playing piano, meditation, carpentry, programming, writing, painting, gardening, using chopsticks, chess and checkers; they all follow this formula. Everything you do will have a discouraging period of slogging through with little to no progress (I’ll refer to this as ‘sucking’).

SKILL PROGRESSION: THE MASTERY CURVE

PLATEAUS & BREAKTHROUGHS ALONG AN EXPONENTIAL 'S' CURVE



**INACTION IS NEITHER
PROGRESS NOR
ADVANCEMENT, IT LEADS
TO COMPLACENCY AND
THE FAMILIAR TERRITORY
OF MEDIOCRITY AND
ABANDONMENT**

This concept is important to understand because it will prevent you from getting discouraged. Know that when you break through a plateau it will be with a bang, and it will be glorious.

This is how it's gonna go. You *make* the decision, you *decide* to walk the path. You're going to learn Italian or to play the piano. Once you actually *make the decision* you can begin putting in a force, a consistent sustained effort. You will do this every day. Taking action is the process that advances you along the Mastery Curve. Action is advancement, not necessarily progress, but advancement. Inaction is neither progress nor advancement, it leads to complacency and the familiar territory of mediocrity and abandonment. Therefore, always choose to take action even in the absence of progress.

EXPONENTIAL GROWTH AND SPILLOVER

You will experience two phenomena as you advance the Mastery S-Curve. Understanding these phenomena will motivate you. First, understand you will eventually experience exponential progress. Learning is exponential. You begin to see compounding returns as you put the pieces together. You pick up a momentum. Your results fuel your motivation and it puts you into a self fulfilling cycle where you gain results, which gives you motivation, which pushes you harder until you get more results.

**PICKING UP NEW SKILLS
CULTIVATES WILLPOWER
AND SELF-DISCIPLINE,
TRAITS THAT IMPROVE
THE ODDS OF SUCCESS IN
ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING
YOU DO**

But if you don't take action then you're stuck 'sucking'. You'll never experience takeoff. Therefore the beginning of every endeavour is typically tedious, discouraging, and uneventful. Often your only hope of takeoff is through **sheer force of willpower**. That's what it takes to break through.

The second phenomenon you need to understand is the accumulation of 'spillover' effects. For example, as you play more chess your critical thinking develops – this skill then spills over into the rest of your life. You're reading improves. You inadvertently become more strategic about your career, sports or even conversation. Maybe you focus on your dating life and this causes your social skills to sharpen. Subsequently your performance at work improves. Picking up new skills cultivates willpower and self-discipline, traits that improve the odds of success in absolutely everything you do.

META-META-COGNITION

This last concept changed my life. It's ethereal and difficult to grasp – it skirted my consciousness for many years until I could finally capture and transcribe it to English. I've dubbed it 'meta-meta-cognition' – the process of analyzing how you look at your own thoughts. Let me explain:

**THEY SAY THAT META
COGNITION IS ASSOCIATED
WITH INTELLIGENCE, THEN
META META COGNITION
IS ASSOCIATED WITH
BRILLIANCE**

Cognition is your ability to read something and understand it. Meta cognition is the ability to evaluate your own comprehension as you read. Meta meta cognition is thinking about the process of evaluating your comprehension.

Every level is a higher order of thinking. Basic cognition is purely operational - it may get you through life from paycheck to paycheck. Taking a step back and thinking about how you're living your life is meta cognition, this can help you manage your life as you introduce an element of proactivity into it. Meta-meta cognition is taking one further step back and assessing the very values that you decide to live your life by – if any of that makes sense. Meta cognition will help you manage your life, finances, relationships, business, and learning. Meta meta cognition is thinking about the values, purpose, and direction *by which* you manage your life, finances, relationships, business, and learning.

Cognition enables you to spend money. Meta cognition enables you to budget. And meta meta cognition answers why you should even spend your money as you do. It's a process of inquiry that universally directs you to *why*. They say that meta cognition is associated with intelligence, then meta meta cognition is associated with brilliance. It is a very powerful tool. (*expanded on in habit 16*)

PART III: THE 16 DAILY HABITS



1 EXERCISE

Exercise is huge. To re-iterate consider again the long term effects: As you maintain a regiment of exercise your body fat percentage drops, your flexibility and strength increase (less chance of injury) your lifespan extends, your immune system is bolstered, you maintain your youth longer, you carry over a sustained vigor to other parts of your life, your resting heart rate goes down, and you have a general feeling of well being. Pretty sweet. Clearly exercising is important; given both its short and long term benefits.

But do you have to do this every day? That seems strenuous. Try to loosen your definition - You don't give it your 100% every day. Some days may be ten minutes of light stretching, just to keep the habit. Other days may be two hour monster gym sessions.

Exercise can be combined with other habits you may be interested in integrating such as meditation, sports, or getting into nature. Often times my physical exertion is a one hour walk through the golf course while practicing a walking meditation. This is a great way to center yourself and help carry the skill to everyday life. Being in nature has a similar balancing effect on your well being. Habits can be effectively combined - find ways to do this.

But you don't need me to tell you to work out. The benefits are clearly documented by academia and supported by the experiences of people. There are communities, networks, and resources for motivation and support.



2 MEDITATION

This habit is absolutely massive. You *need* to meditate. Meditation directly addresses two of the most significant parts of the human experience – ego and fear. Your composition of fears and ego dictate the emotions you experience. For example, arrogance, envy, and greed stem from the ego (a mechanism where you compare yourself to others) while anxiety and worry are rooted in fear. These emotions cause unrest; how radically would life transform if you could rid yourself of them?

People get confused because the benefits of meditation are very intangible at first. The “S curve” of Mastery has a very looong period of ‘sucking’. I’ve held a meditation practice for four years and still consider myself an early intermediate/late beginner. Inexperienced and new meditators often hold inaccurate beliefs and conceptions of what meditation is. Fighting expectations will be a constant battle as you learn to meditate. Here are some resources to help you learn:

- [Reddit /r/](#) - Community of meditators. Read the top rated posts
- [Mindfulness in Plain English](#) – A comprehensive introduction to the subject written in understandable english. Download the pdf for free.
- [Meditation Retreat](#) – An intense 10 day silent mediation retreat guided by Buddhist monks. The organization now has hundreds of centers all over the world run on donations only. A life changing experience. Waitlists are quite long, so sign up several weeks in advance.
- [Holosync Binural Beats](#) - A frequency played through headphones that induces a deep meditative state (great training wheels)
- Practice – Umm, obviously. Start meditating every day. The evidence is in by a landslide, both anecdotally and empirically. Meditation will change your life so start today, any reason not to is an excuse.

**MEDITATION OFFERS
A PROFOUND
TRANSFORMATION OF HOW
YOU EXPERIENCE REALITY**

Once you get the hang of it you will leave your meditation sessions feeling centered, calm, and relaxed. It has an ego-lessening effect and awareness increasing effect that spills over to your everyday life. If you keep up the practice you'll notice dramatic improvements in your focus and attention. Meditate and your sensitivity to touch, sight, and sound will increase (think how this relates to the most visceral things you do – sex, eating, sports etc). Meditate and your brain regions associated with attention, introspection and sensory processing will literally become thicker.

In the long term, meditation offers a 'profound transformation of how you experience reality' It will bring you joy, peace, and happiness. This is real and you need to be doing it.



3 READING

Great text strikes wonder and awe, it can move and inspire. Read quality writing. Read every day.

Think exposure - what is the average quality of text you read? There are a million unedited blogs on the internet - incomplete with non-existent references often written by inexperienced and mis-informed writers. But then, there's books that will change your life. Books the most gifted human beings on earth have carefully constructed over years. A lifetime of experience, insights, and lessons delivered personally in handheld convenient form. Writing is thought on paper, and when you read *you're plugging into someone else's mind*. You can choose to plug into the prolific work of the world's greatest thinkers – or you can survey the unedited impulses from a random sample of the population. You can choose Hemingway or you can browse Facebook's news feed.

I started this habit at a half hour a day. I've since increased my reading to over an hour a day and am burning through books. With a constant flow of information in you increase your ability for information to flow out (applying knowledge to your life).

Reading is easy to put off. Make this discipline a priority. Beginners may start to fall asleep soon after they pick up a book; it's a matter of conditioning - force yourself through. Over time your reading speed, comprehension and focus will improve – just stick to it.



4 CREATIVE RECREATION

People will approach this differently but if there's something you can sit down and do, purely for enjoyment, then that's awesome. Think of a flow state activity you can put your full expression into. For me it's playing an instrument. If you've ever witnessed a skilled pianist or guitarist in a non-performance setting then you'll know what I'm talking about. The "S"-curve of learning an instrument is very, very, long. But you get out what you put in. Your amusements will leave you feeling rejuvenated and often break up and lighten the day. Invest in your recreational hobbies and they will reward you pleasantly.

Note that I generalized this habit as 'creative' recreation because I wanted to emphasize the fact that recreation is not a spectator sport. Creative implies creation, not consumption. Vegetating on the couch is not creative recreation.



5 NUTRITION

As you build a productive life your ability to stay focused and maintain an abundance of energy becomes vitally important. What you eat directly effects how you feel. Eat right and you can avoid energy crashes, fight off sickness, and generally just feel 'good'.

The resources to learn about nutrition are out there and while I am certainly not the best person to give specific advice I can offer a general wisdom. It should be obvious that what you put in your body is very important. Do yourself a favor and learn how **your** body works – and by **your** body I do mean **your body**, not a general human body (For example, something like increasing your heart rate is universally good for human beings but there is a wide variability when it comes to food. Metabolism, allergies, culture, availability – so many factors – you have to experiment to find out what works for **you**). Experiment by cutting dairy or gluten; try and track your body's response to different ways of eating. After a period of experimentation you may discover mild allergens - foods that sap you of energy - or you may discover foods that invigorate you. Personal discoveries of this nature are invaluable and will reward you for the rest of your life.

**THE ONLY SAFE SAIL
THROUGH THE SEA OF
INFORMATION IS RIGOROUS
SELF EXPERIMENTATION.
INTENSE AT THE BEGINNING
- BUT LESSONS LEARNED
WILL REPEATEDLY REWARD
YOU FOR REST OF YOUR
LIFE.**

When a robust *personal knowledge* is profitable I advocate a rigorous process of experimentation to turn second hand information into firsthand experience. Pick your battles; mixing chemicals or engineering a bridge and you can wisely accept second hand sources of knowledge. Lets trust the errors of others here. But deciding what foods to eat - did you ever even decide? For most people this was never a conscious decision (habits passed down from parents, or worse habits developed around convenient and addictive food) If you study the subject you will be overwhelmed by well intentioned diets, eating regiments, and do's and don'ts of nutrition. What you eat is critically important to the health of your body and functioning of your mind, it can add 'years to your life and life to your years', *Your diet can even postpone the effects of aging.*

Not addressing your eating habits is unwise. Indubitably entering a nutritional school of thought is also unwise. The only safe sail through the sea of information is rigorous self experimentation. Intense at the beginning - but lessons learned will repeatedly reward you for rest of your life. Ensure your experimentation is thorough - you need to easily identify causality. How do you respond to gluten? Can you be sure you've correctly isolated the variable? Try an elimination diet then reintroduce foods one by one. Try eating low carb, try cutting dairy, try cutting bread or sugar. What is the effect on your energy levels? How does it affect your thinking overall?

For me, I don't eat sugar or processed food. I drink an abundance of water daily and I take an extra effort to eat more plant based foods. I supplement my diet with fish oil and a few other vitamins. I think what's most important though is that you proactively decide what you put in your body. Make the time to cook your meals, keep the fridge stocked, and don't buy convenience food.



6 FINANCIAL AWARENESS

Like nutrition, this habit is mostly a choice you make rather than an active investment of your time. It's fairly straight forward; every day you try to manage your money reasonably.

Apply the concept of reactivity/proactively to your spending and you have an excellent framework for managing your money. Did you plan on making this purchase? If not then don't do it. The nature of planning a purchase is that it's in line with your goals and budget. The nature of making an impulsive/reactive purchase is quite the opposite, 'it's right here and will satisfy me right now', the purchase has no forethought (mostly consumer/convenience items) You don't have to be a stickler, but at least acknowledge and consciously decide where you'll allow yourself to spend - even if it's impulsively. At a minimum this forces you to be aware of where your money's going.

“If you cannot delay gratification, and discipline yourself to refrain from spending everything you make, you cannot become wealthy. If you cannot practice budgeting as a lifelong habit, it will be impossible for you to achieve financial independence”

- Brian Tracy

For some people, spending money proactively (making a budget) is just too much. But at least look at your spending retroactively (keeping books - recording and categorizing your spending). Once a month go over your bank transactions, categorize then subtotal – you may find a few surprises. If you're awareness is neither proactive or retroactive (if you neither keep a budget or track your spending) then let me take this opportunity to voice my tremendous concern for your financial well being.

Consider:

A company shareholder wants a return on their investment. Every publically traded company keeps budgets and has a system of bookkeeping - at a **minimum**. Often, they go a step above; analyzing discrepancies between their budgeted and actual spending. They use this data to identify inefficiencies and opportunities. Do you believe you will achieve financial success? Maybe so - but if you fail to record your personal finances then I would never invest in you. You would never have my confidence.



7 LATERAL THINKING + CURRENT EVENTS

Most newspapers include word games or sudoku puzzles. Make it part of your morning routine to sharpen the mind and get up to date with the industry's of your interest. Given your goals in life it may serve to be well informed, have the ability to notice trends, and understand the complexity of global issues.

Work hard to develop your critical and lateral thinking. Every day I challenge myself to solve one extremely difficult problem. Actually I only figure them out about 30% of the time. On my computer I have a repository of IQ, Mensa, and brain buster type books that would take a lifetime to work through. I solve some problems in five minutes; others take me thirty until I break down and look at the solution.

If you run a business or are any kind of decision making authority (or eventually want to be in that position) then I can't vouch enough for this habit. You need to be sharp and informed. Period.



8 SOCIAL

Every day I make an effort to advance my social skills. Your ability to communicate effectively with human beings has so many implications in your personal and professional life. I've gone through experiments with this habit and I think the less you're around people the more you need to schedule this as a priority (my lifestyle right now has me around new people *all* the time, but other times in my life I've had to actively manage my social agenda).

I've tried a few different things. For a while I focused on listening to people with the intent to understand - pushing aside the urge to get my point across in order to give other people the floor as they expressed themselves. I've performed experiments with eye contact and physicality while communicating as well. Regardless, the formula is simple: get around people. Strive to be more authentic, strive to more effectively communicate your thoughts, strive to tell more compelling stories, and strive to more effectively understand other people. Think of actors and comedians; social mastery can make you famous.

“The biggest aid to regular production is working in a serene atmosphere. It’s difficult for even the most naturally productive writer to work in an environment where alarms and excursions are the rule rather than the exception”

- Stephen King, *On Writing*



9 PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

This is the easiest of all habits to implement. Just ten minutes a day and your pad is looking clean and fresh. Show respect to the space you inhabit - it's your creation. In the short term doing your laundry, not letting the dishes pile up, and making your bed can offer a peace of mind allowing you to work unfettered on other projects.



10 ASYNCHRONOUS PROJECT

For me I set aside a two hour block once a week to work on a personal project that is unrelated to my active to-do list. This could be fleshing out a business feasibility plan, recreating my weightlifting routine, catching up on some reading, creating a budget, doing research, or writing a unique article. Human tendency is to let the dust gather, or fully abandon what we take on. We tend to focus on the center of our lives and avoid the fringe.

We all have a laundry list of things that we want to try, but will never get around to. Most of the time we *know* we're not going to get around to it, we just enjoy entertaining the idea in our heads.

So don't let the dust gather, don't let your dreams die. Structure it in and you'll find this may be some of the most rewarding time of the week. Working at the fringe of your comfort zone, diving into something new or doing something that may be important but not urgent can have surprising benefits.

I schedule this time at the beginning of each week. Use this habit as a way of revitalizing old projects or to begin something new you've been thinking about but haven't got around to.



11 EXPERT COACHING

If you're a thinking human being with a desire for knowledge then you should be listening to podcasts, watching ted talks, working through online tutorials and viewing the thousands of lectures professors and researchers have uploaded to the internet.

In ancient times– if you were literate – knowledge was evasive; stown away in fragmented volumes, written by hand, distributed unevenly throughout the continents. Our parents had it easy, copies of every great work had been assembled into libraries and made public information. Now we have it even easier - we've experienced true proliferation of information. At any moment we can go online and watch the greatest athletes, artists and craftsmans recorded performances. Not only can we observe the world's best at any time - they have training courses too! With the internet we can learn directly from top professionals in any field. Your golf swing, texas hold'em, even the secrets to baking perfect peanut butter cookies. Don't take these resources for granted - [they might not be around forever.](#)

An intrigued human should have a breadth of interests far greater than they could ever learn and master in one lifetime. So learn quickly and learn from the best – now is the first time in human history this has been possible. Often people's only skill relates to their occupation. Don't let that person be you when it's possible to master many skills.

If you engaged yourself in this type of learning every day, what would the long term effects be? Besides a vast and varied wealth of knowledge you would begin to draw disciplines together. Your understanding and awareness would grow so large that the value and wisdom you could offer other people would be incredible.



12 LANGUAGE

Every day I spend thirty minutes learning a new language. This is an ongoing task that I struggled to integrate. You realize almost no immediate benefit and that makes it exceptionally difficult to do every day. The “S” curve of mastery is very, very long (years).

But alas, the long term benefits must be exceptionally rewarding. Speculating from my time studying in Italy I would have had a far more rewarding experience had I spoke even basic Italian. Coming from a business perspective being bi/multi-lingual is a huge advantage.

For me, I intend to spend a large part of my life travelling. If you expect to live another 50/60 years on this earth then imagine the lifetime of opportunities and experiences other languages may open you up to. Don't cut yourself off.

For some practical advice getting started I recommend the [pimsluer approach](#). It's a 90 day audio program that will help you establish a strong base in almost any language. For other sources of learning try listening to talk radio via the internet or work through a language book with exercises to help you practice. Get someone you're seeing to join in; accelerate the process by practicing with someone else.



13 PLAN THE NEXT DAY

This is so huge.

Note, there is a small learning curve as you develop a personal system. Maybe you prefer managing a timetable through your phone, or maybe you simply pencil out a to do list (Never underestimate the power of a simple list with prioritized items ready to be struck through with a pencil, Richard Branson CEO of Virgin uses this system - and he's a billionaire) Whatever method you use it must satisfy two requirements: 1) The document must be easily accessible throughout the day, and 2) it must specify approximate times when you will complete each task.

It's pretty simple. When you have free time and a clear mind plan out your next day. Understand the days variables and plan accordingly. The plan is your servant, not your master. Never get upset if things don't go the way you thought – it's just a guideline to keep you on track. Lost time, interferences, failing to execute out of laziness or apathy, unforeseen events, all of this will happen. Don't be worried, the element of proactivity you introduce into your life by planning your days out already places you way ahead.

Keep in mind your primary goal is not to be efficient - it is to be *effective*. Don't be so worried about having some intense schedule that will burn you out quickly. Allow a good amount of time for transitions and even more for time to be used organically. If you picture someone ruthlessly triaging priorities, feverishly executing tasks and desperately rushing from one item to the next then rethink your understanding. Focus all your energy to one item at a time. Take things slow. Execute with passion, care and effort not with haste or carelessness. Never multi-task. You have a lot to do, just not all at once.



14 SLEEP

You're either plugged into the matrix or you're not. If you're plugged in you're a *spectator* – you watch tv, you kill time on facebook, your days slip by as you wander through in lower consciousness. If you're unplugged you're a *player* – You are taking consistent and massive action, you are constantly ingesting new information, you are pushing your boundaries and limitations, you are growing.

So naturally if you're living life fully engaged then you need a good night's sleep. The amount of stress you experience by pushing yourself, the information you're internalizing, and the focus and stamina you need to keep going can all be facilitated by a good nine hours on the pillow.

Take this seriously – you *will* notice a difference.

If you've ever studied sleep then you know the body goes through approximate 90 minute cycles (from deep sleep to REM sleep). You would know that light, sound, and what you eat before bed have a dramatic impact of the quality of your sleep. You'd also know how the human body associates certain surroundings and conditions with sleep (think when you walk into a bathroom you feel like you have to pee. The same thing when you're in bed – you get sleepy. Therefore only use your bed for sleep and sex).

I sleep in total darkness, in a cool room, and with a fan for white noise (to drown out traffic and creaks that would otherwise wake me up). I have a comfortable mattress and I wake up to [an alarm clock that gets brighter instead of making noise](#) (simulates the sun rising) I don't set my alarm for the same time every morning, I set my alarm either 7.5 or 9 hours from when I fall asleep (so I don't wake up in the middle of a sleep cycle – you may have to tinker with the times but you will learn your body). Try this and you will be amazed by the effects on your energy levels, retention of information, and even how you handle mornings.



15 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

You're either working in the industry you want to be in or you're not. Either way spend some of your day developing the skills necessary to succeed in the industry *you want to be in*.

This ritual is the key to breaking out of an incongruent career or dead end job. You will develop yourself in the area of interest until you have the credentials, credibility, or opportunity to move permanently. Maybe you're stuck working as a bank teller, but you want to move into internet marketing. Begin to spend a part of your day learning the skills you are going to need to succeed as an internet marketer.

Think of it this way, most people are reactive. Most people land a job through connections or convenience and *only then* learn the skills necessary to succeed. Do not be that person. Do the reverse. Gain the skills through your own volition and then land 'the job'. This is the formula to carve a life of your design and live your dreams.

Already in the industry of your dreams? Don't stagnate. Constantly focus on learning new material, keeping up with trends, observing competitors, or expanding your professional reputation. Sustain success and do what is necessary to stay on top.



16 JOURNAL + RESEARCH

Keep a journal and update it every day.

What is a journal? A journal is a place where you write out your thoughts to look back on and ponder. Write what you thought of your thoughts and think about that (meta-meta cognition). Do you see how this can be a valuable tool for personal insight and growth?

This isn't a high school diary. It's a tool to track your thoughts, expand on insights, accelerate your growth, identify blindspots, and look back on your progress. Write out your perspectives. The very act of consciously creating syntax to your thoughts brings rationality to them.

The second part of journaling is doubly important. Research. As you make discoveries and insights seek out truth and guidance. We have the internet - an amazing tool for feedback and information. A journal is the contents of your mind - looking upon it will bring realization upon realization. The gaps in your thinking will become obvious. This is why research is so important - after identifying the gaps in your logic, knowledge, or understanding you have to fill them in.

Our parents had to live with misinformation their whole lives. Our generation enjoys the luxury to – with incredible ease - access the forefront of human knowledge in the snap of a finger. Use this luxury to fuel your growth.

“FIRST WE MAKE OUR HABITS, THEN OUR HABITS MAKE US”

John Dryden

PART IV: IMPLEMENTATION

I am suggesting the root of success, change, and growth lies in the positive rituals of your daily routine. Changing who you are is difficult - I've walked the path and failed many times. It takes discipline and skill but the rewards are great for those who can manage.

In this section I explain how I track my progress with technology. We spend an amazing amount of time on screen and I figured, since I was on my laptop every day, I'd track my progress with a simple binary system done up in Microsoft excel. I started small, seven things I wanted to do every day. I opened up excel and made a spreadsheet with dates on the x axis and habits on the y axis. Fairly self explanatory; If I completed the task I would color it green. If I failed I would color it red.

**I COULD CONTINUALLY
RECOMMIT TO SOMETHING
UNTIL I GATHERED ENOUGH
FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE
THAT THE ACTIVITY WAS
SOMETHING I SHOULD
VALUE**

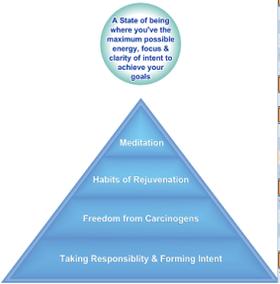
I've kept this up for over two years and the system has grown and evolved. I was always extremely honest with myself and I found the objective measure of progress to be very blunt. Your success or failure is right there, staring you in the face. No ego can manipulate the facts, only your interpretation.

Part of the reason this system helped was that I could recommit. I could continually recommit to something until I gathered enough first-hand experience that the activity was something I should value - experiencing the benefits that would rewire my brains reward system.

After a year my spreadsheet had grown (see the following three pages). All 16 habits were incorporated into my daily life. Over the past two years I have continued this regiment through a variety of life circumstances. Travelling, fulltime studies, working full time, and for a period of about four months I was working full time and taking five senior level accounting courses. I've always managed a social and dating life. There's a lot of fat to be trimmed out of your daily routine - you can fit it all in (although I sympathize for those with children or dependants).



ONE YEAR IN. INCREASING COMPLEXITY



Notes:	4-Aug-13	5-Aug-13	6-Aug-13	7-Aug-13	8-Aug-13	9-Aug-13	10-Aug-13	11-Aug-13	12-Aug-13	13-Aug-13	14-Aug-13	15-Aug-13	16-Aug-13	17-Aug-13	18-Aug-13	19-Aug-13	20-Aug-13	21-Aug-13	22-Aug-13	23-Aug-13	24-Aug-13	25-Aug-13	26-Aug-13	27-Aug-13	28-Aug-13	29-Aug-13	30-Aug-13	31-Aug-13	1-Sep-13	2-Sep-13	3-Sep-13	4-Sep-13	5-Sep-13	6-Sep-13	7-Sep-13		
Physical Metrics:																																					
Morning body weight	193lbs.																																				
Systolic																																					
Diastolic																																					
Resting Pulse																																					
Data Collection:																																					
Not Sick - Almost Sick - Sick	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
Alcohol consumption (# of drinks)	0	0	0	0	0	8	10	0	0	0	0	0	7	6	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	14	6	8	0	0	0	3					
Nutrition Supplements?	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Sex?	0	0	0	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	4	1	3	1	3	3	0	???			
Self Assessed Peak State:																																					
Productivity	0	3	2	6	2	8	0	6	3	6	7	6	7	5	9	2	5	7	6	7	4	10	4	2	2	2	2	7	4	8	6	8	6	8			
Fulfillment	3	5	7	8	7	8	6	5	4	7	7	7	8	7	7	8	7	7	6	8	4	8	7	8	8	6	8	6	8	7	8	7	8				
Stress Level	6	8	5	3	3	3	6	10	8	4	4	4	4	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	8	4	4	4	3	6	6	4	3	6						
Quality of daily decisions (spiritual)	4	5	5	4	6	6	8	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	4	5	6	5	5	5	8	7	6	6						
Quality of daily decisions (financial)	1	3	4	1	2	2	1	0	4	5	5	7	7	4	5	6	7	1	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	6	2	6	7	6	4					
Focus & Relaxation:																																					
Meditation	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Rejuvenations:																																					
Heart Rate Up + Flexibility	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Hygiene & Organization	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Quality of Nutrition	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	
Quality of Sleep	1	1	0	3	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	2	1.5	1.5	2				
Freedom From:																																					
Toxic environment	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	
Processed foods	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Negative Addictions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intoxicants	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Base Level:																																					
Take Responsibility & Form Intent	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	

TWO YEARS IN. RADICAL CHANGES.

FOCUS SHIFTED TO HIGH LEVERAGE HABITS AND RAISING OVERALL LEVELS OF PRODUCTIVITY

DATABASE NOW TRACKS ACTIVITIES WITH NUMBERS INSTEAD OF COLORS. IDENTIFYING CORRELATIONS BECOMES EASIER.

Again, I'm not suggesting you go full nerd for as long or intense as I did. But *if* you did then you'd certainly evolve a robust and insightful understanding of yourself and how you operate. In the following sections I share the most significant of my personal discoveries - my hope is that they help you along your journey.

COMMON PITFALLS & FALLING OFF TRACK

No matter how hard you try, or how much effort you invest, you will – at times – fall apart. I have identified five primary ways this happens:

1. Apathy
2. Getting sick
3. Living life
4. Consuming commitments
5. Cyclical disinterest & Recovery

**CORRELATORY DISPLAYS
IN BEHAVIOR EMERGE:
DEPRESSION, RESISTANCE,
NEGATIVE AND LOW
SELF ESTEEM THOUGHT
PATTERNS, LETHARGY, AND
A DIMMING AWARENESS AS
TIME SLIPS AWAY**

1 APATHY

If you don't have a lot of self discipline then the most common way you'll fall apart is apathy. You need to understand that apathy is death. *Apathy IS death*. It will kill your growth and suck you into laziness. It happens as you slip into *lower consciousness*. Correlatory displays in behaviour emerge: depression, resistance, negative and low self esteem thought patterns, lethargy, and a dimming awareness as time slips away. So many things can throw you off track and sink you into apathy: Loss of progress, negative feedback, feeling 'blue', video games, addictions, poor diet, lack of sleep, fear, financial/family/social stressors. This is where taking responsibility is key. This knowledge helped me fight myself when my brain would come up with rationalizations and excuses for why I coped out on my duties. The rationalizations were pretty good sometimes (I didn't have enough time, I wasn't physically able, I was sick, it would be counter productive etc (your brain is very clever)) but the facts were in. I couldn't gloss over the correlation between my daily choices and how they affected my productivity. Eat unhealthy food or get poor sleep and you **will** be less productive.

In the gutters of apathy the only way out is to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. If you have ever taken the time to write out your values then they can be extremely helpful in this situation. Read them over, ponder them and commit yourself to them. The quicker you can recommit and get back on track the better. You will go through this process many, many, many times

2 SICKNESS

The second way you completely fall off track is getting sick. The average adult catches two to four colds a year. That's two to four weeks of setbacks, suffering, and disruption. Not much you can do about it other than prevention (and as it turns out prevention is pretty effective! You don't ever have to get sick: drink water, avoid binge drinking, get all your vitamins and minerals, sleep, oral hygiene, wash your hands, and relax regularly)

**BE CAUTIOUS OF HUMAN
TENDENCIES AND AVOID A
HEDONISTIC CONSUMPTION
OF LIFE - WE ARE MASTERS
AT RATIONALIZING AWAY
OUR MONEY, TIME, AND
RESPONSIBILITIES**

3 LIVING LIFE

The third type of falling apart is simply 'living life' and I think everyone can relate to this. To be honest, this isn't necessarily a bad thing – you should be looking for every opportunity to live life that you possibly can. I look back at my excel chart of times where I was in this mode, nothing would be getting done. I'd be drinking, partying, and overindulging. Weekend benders, surfing trips, vacations, festivals etc. Retrospectively I wouldn't change a thing because in those moments I was having *so much fun*. I met so many people, created so many memories, and developed so many relationships. Productive progress is one road to fulfillment though an alternate - arguably superior - path exists through the actual living and appreciation of your existence. Taking time to smell the roses, as they say.

More resources (money, leisure time, lack of responsibility) equals more potential to do the things you want to - whether that's pursuing hobbies, new careers, relaxation, or to just live and appreciate your current life situation. Just be cautious of human tendencies and avoid a hedonistic consumption of life - we are masters of rationalizing away our money, time, and responsibilities - that's why challenges, pain, and suffering can be instrumental to growth (Think, if you're laid off or go broke external factors will force you to step up to the plate and make improvements and changes to your life)

**THEORY AND THE
'RIGHT' THING TO DO IS
AKIN TO PERFECTION.
IT'S IDEALISTIC AND
UNREALISTIC. EXECUTION
IS THEORY IN PRACTICE -
IT'S MESSY, DISORDERLY
AND A DAY TO DAY
STRUGGLE.**

4 CONSUMING COMMITMENTS

The fourth reason you lose progress is by honouring consuming commitments. Maybe family obligations or a travel day, or a big exam you must prepare for. Do what you need to and get back on track as soon as possible.

5 CYCLICAL DISINTEREST & RECOVERY

Fifth and finally is cyclical disinterest. This is a period of waning enthusiasm or forced recovery - you can't go 100% all the time. Look at this graph from my first year of the experiment. 52 weeks aggregating 365 days of data. It graphs the percentage of metrics I completed on any given day smoothed to a two day average (I was looking specifically at the number of metrics I had performed on any given day - so if on Tuesday I completed 8 of my 16 tracked habits then performance on that day would be 50%)

Charting this rough measurement on a graph yields some very interesting lessons. Notice that I rarely achieved everything I set out to do. Theory and the 'right' thing to do is akin to perfection. It's idealistic and unrealistic. Execution is theory in practice - it's messy, disorderly and a day to day struggle.

The biggest takeaway from this particular graph is that performance is *cyclical*. High exertion is necessarily followed by an inverse recovery. I used to get depressed and beat myself up for poor productivity and follow through. Today I accept and enjoy unproductive periods for what they are. This change happened when I finally acknowledged my human tendency to regress. By accepting this I brought on a paradigm shift in mindset. I realized this cyclical disinterest was impossible to avoid and viciously flogging myself was an unprofitable course of action. The paradigm shift is to view these times as periods of recovery and to adjust behaviour accordingly. Think of it as rest, recovery, or a rekindling of motivation - not a loss of productivity or weakness of character. You're loading a spring and preparing to bounce back stronger than before. This approach is sustainable and effectively prevents burnout.

STREAKING

Looking back I noticed almost all my habits would streak. There's an element of general momentum (Exercising in a day may give you momentum to complete other tasks) and then there's an element of discipline specific momentum (If you meditated yesterday it is more likely that you will today) On the flip side there's negative momentum. If you don't do something today then it will be harder tomorrow and even harder the next day.

The result is that habits streak. You'll have runs where you stick with it every day but then experience the opposite where, sometimes for weeks, you never seem to fit anything into your schedule. For this reason take extra effort to revitalize individual habits that are falling apart.

“In any given moment, a man’s growth is optimised if he leans just beyond his edge, his capacity, his fear. He should not be too lazy, happily stagnating in the zone of security and comfort. Nor should he push far beyond his edge, stressing himself unnecessarily, unable to metabolise his experience. He should lean just slightly beyond the eye of fear and discomfort. Constantly. In everything he does”

- [David Deida](#), *The Way Of The Superior Man*

THE ANXIETY RESPONSE

The anxiety response is so key to your growth. I left this section last for a reason... this concept is **powerful**. Your body comes equipped with the tools for growth but we dodge and avoid the signals that would point us in the right direction. Fear and impending uncomfortable situations cause us anxiety. Our ego creates delusions and rationalizations to quell the anxiety brought on by fear. Our human tendency to conserve energy and avoid conflict causes us to seek out immediate comforts.

**OUR HUMAN TENDENCY TO
CONSERVE ENERGY AND
AVOID CONFLICT CAUSES
US TO SEEK OUT IMMEDIATE
COMFORTS.**

When you realize you don't know what you *need* to know there is an uncomfortable anxiety. You expose your ego and your feel good belief systems are shaken. *Do not run* from this feeling of anxiety - human tendency is to suppress and rationalize away these feelings. You look at your bank balance and realize you've overspent - what follows is an uncomfortable anxiety. To suppress or rationalize this feeling away stops you from taking responsibility and doing what is right. Do not let your ego get the best of you. Your ego will rationalize your life away, giving you all the reasons to be O.K. with your mediocrity and failure.

When you feel that uncomfortable anxiety you need to ruthlessly seek out the cause and address it. Take full responsibility for what has happened to you. Maybe you've been financially irresponsible. The ego response would be to justify the situation, "I *needed* to get that stuff, I *had* to make those purchases" This is unacceptable thinking if you want to grow. Consciously ponder that anxiety and take responsibility for your situation, "Wow I was managing my money poorly last month. There's certainly a lesson there and now it's time to learn from that experience and resolve to do better this time around" VS "I don't know how anyone could survive on my wages" (Delusional, a pattern of thought created by the ego to resist change and the uncomfortable anxiety of not knowing what you need to know or not doing what you need to do)

**NOTICE THAT ACCEPTING
BAD DECISIONS, POOR
UNDERSTANDING,
PERSONAL NEGLIGENCE,
IRRESPONSIBILITY,
MEDIOCRITY, INACTION,
AND APATHY ARE ALL VERY
DIFFICULT THINGS FOR
YOUR EGO TO DO. IT'S MUCH
EASIER TO PLACE BLAME ON
CIRCUMSTANCES OUTSIDE
YOUR CONTROL - EVEN IF
THAT INVOLVES CONTORTING
REALITY TO AVOID THE
TRUTH**

Notice that accepting bad decisions, poor understanding, personal negligence, irresponsibility, mediocrity, inaction, and apathy are all very difficult things for your ego to do. It's much easier to place blame on circumstances outside your control - even if that involves contorting reality to avoid the truth. These mental gymnastics are the mechanisms keeping you comfortable and complacent - the compass to navigate out lies in that anxious response. When you do experience that response courageously dive into the feeling and get to the root of what's going on. Understanding the truth will allow you to take full responsibility for your life situation. It will facilitate your ability to change and grow in the future. Do not sabotage your growth and buy into your ego. The key to growth is your emotional system, and you would do well to get in touch with it (hint- meditation)

“THE ROAD OF EXCESS LEADS TO THE PALACE OF WISDOM, FOR YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT IS TOO MUCH UNTIL YOU KNOW WHAT IS MORE THAN ENOUGH”

PART V: THE PALACE OF WISDOM

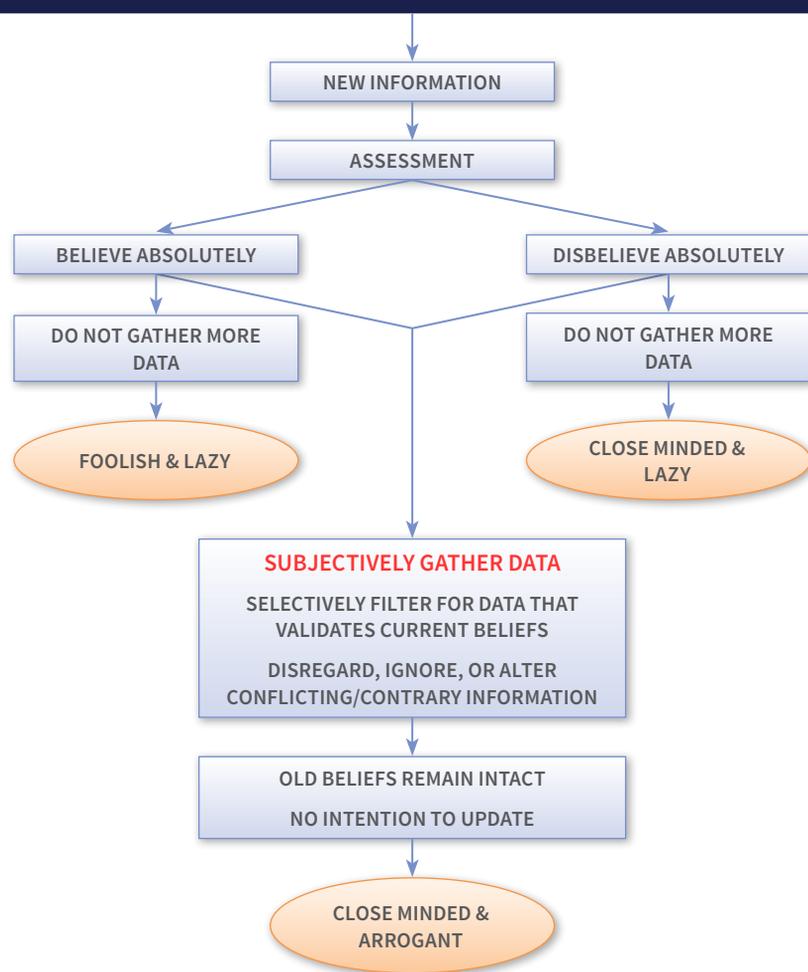
The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom. It's not until you walk a path yourself - the process of trial and error, course corrections, bumps bruises and lessons learned - that knowledge can become your own. We have unlimited access to second hand knowledge and a limited ability to learn for ourselves - therefore you not only need to be selective as to what information you expose yourself to but you must also develop a personal process to systematically synthesize 2nd hand knowledge into 1st hand experience (at least where doing so is a benefit to you knowing and can be done within the reasonable limitations of your time and energy).

Most people are unaware of how they synthesize new information. The person who too quickly believes what he hears is foolish. To reject something outright is close minded. Others may selectively filter data and simply revalidate their current beliefs while ignoring, disregarding, or altering contrary information - this is arrogant and close-minded. The only way to navigate seas of information is to develop a cyclical process of objectively collecting data and updating your beliefs to reflect your experiences. This is both open minded and courageous. This is the only path for effective growth and the only path that will lead you to truth. Look at the next page - notice only **one** path allows for continuous learning and growth.

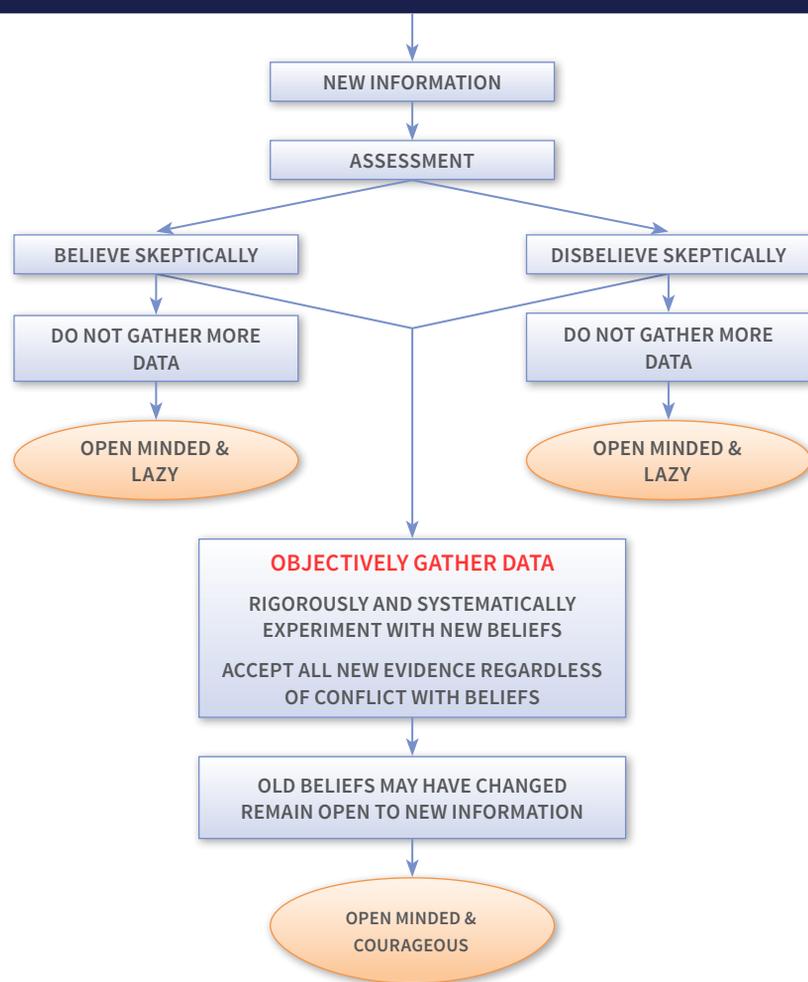
Aristotle said “*It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.*” what path reflects this understanding?

What path represent you?

CLOSE MINDED SINGULAR PROCESS



OPEN MINDED CYCLICAL PROCESS



Productivity & Daily Habits

**THE MOST IMPORTANT
LESSON TO TAKE HOME
IS THAT SOME HABITS
LITERALLY INCREASE THE
RESERVOIR OF ENERGY YOU
HAVE TO EXPEND**

THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON YOU NEED UNDERSTAND

I originally tracked 16 habits that I believed to cover all areas of life people commonly seek improvement. It wasn't long until I came across a realization that altered the course of my experiment. The most important lesson to take home is that some habits *literally increase the reservoir of energy you have to expend*. Build up your energy first then focus on spending it. It became clear to me that some habits rejuvenate while others are endless vacuoles for your energy. Learning new skills, mentoring and helping others, excelling at your job, learning a language/instrument, getting through your reading list, running a business – all of these worthy goals have no cap on how much time and energy you can invest. If, somehow, you could attack these activities with a strong and clear purpose - if you could bring more energy, focus, and motivation - then you would expect to see a proportional increase in progress and results.

This caused me to change the experiment. I only continued tracking habits suspected to have a relationship with my daily productivity. By tracking only those habits and self assessing my daily productivity out of 10 I have been able to create a massive database of personal information with which I can test my hypothesis. My new understandings are supported empirically by statistically significant data.

The result is that I no longer focus on reading x amount, or studying y amount. Instead I focus on putting myself in a state of being where I have the maximum possible energy, focus, and clarity of intent to achieve my goals. I focus on achieving that high functioning state with consistency - from there I effortlessly transition to whatever activity is most profitable or interesting to me at the time.

PYRAMID OF PRODUCTIVITY

A State of being where you've the maximum possible energy, focus & clarity of intent to achieve your goals

Meditation

Habits of Rejuvenation

Freedom from Carcinogens

Taking Responsibility & Forming Intent

“SUCCESS IS PEACE OF MIND ATTAINED ONLY THROUGH SELF-SATISFACTION IN KNOWING
THAT YOU MADE THE EFFORT TO DO THE BEST OF WHICH YOU ARE CAPABLE”

- John Wooden, *A Lifetime Of Lessons On
And Off The Court*

The Most Important Lesson Summarized In A Chart

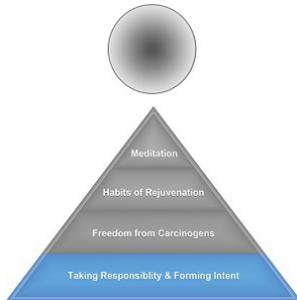
THE PYRAMID OF PRODUCTIVITY

This pyramid demonstrates the necessary steps to achieve a peak state of being. Every high achiever has at least an intuitive understanding of these concepts. This pyramid progresses logically. Performing at the edge of your capabilities and potential requires the pyramid to be recycled every day. Every day you start at the bottom. Every day you climb to the top. The four levels are tiered and represent their relative correlations with productivity.

Page 40 shows a screenshot of my current database. Interested in more than just productivity you'll notice I actually track five metrics in total (to search for relationships within my daily routine). Those five metrics are:

1. Productivity
2. Fulfilment
3. Stress
4. Financial Decision Making
5. Spiritual Decision Making

I have performed extensive analysis on all the above metrics and will eventually summarize my data in a second manifesto. But for now I will focus exclusively on productivity and its four tiered determinants. It starts at the bottom - the daily activity most highly correlated with productivity:

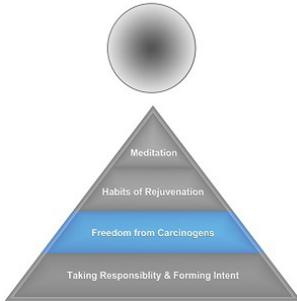


Bottom of the Pyramid (1st level)

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY & FORM INTENT

“Take full responsibility for all things in your life and decide to take action to improve them” This means your health, finances, relationships, business, education, happiness and so on. No progress is possible until you acknowledge your situation (bad or good) and resolve an intention to change. This is the level of decision making where you actually *decide* to do something. This is the level of swallowing your pride and facing your fears by honestly acknowledging your situation and resolving to take action upon it. This is the level of setting goals and writing them down. It’s not complicated - you can do it in your head or pencil it out but the key is to actually intend on following through!

Most people do not make the decision to be their best self. Even top performers struggle to make this decision every day. Think how different life would be if you *always* performed to very best of which you are capable - to act with 100% of your energy and do whatever it takes to achieve your goals. How dramatically would this change your life? That’s why the first thing you must always do is decide upon your goals and resolve to take action upon them - you can’t hit a target that doesn’t exist.



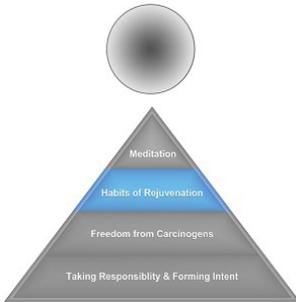
Middle of the Pyramid (2nd level)

FREEDOM FROM CARCINOGENS

Now that you've resolved upon a course of action you must clear the space for progress to flow easily. Every day you must free yourself from four primary carcinogens:

1. Negative addictions
2. Unaccommodating or negative environments
3. Intoxicants
4. Foods that rob you of energy

You're not going to sit down at your desk and work, or go the gym and lift weights if you're drunk, bloated, high, in prison, or surrounded by distractions. You won't make progress if you don't physically have the space to work or perform. Create an atmosphere and environment where you're free from judgement and can act out your goals with enthusiasm. Free yourself from negative addictions such as facebook, endless tv series, social procrastination, smart phones, or porn. Remove yourself from people or situations that hinder your ability to act. Stop eating foods that make you lethargic and unconscious.



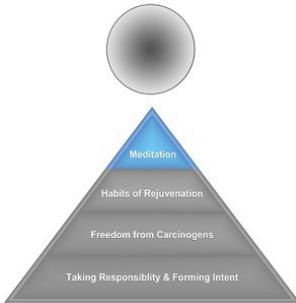
Middle of the Pyramid (3rd level)

HABITS OF REJUVENATION

1. Exercise
2. Sleep
3. Correct nutrition
4. Hygiene

These habits rejuvenate. They increase the amount of energy you have to bring to the world. In theory you could perform all four of these habits within an hour of waking up. This would place you in the upper most echelon of human beings.

I have to stress the importance of making each of these habits your own. Each discipline represents a significant part of your life - none of them are going away. You should constantly be experimenting and learning. Your fitness changes as your body changes - you learn new things, your capabilities change over time - be sure to update your knowledge. You need to learn proper nutrition as it pertains the cause and effect of your own body (aka experiment on your own, don't just read something on the subject and accept it as a personal truth - you have to discover that personally) the same goes for sleep, exercise, and your environment. It's your responsibility to learn how your body and mind respond to different triggers. It's your responsibility to learn the cause and effect reactions you have to your environment (What environments do you work well in? What people help you and what people slow you down? Etc.)



Top of the Pyramid (4th level)

MEDITATION

You absolutely must learn to meditate. Navigate through your own preconceived notions and the subjects religious affiliations. Specifically I'm talking about basic mindfulness meditation. Start a practice, read a book. Once you learn you'll never look back; the benefits are too great. Meditation comes after the other habits of rejuvenation and is separated to demonstrate its contingent relationship (meaning meditation becomes difficult and positive effects marginalized when you're sleep deprived, on a sugar high/crash, or lethargic from a lack of physical activity). The parts of mindfulness meditation we are primary interested are:

1. EXERCISING YOUR PREFRONTAL CORTEX AND STRENGTHENING YOUR ABILITIES OF FOCUS AND ATTENTION

Like lifting weights you train your mind. You literally do this by sitting still for 10 – 30 minutes and attempt to focus on one thing. That's it. You can be staring at the light switch, a candle flame, or you can have your eyes closed and focus on a specific feeling within a part of your body. You'll eventually lose focus and once you become aware of this you return to the original object of attention. Do this over and over, day after day, for years and years. You will be unstoppable.

2. GAINING CONTROL OVER YOUR PARASYNHETIC SYSTEMS INCLUDING YOUR RELAXATION RESPONSE

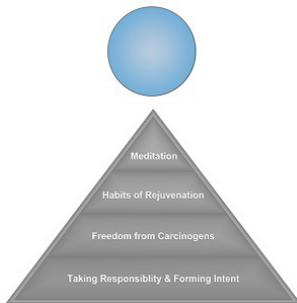
The relaxation response counters the stress response. It's beyond the scope of this text but do some quick research on the human stress hormone cortisol - it wrecks havoc our health and well being. Another great source of information is Maxwell Maltz, "Phsyncybernetics" A timeless book with some very interesting insights regarding the relaxation response.

3. ACTIVELY CHANGING YOUR STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Once you know what you're doing meditation becomes a tool to clear your head and hone your focus onto what's important. Petty distractions, conscious or unconscious, will cease to interrupt you. Meditation effectively improves the signal to noise ratio of your mind; it filters unnecessary thoughts and directs your focus to what's most important.

“SEEK NOT TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE WISE.
INSTEAD SEEK WHAT THEY SOUGHT”

BULB OF THE PYRAMID



If you maintain an excellent practice of daily habits then you will find yourself at the bulb. “A State of being where you’ve the maximum possible energy, focus, and clarity of intent to achieve your goals” From this point you’re energetic and driven. Phenomenally working towards your goals no longer strains upon your willpower.

From this understanding your optimized energies can be focused towards anything you choose - whether that's achieving pro athlete levels of fitness, making a lot of money, drinking a lot of beer, reading a lot of books, mastering skills, instruments, or languages, spending time with family and friends, joining a movement greater than yourself, contributing to a community you care about, teaching and mentoring others, creating art, creating culture, *or maybe...* maybe you take seriously the investment of your life's energies by recognizing your own mortality. Death is inevitable. We all will die. So appreciate our temporary awareness and the precious gift of human life because **who you decide to be** is the most important decision you will ever make.

To you and your pursuit of happiness,

- Clayton Ross Ferguson



PART VI: FINAL WORDS

I enjoy writing and would love to come out with more eBooks similar to this one in the future. Make sure to subscribe to my newsletter so you don't miss any updates, articles, or other free resources when I release them on my site ([sign up here](#)).

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My email is clay@fergusonross.com

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THANKS FOR READING!

