

A Year of Change

By Peter Clemens

In 2007-08 I married the love of my life, became a first-time father and relocated from Australia to Canada. Perhaps more importantly, during this time I underwent a personal transformation that changed both how I see my life and the world in which we live. I also started doing something that, little did I know at the time, would come to be a passion of mine: blogging. In April 07 I founded TheChangeBlog.com, and later in February 08 I became Editor of the popular self improvement blog PickTheBrain.com. This e-book contains the best articles I wrote during this “Year of Change”.



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Learning to Dream, Again

“When my daughter was seven years old, she asked me one day what I did at work. I told her I worked at the college - my job was to teach people how to draw. She stared at me, incredulous, and said, ‘You mean they forget?’” - Howard Ikemoto (artist and art professor)

There is something wonderfully simple about the way young children see life. It is a way of seeing in which anything is possible, and this means they see no reason why they can't grow up to be an astronaut or a cowboy or a princess.



I personally remember a time when I truly believed that I would grow up to be a famous tennis player competing on the world stage. As I grew older, this dream changed to being a critically-acclaimed movie director. Somewhere along the line, though, this dream faded and for a long time I never properly replaced it.

For some reason, I stopped dreaming. Actually that is not quite accurate - I never stopped dreaming, it is just I stopped believing my dreams were possible.

“All men dream; but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity; but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act out their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.” - T. E. Lawrence

As I look around me each day, I don't think I am the only one who has experienced this. So why is it, then, we forget how to dream the beautiful dreams of our childhood?

I believe that we are *taught* to forget. As Bill Strickland says in [Make the Impossible Possible](#), “We’re told how complicated life is, told we can’t do this and we’re not smart enough or fast enough or talented enough to pursue that. And in hearing that - in responding to these words whose effect is to close doors and narrow our thinking - we make ourselves poor... in our imagination and in leading a meaningful life.” If this is the case, then, how can we learn to dream again?

Letting Go

Lately I have started to again dream like I did as a child. And from this I have come to one powerful realization: **let go of the need to know *how***. When I analyzed my own thoughts, I found the problem was that I would quickly discount my dreams as mere fantasies because I could not immediately imagine *how* these dreams would become reality. But the truth is, just because our minds don’t immediately know how we will accomplish something, it doesn’t mean it is impossible.

It may be uncomfortable to let go of this need to know *how* as this can leave you feeling vulnerable or silly. But if we are to dream to our full potential, it is essential that we develop *trust* in our own intuition. This means we should dream wildly without trying to know how these dreams will become reality. Yes, it is important to make a plan and take action, but this can be done later. For the moment, just let your mind drift away and indulge in those dreams you once had as a child....

Living Consciously: 10 Things I Have Learned About Myself

If you read my article [50 Tips from My Year of Change](#), you will realize that 2007 was a big year for me. When I think about it, all those tips really point to one thing: I have become increasingly *conscious* as to how I am living my life.

“Living consciously” is a term commonly used on personal growth blogs, but what does it really mean? To me, living consciously is about existing in a state of *mindful awareness*. It is about analyzing and evaluating my choices, behaviors and habits so that I understand *why* I am steering my life in the direction it is heading. This is in stark contrast to being on autopilot, a state I was in for a number of years.

So what have I learned? The following are 10 insights I have had into my own life that I would like to share. They include insights into how I spend my time, what I eat and drink and what goes on in my head.



1. Sleep

I was once the stereotypical person who continually hit the snooze button, only to get up at the last possible moment. One of my major realizations in regards to sleep is that I do not need 8+ hours sleep each night. Now I realize some people do need this amount of sleep, but this is exactly what living consciously is about. You should be aware of how much sleep *you* need. I get by fine on between 6.5 to 7 hours and the extra time I now have in the morning gives me time to work on myself mentally, physically and spiritually. By the same token, though, anything less than 6.5 hours turns me into a zombie the next day.

2. Sugar

Perhaps the most important factor that has helped me reduce my sleep and still be able to wake up at 5am refreshed and ready to go (well.... most of the time) is to understand how sugar affects my body. If I eat anything with sugar after 5pm my sleep is ruined and I wake up feeling like a zombie. I know this is not the case for everyone – my wife Kathryn doesn't seem to have this problem at all - but for me eliminating all sugar in the evening has been life changing.

3. Alcohol

I enjoy drinking alcohol. An occasional glass of red with dinner or a cold beer on a hot summer day are two of my simple pleasures in life. However, one of my major realizations in the past year is that I don't enjoy it as much as society seems to tell me I should (or perhaps that was just Australian society?). These days I am fully aware that just one drink can make me tired and less alert, so I know if anything needs getting done I should steer clear of alcohol.

4. Television

Since moving from Australia to Canada in mid-2007 I have gone from having 5 television stations I can watch (we didn't have cable) to having over 100. But guess what? I watch far less television now. Basically this change has stemmed from my realization that there are far better ways to spend my time. Also, I find that "relaxing" in front of the television is not so relaxing after all. I feel much more refreshed after spending time with my family, hitting the gym or simply going for a walk.

5. Caffeine

Once upon a time I never gave a second thought to consuming caffeine. However, after reading articles such as Steve Pavlina's [How to Give Up Coffee](#) I started to become more aware of the role caffeine, and in particular coffee, played in my life. After much experimentation, I have found that a cup of coffee *is* a great way to kick-start my day, but after that it is best for me to stick to caffeine-free herbal teas.

6. Uncertainty

I was once a chronic worrier. It always bothered me that I was unsure of my path in life, especially when it seemed other people were so sure of what it is they wanted to do. Anyway, I have learned that it is ok to be uncertain. In fact, I would even go so far as to say uncertainty is the spice of life. I believe when we give up the need to know, life becomes vibrant and, yes, even a little risky.

7. Happiness Every Day

One of my major “ah-hah” moments was when it dawned on me my life really is just a series of days. Since this realization I have become determined to enjoy each and every day I experience on this planet. Yes, even in my boring job (see my article *Feel the Pain, Then Make the Change* later in this e-book) I find ways to enjoy myself. For example, each day I make an effort to connect with other people, laugh, celebrate my successes (even if it is just a mental pat on the back!) and learn something new. And when I am not at work, there is nothing I enjoy more than chasing my son around the house. I have learned in many cases, these simple pleasures can be the difference between happiness and unhappiness.

8. The Truth

This past year I have come to see just how easy it is to lie to ourselves. As I wrote about in two of my popular articles - *If You Want to Change, Tell the Truth* and *Feel the Pain, Then Make the Change* - being truthful with ourselves about our weaknesses and our pain can open the door to a beautiful new life. Can I handle the truth? Well... it can certainly hurt, but it is better than going through life numb or in denial.

9. Down Periods

Despite my “new life” of happiness and meaning, I still go through periods where I get a bit down. I have learned that these are just a part of a natural cycle, and if I ride it out for a day or two my mood and level of motivation will soon return to normal.

10. Nature

I have always loved the outdoors, but it is only in the past year or so that I have come to fully appreciate the benefits of regularly connecting with nature. When I am outdoors in nature my mind feels at peace and my soul feels alive. Even on a typical working day, when I am in an office for most of the day, I will do my best to get outside. This may involve running in the morning before work, taking my lunch to the park or simply admiring the trees I pass during the walk to and from the office.

30 Fundamentals of a Wonderful Life

Recently I had my first golf lesson with a professional golfer. Now this is not the first time that I had played golf - I picked up a golf club for the first time approximately 9 months ago and subsequently played on and off with friends. I studied a few golf books and received a few good tips from my friends, but frustration finally sent me in search of professional help.

At the lesson, the first thing I did was hit some golf balls while the coach watched. Then, he told me this: “first, we are going to work on the 4 fundamentals of golf: grip, stance, posture, and alignment”. If you think about each of these - grip, stance, posture, and alignment - you can understand why I didn’t hit too many golf balls in that first lesson. The swing - that all important element that is the final determinant of how the ball is hit - would not be the focus until I had the fundamentals under control.



This golf lesson got me thinking. It seems to me there are certain fundamentals not only in golf, but in life, we should have under control before we turn our attention to loftier ambitions. For example, many people who desire wealth will begin investing (the swing) without developing any financial intelligence (the fundamentals).

For the non-golfers out there, another metaphor is the construction of your dream home. Imagine you want to build a beautiful, multi-level home (your life). Once the site is prepared and you are ready to build, the first step is the laying of the foundation (the fundamentals). It is crucial that this foundation is strong, for it is upon this the rest of the house is built.

Here are what I consider to be 30 fundamentals of a wonderful life. Yes, I'm sure there are more. However, if you can manage to get each of these under control you will have a strong foundation upon which to build a wonderful life.

Success

Defining what success means to YOU: success will mean different things to different people. In these modern times, traditional ideas of success involving impressive job titles and high salaries are being challenged by such ideas as “time affluence”. Decide what is important to you, and don't waste time chasing someone else's idea of success.

Strong work ethic: expecting great success without being willing to work hard for it is a recipe for mediocrity. If it seems that others just get lucky, remember the following quote from the famous golfer Gary Player:

“The harder I work, the luckier I get.” - Gary Player

Focus on adding value: stop focusing on what you *want*, and start thinking of how you can *add value* to other people. When you help other people get what they want, they will be more willing to help you.

Abundance mentality: this is the understanding that there is plenty out there and enough to spare for everybody. With this mentality, you are willing to share prestige, recognition, and profits.

Motivation: what drives you to succeed? When you understand the reasons behind what you do (e.g. to provide for your family), you will gain purpose and clarity.

Goals: there are numerous studies that have shown people who set goals are more likely to succeed than people who do not. By setting goals, you focus your attention on a target which, in turn, focuses your mind on finding ways to get there.

Personal Growth

A curious mind: a curious mind loves to learn new things. If you have ever watched a small child play you will know exactly what I mean. So instead of just accepting things “as is”, ask yourself the questions: *What? How? Why? Who? When?*



An open mind: some of our beliefs and actions are so ingrained that we automatically disregard any evidence that we should think or act otherwise. Keep an open mind, and you may just come across a better way of seeing or doing things.

A willingness to change: it is one thing to want to live a better life, but are you *really* willing to make the necessary changes? The following quote explains this concept perfectly:

“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results” - Albert Einstein

Defining your values and principles: who are you? What are you about? And what do you value? If you don’t have one already, I highly recommend taking the time to write a personal mission statement.

Awareness: are you on autopilot? If so, turn it off and decide to *live consciously*. This means being committed to awareness as a way of existing in the world: awareness of your beliefs, awareness of your surroundings and awareness of your freedom to choose your own destiny.

Self-discipline: you may have the best intentions in the world, but without self-discipline you will fall victim to temptation. If you have problems with self-discipline, burn the following quote into your memory and recall it whenever temptation arises:

“The price of discipline is always less than the pain of regret”

Happiness

The ability to enjoy the now: it's important to plan for the future, but too many people have “destination addiction” which means they can't enjoy the present. Stop. And enjoy this very moment....



Find your purpose: in his book [Happier](#), author Tal Ben Shahar defines happiness as:

“The overall experience of pleasure and meaning.”

Different people find different ways to fill their life with meaning. One thing is clear though: meaning comes from developing a sense of purpose.

Gratitude: instead of focusing on what you *don't have*, try appreciating what you *do have*. If you are reading this, chances are you are better off than the vast majority of the world's population.

Quality relationships: happiness is closely linked to the quality of your relationships in your life. Take the time to keep in touch with friends and family.

Perspective: when things get tough, it is important to be able to step back and [gain some perspective on life](#).

Accepting those things that cannot be changed: I have always loved the profound wisdom of the following quote, commonly known as the Serenity Prayer:

“God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.”

Wealth

Financial intelligence: before investing in real estate or the stock market, invest in yourself by developing your own financial intelligence. As they say, knowledge is power.



Spend less than you earn: to become wealthy you must spend less than you earn. Just consider the opposite for a moment: if you spend more than you earn, you are accumulating debt.

Proper management of debt: have you ever felt up to your eyeballs in debt? It's not a good feeling. There are circumstances where debt is good, but if you fall into the debt trap you can become a slave to making the repayments.

Patience: without patience, you will be drawn towards high risk investments such as speculative stocks or get rich quick schemes. Yes, there are some people who get rich quick, but there are also a lot of people who get hurt (especially if they haven't taken the time to develop their financial intelligence). Be prepared to [get rich slowly](#).

Adequate protection of assets: it is one thing to accumulate assets, but if they are not adequately protected you may be in for an unpleasant surprise. Life does go awry every so often, so be prepared.

Health

Recognize the importance of your health: it is often said that “your health is your wealth”. Don’t wait until your health is gone to realize this.

Exercise: if you want to be fit and healthy, you *must* do some form of exercise.

A healthy diet: there is truth to the old saying “you are what you eat”. If you want to live a long and healthy life, make sure you maintain a healthy diet. Yes, this is common sense - but common sense does not necessarily translate to common practice.

Relationships

Treat others as you would like to be treated: this is known as the Ethic of Reciprocity, or the “Golden Rule”. Imagine if everyone lived by this principle.



Love yourself: I don’t mean this in a vain sense. I just believe that before asking another person to love you, you should take the time to find things you love about yourself.

Have good manners: good manners are said to be the lubricant of social interaction. Saying “please” shows you respect someone, and saying “thank you” tells them you appreciate them.

Be real: show a *genuine* interest in other people. And don’t be afraid to let them see the real you, even if it means you feel vulnerable. I believe it is when you are at your most vulnerable that people fall in love with you.

Wake Up to the Important Things in Life

I'm sure you have experienced a wake up call at some point in your life. Events such as a divorce, a new baby, a firing, a terrorist attack or a near-death experience tend to hit us like a ton of bricks and are not easily forgotten. Personally, what I find interesting is that implicit in the idea of a wake up call is that we have, in some sense, been asleep. What is it that we have been asleep to?



When I think of wake up calls, the word that comes to mind is “priorities”. Wake up calls tend to make us stop, pull back from the runway of life, and consider exactly what it is that is important to us. Very often we realize that we have had our priorities upside down. Perhaps we have been spending too much time at the office, too little time with our kids or have been neglecting our health. So to answer my earlier question, it seems to me that many of us travel through life asleep to what really is important. If you are in a slumber, the following are some ideas to help you wake up and remember the important things in your life:

Connect to Your Own Mortality

Some may find it depressing to think about death, but it can actually be a great technique to improve your life. Try, for example, to imagine laying on your deathbed. What could potentially give you cause for regret? Would it be all the money you didn't make? Or would it be the friendships you didn't nurture, the time you didn't spend with your family and the places you didn't see?

Now, consider the way you are currently living your life. Is there anything that could give you cause for regret when you do actually come to lie upon your deathbed? Steve Jobs is a famous advocate of connecting to your own mortality. In his Commencement Speech at Stanford University, he said:

‘Remembering that I’ll be dead soon is the most important thing I’ve ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life, because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure — these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important.’

Write a Personal Mission Statement

I admit to being one of those people who normally skips the exercises in self-help books. I did, however, decide to follow Stephen R. Covey’s advice in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and write a personal mission statement. In short, a personal mission statement is an individual statement of who you are, what you are about and what you value. The process of writing such a statement helps to clarify your inner-most thoughts and feelings, and once finished is something you can turn to for guidance. If you are interested in writing your own personal mission statement, I recommend Dr. Covey’s [Mission Statement Builder](#). Also, if you would like to see an example you are welcome to [read my personal mission statement](#).

Have a Meaningful Conversation with an Older Person

As you grow older, you naturally acquire experience and knowledge of what is important in life. For example, is there anything you could tell the “you” from 10 years ago that would make life easier? I’m sure there is. Unfortunately, unless you have a time machine this is impossible. A great way, then, to acquire the wisdom that comes with age is to seek out an older person, such as a grandparent, and have a meaningful conversation with them. Ask them about their life, what they have learned and what they

would do differently. You may just find they experienced many of the thoughts and feelings you are currently are when they were younger.

Meditate

Usually the problem is not that we don't know what is important in life, but that it is forgotten as we get caught up in the everyday tasks that comprise life. One of the best methods I have found to overcome this problem is meditation. Meditation is a great way to relax both your mind and body. Such a state is ideal for gaining a better understanding of who you are and what you value.

Volunteer

It is easy in life to become consumed with your own sense of self importance. A very effective way to step back and see life in a greater context is to volunteer. For example, helping those with less than yourself will help you realize just how fortunate you really are. So often we act in such a way that we don't already have the important things in life, when in actual fact they are right under our nose.

5 Signs You Are on Autopilot

I was on autopilot for many years. Sure, I was traveling through life with my eyes open and my hands on the wheel. But it seemed as if I was heading toward some pre-determined destination that had been chosen for me by others. In addition, it seemed whenever I turned the wheel to guide me toward this destination, there was no conscious thought behind my actions.

Are you on autopilot? Admittedly this can be a tough question to answer. First, it is always hard to be brutally honest with oneself. If you realize that you are traveling through life on autopilot, you may just need to make some big changes. Second, how can you tell if you are? Personally, I believe the best method is to look for particular *signs*. The following are 5 signs that are either relevant to my life or the lives of some close friends of mine.



1. You know exactly where you will be in 5 years (and it depresses you!)

In many circumstances, knowing where you will be in 5 years time is a *good* thing as it is a sign that you have direction, goals and purpose. But if you know exactly where you will be, and it depresses you, it is time to wake up, grab control of the wheel and change course. I have a few friends who studied accounting at university and yet hated the idea of becoming an accountant. Fast forward 5 years to the present and guess what? They are accountants, and they hate it.

2. Your career is what your parents wanted you to do

Many of us make decisions, whether consciously or unconsciously, to please other people (e.g. our parents). If you are happy with your choice of career then there is probably nothing wrong with this. But it may be worth looking in the mirror and asking the person in front of you a few tough questions. For example, am I *really* happy with my choice of career? Am I doing this because it is what *I* want to do? Or am I doing this to please someone else?

3. You went straight from school to college to work

Have you ever taken some time out to explore the world, find new interests you never knew existed or just get to know yourself better? One piece of advice I was given by my parents was this: finish your study (i.e. school and college) first and then travel. Was this good advice? Maybe. Maybe not. The scary thing for them was that I would take off midway through my university course and then, upon return, would no longer want to complete it. In my opinion, if someone returns home after travel and is not compelled to finish their study it is a fairly good sign this path does not reflect their calling.

4. You did well in school and automatically chose a college course that was the hard to gain acceptance into (e.g. medicine or law)

I did quite well at school. While I was not eligible to study medicine or law, I could basically do whatever else I chose. I remember feeling that because I had a relatively high score, I should choose a course that required a high score for entry. The problem with this attitude is that I automatically discarded a number of other potential career paths because I felt I was above them.

5. Your interests and/ or hobbies are all the same as from when you were a child

Once again, this is not necessarily a bad thing. But consider this example from my life: I began playing tennis from a young age, and played competitively at a fairly high level for a number of years. At 21, I decided I wasn't having fun anymore and stopped playing. In retrospect, I should have made this decision much earlier as by the time I quit I had not been enjoying myself for approximately 3 years.

Why hadn't I quit earlier? I believe it was because I started playing from such an early age and just didn't know any different. Putting away the tennis racquet, though, was one of the best decisions I have ever made (although, as a side-note, these days I enjoy playing on a social basis). I started to spend time pursuing other interests that had lied dormant because tennis had consumed my life.

The Magic of the Every Day Mindset

The “Every Day Mindset” is a simple, yet extremely powerful, way in which to live your life. What is this mindset? Put simply, it is a mindset that remembers that this day you are currently living will only ever happen once, and it therefore encourages you to make the most of it.

It is not about recklessly living life as if there is no tomorrow. The future is important to plan for, but it is important not to obsess about it to the extent that you neglect the present. Remember, the only way to get to the future is through a series of todays. Since this Every Day Mindset has changed my life, I would like to share with you 3 specific ways in which I apply it:



1. Enjoy Every Day

I choose to enjoy every day. I wake up early at 5am because I am excited about the day ahead, and throughout the day I try to maintain a positive attitude. Yes, sometimes “shit happens” and I don’t have a good day. But I figure if I at least try to have fun and be happy there is a good chance I will enjoy myself.

What I am particularly interested in is ways to enjoy my time at work. Most people know how to enjoy their leisure time, but many people struggle to imagine being happy at work. If this is you, here are a few quick tips:

- **Do what you love:** this should be your ultimate career goal. I know it's easier said than done, but just remember it is possible.
- **Make friends with your co-workers:** in so many ways, it is our relationships with people that give us the most happiness in life. So take the time and effort to become friends with the people you work with.
- **Take pride in your work:** even if you aren't saving lives, chances are you are contributing in some positive way to society. Take pride in your work and you are sure to feel better about yourself.
- **Stop waiting:** stop waiting for *something* to occur before you are happy. Because guess what? Chances are that a better title, more money, a car bay or that nice corner office with the great view will not make a significant and lasting difference to your level of happiness.

2. Take Small Steps

I have some big dreams and ambitious goals for my life. I'm also human, which means I suffer from fear, self-doubt and procrastination. This means that if I'm not careful, big and ambitious become overwhelming and intimidating. And the danger with feeling overwhelmed is that I won't take actions towards my dreams and goals.

What I have discovered is that big things can result from taking small steps. As Lao Tzu once said:

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

What this means in the context of the Every Day Mindset is that each day I try to get a little bit closer to fulfilling my dreams and achieving my goals. And so long as I am making progress, I feel happy. Here is my favorite tip for taking small steps towards big goals:

- **Try to improve 1% each day:** this doesn't seem like much, but imagine how much you will have changed after just one month. So try being 1% happier, healthier, and productive than yesterday and see what happens.

3. Make Your Habits Daily

In the past I have struggled with motivation. And I found that when my motivation fell, many of my good habits would slip away. For example, when it came time to exercise I would tell myself “I will exercise tomorrow”, despite having previously committed myself to exercising at that particular time.

When I changed my mindset to one in which I exercised every day, this excuse suddenly disappeared. And guess what? It made all the difference. So to make a habit stick, commit to doing it daily.

24 Daily Habits

“We first make our habits, and then our habits make us” - John Dryden

I have previously written about how the habit of exercising every day has helped me tremendously. Doing something every day is such a powerful way to form a habit that I thought I would make a list of 24 habits that are worth doing on a daily basis. *(Note: I have divided these into morning, day and night although some could obviously be under different headings.)*



The Morning

- 1. Wake Early:** I am a big fan of waking at 5am and spending time working on myself before going to work.
- 2. Exercise:** when I had the goal of exercising 4 times a week I found it was very easy to tell myself *I will exercise tomorrow instead*. Setting the expectation of daily exercise removed this as a potential excuse and I have since reaped the benefits of this daily habit.

3. Review or (Even Better) Rewrite Your Goals: each day I try to get closer to achieving my short, medium and long term goals. Starting the day by reviewing or rewriting my goals gives me better awareness of them throughout the day. As Robin Sharma says:

“With better awareness you can make better choices and when you make better choices, you will see better results.”

4. Read and/ or Listen to Motivational Material: in the morning a whole day of endless possibilities lies ahead. I motivate myself to do my best by reading and listening to inspirational books/ audiobooks.

5. Visualize the Day Ahead: I like to take a few minutes to shut my eyes and visualize what I want happen in the coming day. It’s amazing how often my desires become reality when I do this.



6. Write a “To Do” list: I like to write out a list in my diary of the important tasks I need to do. As they are completed I put a line through them. This is so simple, and yet so effective.

7. Check the News Headlines: I think it’s important to have an idea of what is happening in our community and the world. Also if don’t at least check the main stories, I find it is easy to feel left out of conversations throughout the day.

8. Take a Multivitamin: I try to eat a well balanced diet, but taking a multivitamin daily reassures me that I obtaining the proper amount of vitamins and minerals that I need.

9. Tidy Up: a cluttered house can lead to a cluttered mind and fuzzy thinking. I find it’s best to stay on top of things by tidying up each day.

10. Take Time to Look Good: it's a reality of life that people judge us by our appearance. I take a few extra minutes each morning to ensure I go out into the world looking the best I can.

The Day

11. Put First Things First: many people have their day controlled by tasks that are urgent, but not necessarily important. Examples include interruptions, some emails and some phone calls. The habit of putting first things first is about organizing and executing your life around your deepest priorities.

12. Connect with Nature: I find spending time outdoors in nature is great for my sense of wellbeing.

13. Blog: blogging makes me think and write - two things that I can't get enough of each day.

14. Snack Well: I substitute the chips, candy and chocolate with fruit, vegetables (carrots and celery are great to chomp on) and nuts.

15. Be Proactive: being proactive means showing initiative and taking the responsibility to make things happen. Whenever I want something to happen, I ask myself: *what can I do to make this happen?*

16. Ping a Friend: I try to send a quick email or text to a friend each day. It's a great way to stay in touch with friends when I am extremely busy.

17. Save: I save at least 10% of each pay check. A great way to find the money to save is to break it down to a daily amount, for example \$10-15.

The Evening

18. Have Family Time: on a typical workday I won't see much of my wife and son, so I believe it's important to, at the very least, *be there* most evenings. Family time is about *quantity* and *quality*.

19. Floss: This is essential to reduce tooth decay and gum disease. Why wouldn't you want to have the best smile possible?



20. Wind Down: I try to switch off the computer and the TV about 30 to 60 minutes before bedtime and let my brain have some down time after a long day. I sleep far more peacefully when I do this.

21. Review My Day: I find this is a great way to hold myself to account for taking action throughout the day. Did I get closer to achieving my goals? Did I complete my To Do list? Did my day go as planned? If not, why not?

22. Read: I love to read and do so continuously throughout the day. I find it is especially good to read just before to going to bed. Just makes sure it's a relaxing book, and not one about nuclear physics (see habit #20).

23. Say *I Love You* to My Family Members: don't just assume that your family members know you love them. I say these words to my wife and son *at least* once per day.

24. Go to Bed at a Reasonable Time: the first habit of this list (waking early) begins by going to bed at a reasonable time and getting a good night's sleep.

MIND OVER MATTRESS: HOW TO WAKE EARLIER WHEN ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS SLEEP

I normally wake at 5am, and have been doing so for some time. In fact, if I didn't wake early you probably wouldn't be reading this right now as I simply wouldn't have the time to write. This past week, however, I have struggled to wake early and have been hitting the snooze button for the first time in a long time... what's going on???

One thing I have learned over the past year and a half is that waking early is not just about setting your alarm clock for a particular time and getting up. For example, it is pointless to force yourself to wake early if it leaves you feeling like a zombie for the rest of the day. If you are interested in waking earlier, the following are a few things I have learned that may be of help. And hopefully we can work out why I have been bashing the snooze button so much....



The Evening Before

Avoid caffeine/ alcohol/ sugar. All these things can potentially affect your quality of sleep and make it incredibly hard to wake when your alarm goes off. When it comes to something like sugar, for

example, I indulge my sweet tooth during the day. Then in the evening I avoid it because I know it makes me restless during the night.

Wind down. Don't go to bed with your mind still active. This is one reason I have been struggling to wake early the past week - I have gotten into the bad habit of shutting down the computer and heading straight to bed. I need to get back into the habit of turning off the computer earlier and instead reading some fiction followed by some meditation.

Visualize. Just before falling asleep, visualize yourself waking at a particular time. It's amazing how effectively this works.

Sleep

Get enough. Different people need different amounts of sleep. So the key is to experiment and be aware what amount works well for *you*. I need at least 6 and a half to 7 hours. When I sleep less than this (such as I did a night or two last week), I always regret it because I am tired all the next day. There is nothing productive about that.

Better quality. I sleep less than I did 2 years ago, but I generally find it easier to wake up. One major reason for this is my quality of sleep is much better (although I am conveniently forgetting the first few months after our son was born). Apart from avoiding the things I mentioned earlier, I usually wear a sleep mask to make things completely dark. Kathryn has nicknamed me Zorro because of this, but it is worth it. Also, I might even look at getting myself a posturepedic pillow (as suggested awhile back by my friend Todd in [24 Powerful Relaxation Techniques](#)).

Waking Earlier

Have a purpose. I usually find it relatively easy to wake at 5am because I have a clear purpose of what I want to do in the morning. Typically I will spend a few minutes the night before making a list of what I want to do. Then in the morning I am able to quickly focus on these.

Find a morning routine you love. Over the past 1-2 years my mornings have changed from waking up and rushing to get ready and out the door, to waking earlier and incorporating some activities/ habits I enjoy into my mornings. To get some ideas, I highly recommend my articles 24 Daily Habits and 10 Ways to Give Your Morning a Makeover. I obviously don't do everything in the preceding articles each morning, but once you have some ideas to make your morning more enjoyable it is easy to incorporate at least one or two.



Be sneaky. A very effective trick I do is to place my alarm on the other side of the room, effectively forcing me to get out of bed to turn it off.

Be disciplined. Of course the above trick is no guarantee that I won't go back and curl up in bed (as I have done a few times over the past week). I don't think my problem has been discipline so much as the other things I have discussed in this article. But certainly waking earlier does require you to put "mind over mattress". Remember: "the price of discipline is always less than the pain of regret".

Small steps. It took me a number of months to go from waking at 7am to 5am. The key was to take it slowly by chipping away at 15 minutes at a time. Take small steps and be patient.

One Year On. How Fatherhood Has Changed My Life.

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since the most nerve-wracking, yet exciting and wonderful, moment in my life. It was a moment that seemed to take forever to arrive (in addition to the standard 9 months, Kathryn went 2 weeks overdue), but when it did I knew that my life would never be the same again. And I couldn't have been happier....



In this article I want to share with you how fatherhood has changed my life. Although this is a very personal article, I believe there are many lessons that anyone can take away from my story. The realization that I was to be a father was a catalyst for change in my life, but I am sure there are a number of different paths people can take to the outlook I have today.

Self Reflection

When I reflect on my life prior to hearing the news that I was to be a father, many good things come to mind. Kathryn and I had been together over 2 years and we were living a fun and happy life. But underneath this I had a longing for something more. I was starting to grow tired of the big weekends that took days to recover from, but I didn't know what I wanted to do with myself.

As I have previously written about, I did not initially welcome the news that I was to be a dad. I think the main reason was that I had all these other things planned for my life before I took the big step into parenthood: traveling the world (again), getting rich, etc. I experienced a few months of intense soul-searching before I finally came to be excited about the news.

Motivation to Change

How did I come to be excited about the news? When I think about it, it comes back to the way I changed my thinking. I did not discard my plans; rather I changed them to accommodate the new baby that was to come into our lives. A close friend of mine said me: “why can’t you have a baby and still travel the world and make money?” To this day, that has stuck in my mind and motivated to work hard towards creating the life I want. And I should point out that much of this “work” I refer to has been work I have done on myself (i.e. personal growth). I strongly believe that private victory precedes public victory. So I didn’t really know where I was headed, but I figured so long as I committed to improving myself then things would work out.

A New Life

On February 10, 2007, we welcomed our son Xavier into the world. The following are some of the important ways that I have changed:

A sense of awe. It was when I saw Xavier for the first time that I truly understood what a miracle life is. To hold this little human being, with his little fingers and tiny feet, left me in awe of just how truly amazing life is. And this sense of awe has changed how I view my everyday surroundings, in particular nature. Often I will just stop and admire a beautiful tree or the snow-covered mountains here in Vancouver and think: “Wow - that is amazing”.

Awareness of my own mortality. I remember driving home from the hospital, on my own, a few hours after Xavier was born. I had so many emotions rushing around inside of me, but one of the most intense was a sense of my own mortality. I had never felt so alive, but by the same token I had never felt so vulnerable. I drove home particularly careful that night, knowing that my life now had a new meaning.

Meaning. I mentioned at the start of this article that I had been longing for something more in life. I now realize that I was searching for meaning, and in Xavier I found that meaning. Now, I don't think having a kid is a prerequisite for living a meaningful life, nor do I want fatherhood to be the only thing that brings meaning to my existence. *But what fatherhood has done is to help me understand what a wonderful feeling it is to live with meaning*, and I now do things (e.g. write for this blog and volunteer) that also give me this same sense of meaning.

Connected to the world. I have always considered myself to be a bit different, and this has at times left me feeling unconnected to the world around me. But Xavier has connected me to the future, and for this reason I now *care* more than I ever have about the fate of the humankind and the world we live in. Whether the issue is the environment or politics, I realize that what we do on this planet today will affect the future for our sons and daughters, and then their sons and daughters and so on...

A desire to make a difference. Because I now feel a greater connection to the world I live in, I want to make a positive difference. It is no coincidence that I started this blog soon after Xavier was born. I see this blog as a manifestation of my newfound calling to help other people live better lives.

The #1 Way to Shake Up Your Life

If you are in a rut, I can think of no better way to shake up your life then to pack your bags, jump on a plane, and start exploring the world. And I'm not talking about a one-week vacation to Hawaii (or wherever it is you go for your holidays). I'm talking about extended time (6+ months in my books) away from your home city or town.

For a number of years I was traveling through life on autopilot. I went straight from school to university, and for much of this time I felt that I was traveling along a pre-determined path that really didn't interest me. However, once university finished I made perhaps the best decision of my life. I grabbed my backpack and took off for a year of traveling around the globe. And it just so happened that this year changed everything...



Why you should travel

Why should you travel? I realize that for anyone who has previously traveled, this section may come across as preaching to the converted (you may wish to skip ahead to the resources below). But I often hear from readers, young people in particular, who feel lost and want help with finding what to do with their lives. While travel may not be the right option for everyone, here are a few benefits related to travel that I have observed:

Freedom to find yourself. Sometimes living in your home town or city can be suffocating. Perhaps you feel forced by your parents to pursue a particular career, are scared to explore your sexual

preferences or are heavily influenced by your friends to act a certain way. Moving elsewhere can help you escape these pressures so you can fully explore what life has to offer you.

A blank slate. Moving to a new city or town gives you an opportunity to start afresh. When I arrived in Vancouver from Australia 6 months ago, I felt as if I had a blank state upon which to create the life I wanted. And I truly believe that a new environment is often needed to bring out the best in people. For example, I don't think I would be where I am today with my writing and blogging if I was still living in Australia.

The ordinary becomes interesting. Food shopping. Walking around Downtown. A conversation with a stranger. These all sound like fairly ordinary activities, right? Well it is amazing how these simple things can be exciting activities and adventures when you travel to, or live in, another place.

A real education. In university I studied Asian Studies, so I have a solid knowledge of the politics, geography, economics, and history of Asia. However, I haven't yet had the chance to travel through Asia, and I sometimes think to myself how much do I *really* know about the region? We can learn a lot from textbooks, but nothing compares to actually going to a place and experiencing it firsthand.

Goodbye comfort zone. Human beings have a tendency to settle. One of the main benefits of travel is that it forces you out of your comfort zone, which in turn helps you to grow. My experience of living overseas is that it has forced me to get out and meet new people. And since I am normally a reserved person, this has helped me tremendously to build self-confidence and develop as a person.

Chase your passion. Often to chase your passion you will need to move to a certain place that is associated with that particular passion. For example, fashion is associated with Paris and New York. Finance with London. Film with Hollywood. Surfing with Hawaii and Australia. IT with Silicon Valley.

If you have a particular passion, it is very likely that there is somewhere better than your current place of residence to pursue that passion.

Unique opportunities. Travel opens the door to a number of unique opportunities that would otherwise not be available. You may, for example, wish to study at a university with a world-class reputation for a particular course. Or, you may want to make a difference by volunteering for a certain cause. Remember, there are endless opportunities in life and often the only constraint is our own imagination.

Different travel options

Perhaps the most important point in this article is this: **you don't necessarily have to be rich to travel.** If you have automatically discarded the possibility of travel due the imagined cost, take a moment to consider the following travel options and resources. You may be surprised at the different travel options available, including (but not limited to): studying abroad, volunteering, backpacking, teaching abroad and internships.

Resources

TrekEarth. Amazing photography from around the world to whet your appetite. www.trekearth.com

Thorntree forums. Lonely Planet's bulletin board for travelers to exchange travel information, advice, hints and tips. www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree

Virtual Tourist. A large resource of user-generated tips and warnings for more than 25,000 locations around the world. www.virtualtourist.com

Family Travel Forum. Children do not need to get in the way of travel. Find out how other parents do it at: www.familytravelforum.com

Transitions Abroad. A huge resource for work abroad, study abroad, cultural travel overseas and international living. www.transitionsabroad.com

Meet up. An easy way to find people in a particular area who share similar interests to you. www.meetup.com

Couch surfing. See the world on the (really) cheap. www.couchsurfing.com

Wwoof. A worldwide network that helps people share more sustainable ways of living. www.wwoof.org

Anywired. Everything to help you take your show on the road. www.anywired.com

Location Independent. Another site dedicated to helping you live and work anywhere you choose. www.locationindependent.com

If You Want to Change, Tell the Truth

So I went to a job interview last week and, to be honest, it didn't go well. What I found interesting, though, was in the aftermath of the interview my mind was on overdrive. And by paying particular attention to these thoughts rushing through my head I noticed something: *I wanted so badly to blame external factors for the way the interview went.* I wanted to blame the public transport for making me 5 minutes late. I wanted to blame the interviewer's wooden demeanor for the uncomfortable atmosphere in the interview. I wanted to blame the unusual interview questions that had me on the back foot trying desperately to recall some specific example from past.

By the time I got home from the interview my mind had settled somewhat. While in the bathroom, I paused for a moment and stared at my reflection in the mirror. It was then that I said to myself: *you sucked.* That was it. That was the brutal, honest truth. I went to the interview under-prepared and the famous Benjamin Franklin quote came true: "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

Then something strange happened: despite my disappointment, I felt at peace. Sure, my pride and ego had taken a battering. What I realized, though, was that by accepting responsibility for my role in the failed interview, I was opening the door to change. I knew that if I was honest with myself, then I was giving myself the opportunity to address my shortcomings.



I think, then, the lesson we can all take from this is: **if you want to change, tell the truth.** Being honest with yourself about your shortcomings is *always* the best policy. Sure, it is easier to blame external factors when things go awry. All this does, though, is make you vulnerable to more pain in the future as you will not have addressed the underlying issues.

With this in mind, here then are 3 tips you help you be truthful with yourself:

- 1. Be concrete:** it is important to do more than simply acknowledge things didn't go well. Try to pinpoint exactly what it was that let you down. In my case, I was under-prepared for the interview, which led to me being nervous in the interview and not giving well-thought out answers.
- 2. Be courageous:** it may be very uncomfortable to examine your life and acknowledge what isn't working. This is why you need to be courageous. Fight the desire to blame others. And remember: it is impossible to change aspects of our lives that we hide in the shadows.
- 3. Be complete:** there is potentially a danger here of becoming too negative. I suggest you "be complete" by also reflecting on your strengths. Recall past experiences where you did successfully change some aspect of your life and use these as inspiration.

How to Build Self-Discipline

Discipline is freedom. You may disagree with this statement, and if you do you are certainly not alone. For many people discipline is a dirty word that is equated with the absence of freedom. In fact the opposite is true. As Stephen R. Covey once wrote, *“the undisciplined are slaves to moods, appetites and passions”*. And in the longer term, the undisciplined lack the freedom that comes with possessing particular skills and abilities - e.g. to play a musical instrument or speak a foreign language.



Self-discipline involves acting according to what you *think* instead of how you *feel* in the moment. Often it involves sacrificing the pleasure and thrill of the moment for what matters most in life. Therefore it is self-discipline that drives you to:

- Work on an idea or project after the initial rush of enthusiasm has faded away
- Go to the gym when all you want to do is lie on the couch and watch TV
- Wake early to work on yourself
- Say “no” when tempted to break your diet
- Only check your email a few of times per day at particular times

In the past self-discipline has been a weakness of mine, and as a result today I find myself lacking the ability to do a number of things which I would like - e.g. to play the guitar. But I have improved, and I

can say that it is self-discipline that got me out of bed this morning at 5am to run and then write this article. Believe me, I would love to be curled up in bed right now, but this desire is subordinated by my inner sense of purpose.

If you struggle with self-discipline, the good news is that it can be developed. For example, it is only in the past two years that I have trained myself to wake early. The following are what I have found to be the five traits of self-discipline:

1. Self-Knowledge

Discipline means behaving according to what you have decided is best, regardless of how you feel in the moment. Therefore the first trait of discipline is self-knowledge. You need to decide what behavior best reflects your goals and values. This process requires introspection and self-analysis, and is most effective when tied to written expression. I highly recommend taking the time to write out your goals, dreams and ambitions. Even better, write out a personal mission statement. I found that writing such a statement gave me a greater understanding of who I am, what I am about and what I value.

2. Conscious Awareness

Self-discipline depends upon conscious awareness as to both what you are doing and what you are not doing. Think about it. If you aren't aware your behavior is undisciplined, how will you know to act otherwise?

As you begin to build self-discipline, you may catch yourself being in the act of being undisciplined - e.g. biting your nails, avoiding the gym, eating a piece of cake or checking your email constantly. Developing self-discipline takes time, and the key here is you are aware of your undisciplined behavior.

With time this awareness will come earlier, meaning rather than catching yourself in the act of being undisciplined you will have awareness *before* you act in this way. This gives you the opportunity to make a decision that is in better alignment with your goals and values.

3. Commitment to Self-Discipline

It is not enough to simply write out your goals and values. You must make an internal commitment to them. Otherwise when your alarm clock goes off at 5am you will see no harm in hitting the snooze button for “*just another 5 minutes....*” Or, when initial rush of enthusiasm has faded away from a project you will struggle to see it through to completion.

If you struggle with commitment, start by making a conscious decision to follow through on what you say you’re going to do - both when you said you would do it and how you said you would do it. Then, I highly recommend putting in place a system to track these commitments. As the saying goes, “What gets measured gets improved”.

4. Courage

Did you notice the sweat dripping from the man in the picture at the start of this article? Make no mistake, self-discipline is often extremely difficult. Moods, appetites and passions can be powerful forces to go against. Therefore self-discipline is highly dependent on courage. Don’t pretend something is easy for you to do when it is in fact very difficult and/ or painful. Instead, find the courage to face this pain and difficulty. As you begin to accumulate small private victories, your self-confidence will grow and the courage that underpins self-discipline will come more naturally.

5. Internal Coaching

Self-talk is often harmful, but it can also be extremely beneficial if you have control of it. When you find yourself being tested, I suggest you talk to yourself, encourage yourself and reassure yourself. After all, it is self-talk that has the ability to remind you of your goals, call up courage, reinforce your commitment and keep you conscious of the task at hand. When I find my discipline being tested, I always recall the following quote: “The price of discipline is always less than the pain of regret”. Burn this quote into your memory, and recall in whenever you find yourself being tested. It may change your life.

How to Sell Yourself (and Why Your Career Depends On It)

To get ahead in life, you need to be in the business of selling. If this statement makes you cringe, it is probably because the word “sales” evokes images of annoying telemarketers and pushy car dealers. Relax, though, as this article is about a product so wonderful and special you should have no qualms in selling it. The product? You.

There are endless situations in life where the key to success is the ability to sell yourself to others. In your career, the ability to convince an interviewer that you are the best person for the job is critical. When it comes to relationships, your ability to show your best qualities can be the crucial factor in clinching a date with the girl or guy you want. When you think about it, if you cannot sell yourself as a person to others, you are going to have a difficult time selling them your ideas, your wishes, your needs, your ambitions, your skills and your experience.

Despite the necessity of being able to sell yourself to others, for many people like myself it does not come naturally. Introversion, shyness and lack of self-worth are just a few of the obstacles that can potentially get in the way. To overcome such obstacles, I suggest focusing on the following:

Be Sold on Yourself

This is the first, and perhaps most important, aspect to successfully selling yourself to others. Unless it comes naturally, this is probably also the hardest. Being sold on yourself comes down to this: **you**



must be aware of your own self-worth. This means you believe in yourself, have faith in yourself and have confidence in yourself.

Being sold on yourself is not something that usually happens overnight. For many years, I did not like myself. I can, however, personally attest that it is possible to change your life and gain a sense of self-worth when there was once none. If you struggle with your sense of self-worth, here are just 3 ideas that may help:

- Live in such a way that you would want to be friends with yourself
- Find some time to reflect on what you like about yourself. If this seems hard, start with the smallest of attributes.
- Don't do anything that will give you cause to feel ashamed later.

Have a Saleable Package

This article is predominately about letting others know about the inner contents of your package. That being said, there is no getting around the fact that people judge others based on their appearance. Some questions you may consider asking yourself are: am I looking after my appearance to the best of my ability? Are my clothes appropriate for the image I wish to project?

Be Positive and Enthusiastic

Can you remember the last time you received poor customer service? Did the person look bored, disinterested and as if they wanted to be some other place? Don't be that person. Positivity and enthusiasm can both be developed, but once again it takes work. Here are a few tips to help you:

- Look for the best in people
- Associate with positive people
- Care deeply about something
- See life as an adventure
- Smile

Be Real and Authentic

Rather than being about who you *appear* to be, selling yourself is about letting others know who you *are* as a person. For this reason, lies and half-truths are a recipe for disaster later down the line. By telling the truth, you will earn both trust and respect which, in turn, will help you build a great reputation. Not only that, it will make you feel good about yourself. The last thing you want to do is sell yourself out by compromising your values and principles.

10 Excellent Self Improvement Podcasts

Recently I discovered some excellent new self improvement podcasts, and in doing so I was reminded just how beneficial podcasts have been my development. Podcasts are a perfect way to work in multiple positives, meaning I can feed my brain with self improvement material while commuting to work, going for a walk, working out or a number of other activities.



The following is a list of my 10 favorite self improvement podcasts (in alphabetical order). It includes some old favorites (Steve Pavlina and Robin Sharma), as well as the new discoveries that prompted this article (Genius Types and We The Change).

1. Awareness and Consciousness

The Awareness and Consciousness Podcast is dedicated to teaching self-awareness and how to live in an emotional state of happiness. Gary has some wonderful insights and is very easy to listen to.

- Recommended episode: [Not Good Enough](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

2. Cultivate Greatness

Cultivate Greatness is site focused on personal development, leadership training, and life hacks. Many of Travis' podcasts are discussions with published authors on these topics. The episodes typically have a relaxed and fun tone making them well worth a listen.

- Recommended: [Interview with Carmine Gallo](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

3. Genius Types

Brian describes himself as a student of creativity, entrepreneurship and personal growth. I have been a fan of Genius Types for some time, and the podcasts are a very welcome recent addition to the site.

- Recommended episode: [Career Strategies for Creative Types](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

4. Guy Finley

Guy is a best-selling author and well-known radio presenter. He speaks on a range of issues, including relationships, fear, addiction, stress/anxiety, peace, happiness and freedom.

- Recommended: [Keys to Consciously Changing Yourself](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

5. Lifehack Live

Lifehack Live is the weekly podcast from one of the most popular blogs on the net, Lifehack.org. Lifehack contributing Editor Dustin M. Wax discusses with his guests how to get things done, increase productivity and be better organized.

- Recommended episode: [Lifehack Live Interview with Scott Young](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

6. Oprah and Eckhart Tolle

Unless you have been living under a rock, you have probably heard that Oprah and Eckhart Tolle held a 10-week live web event to discuss the concepts in Tolle's book [A New Earth](#). What you may not realize is just how good these discussions actually are.

- Recommended episode: [Ego: The Current State of Humanity](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

7. Patrick Mathieu - The Power of Mortality

Patrick shares his inspiring story of how at an early age he was forced to confront the fact that he would die. Patrick was born with a “bad” heart that has confounded cardiologists since his birth. The death sentence Patrick was given at 18 proved to be a wake up call that forever changed his approach to life.

- Recommended: [Life is Too Short](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

8. Robin Sharma

Robin is one smooth talker - I love listening to his voice. He backs this up with some of the most inspiring, yet down-to-earth, advice you will come across. While he doesn't seem to record many new podcasts these days, there are 35 podcasts available free on his site.

- Recommended: [8 Things Successful People Do](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

9. Steve Pavlina

I was actually introduced to podcasting through Steve. Like Robin Sharma, Steve seems to have slowed down with recording new podcasts. That said, he has 20 podcasts available on his page and each of them is a well of wisdom.

- Recommended episode: [Faster Goal Achievement](#).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

10. We The Change

We The Change is dedicated to both personal growth and the emerging global consciousness that is spreading peace, sustainability and social justice throughout the world. In just a short amount of time, Todd's "Conversations for Change" podcast has featured some of the top spiritual and development thought leaders in the world.

- Recommended episode: [Interview with Siona van Dijk](#) (a director of the [Gaia Community](#), one of the largest conscious social networking platforms on the Internet).
- More: [Click here for the full archive](#).

What Are You Doing That's Different?

“The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don't like to do. They don't like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.” — E.M. Gray

I write this having just returned from an early morning run. The local neighborhood looked beautiful covered in a thin layer of snow, but as you would expect I had the streets to myself at 5.30am.



Waking early has come to symbolize my personal development journey. I have gone from a person who would continually hit the snooze button to one who happily wakes at 5am most days. Some mornings are harder than others but, yes, I honestly do enjoy waking at 5am (although it took some adjusting to). Why? Because the morning is *my time*. It is the time I get to work on myself, write for this blog and visualize the path I want my life to take.

As I ran the lonely streets this morning, I had an inner feeling that I am doing things right. Part of the reason why relates to the fact that I am following a path most people choose not to take - the “road less traveled” as it is often called. I want to squeeze as much out of each and every day as possible.

I know waking early isn't for everyone, but there are endless ways in which you can be different from the majority of people, and in doing so break away from the pack. Some ideas include:

- Watch little to no television
- Exercise regularly and eat incredibly well
- Be devoted to excellence in everything you do
- Have a strong bias towards taking action
- Create something unique
- Be a positive and passionate person
- Chase your dreams
- Take the time to build and nurture relationships
- Be masterful at managing your time
- Continually focus on adding value to the lives of other people

What are you doing that's different?

Well, I Have Definitely Changed

I have experienced some major changes in my life to date. In the past year alone, I have become a father for the first time, I have relocated from Australia to Canada, and I have started a new job (to name but a few things!).

These are all obvious changes. My biggest changes, however, are perhaps not so easy to identify as they have been internal. Since starting this personal development journey many of my thoughts and actions have done a complete 180 degree turn.

I always think back to the way I handled the news I was to be a father. Our son, Xavier, was an “unexpected surprise” and I definitely did not handle the news well for about 2 months. “My life is over, I am doomed to a life of poverty, I will never again have the freedom to travel the world....” These were just a few of the many thoughts that were rushing around my head. And my unhappiness was reflected in my behavior at the time - I drank too much alcohol and I didn’t give my partner the love she deserved when she, herself, was going through a difficult stage.

Now when I look at my son, who has just turned 10 months old, it is impossible to wish for my life to be any other way.

So I have changed. And recently I received proof of this....



Next year in July 2008 Kathryn and I are expecting our second child (*Note: Rohan Joseph Clemens was born July 4, 2008!*). This is a bit sooner than we were planning, but in the 4 weeks since I found out my thoughts have been entirely positive. When last time I turned to alcohol to escape, this time I didn't touch alcohol for 2 weeks. Instead, I calmly savored the news with chamomile tea (how manly!). While this abstinence was a subconscious choice, I also believe part of me wanted to prove to myself that I have changed. And I have.... I have definitely changed for the better.

So it's going to be another big year. Wish us luck!

Thanks

Thank you for taking the time to read about my “Year of Change” – hopefully it has inspired you to dream and provided practical advice as to how you too can positively change your life.

If you found this e-book of value, please consider supporting me in one or more of the following ways:

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