

Misconception of Success

Remaster the Way You Think

&

Live the Life You Want

By Patrick Davis

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Dedication

*I dedicate this book to my mentor who taught me that
attitude is everything.*

Keith McNally

&

*To the woman who believed in me even when I didn't
believe in myself.*

Madison Quammen

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Introduction

For people to turn their dreams into reality, they must first change how they view themselves and their surroundings. When you choose to see a positive outlook on life, the perception of yourself, relationships, time, health, and finances will be more manageable. You will be able to defeat your biggest enemy, which is the person in the mirror. You have to look deeper within yourself and tell yourself that you are good enough, and that you deserve more.

I feel that so many people in this world feel like a prisoner in their own life. That they let other people fill them with a bunch of on how their life should go. I thought that if I told my story about all of the mistakes I have made and what I have learned, then, just maybe, I could help others from thinking they weren't *successful*, and that they couldn't live the life they truly wanted.

This book is for anyone questioning their self-worth and/or trying to find their own version of happiness. No one is perfect in this world, but our potential is unlimited. I want people to believe that their dreams aren't unrealistic and that they can accomplish anything they put their mind to. Ultimately, whatever you choose to do, whatever job you take, whatever opportunity you make, just make you Do it for YOU!

Chapter 1

Genie in a Bottle

The purpose of this book is to save as many people as possible by helping them conquer their worst enemy, THEMSELVES. Take control of how you think, and you can take control of your life. Your finances, career, and relationships won't suffer anymore, once you are able to handle situations with the right perspective. My glass has been half full for most of my life, and I finally got tired of not seeing the glass full of beer, something I love. It came down to me realizing that everyone on this planet is meant to do more than just work, pay bills, and die.

I write this for all the people just like me who are in an attitude slump and have always felt there was more out there for them. It's for anyone who has felt unhappy with their traditional day job, with the micro-managing boss, and the work schedule that is more like a prison sentence. I write this for the people who have the dreams of becoming more, but don't take the risk. I feel for these people, because I'm one of them. I have felt this way for years and have always wished I could have more, but I

have never known how to get it. Overall, I am simply just an average person trying to live an extraordinary life.

I remember watching *Aladdin* as a kid and always thinking, “Wow! How cool would it be if I just got stranded in the middle of a desert, stumbled across a magical lamp that I would for some reason rub, and it would poop out a genie that would grant me three wishes of my choice?” It’s funny, because roughly 20 years later, I’m still thinking the same thing. What would I really wish for, though, if given the opportunity? Money maybe, super powers, or to live forever? Childish stuff, really.

Before I get too far, let’s recap and summarize what should have been an Academy Award-winning movie. *Aladdin* is a young, savvy, but poor/homeless guy who has a monkey as a sidekick (pretty cool if you ask me), who hustles the streets to survive. One day, royalty parades through the streets, boasting their presence. While the peasants and *Aladdin* stand by watching them with their jewels and power, *Aladdin* becomes intrigued. He thinks, “Well, this suck. I’m sharing a piece of bread with a monkey, and they’re headed to the castle to have crab legs.” Unfair, just unfair. He decides to head off to find someone who can help him shortcut his way to the top.

Aladdin meets the bad guy of the movie, and he leads him to the lamp that holds the genie. When Genie appears, Aladdin is granted his three wishes. Aladdin's first wish is to become a prince that is wealthy and powerful. The wish is granted, and Aladdin takes off to brag about his newfound fame to the world, and, of course, Jasmine, his hot princess crush.

If you have seen the movie, which I'm sure you have if you were born in the 20th century, you know what happens next. Aladdin feels guilty lying to Jasmine about not being a true prince, and finally breaks down and tells her the truth. She gets mad and dumps him (pretty much), and Aladdin goes back to being a loser, temporarily.

Once he gets done moping around, Aladdin finds a new sense of motivation and says, "Enough is enough! I'm tired of being a loser." He gets back out there, works hard, kicks Jafar's ass, and wins the girl. It's all without being a real prince.

The point of the story is that there is no shortcut to success or happiness. We only wish for it, because we don't really want to work for it. I know some people are thinking, "Well, I don't need to work on being happy." Partly, that's true, but you show me one person who is happy 24/7, and I will also show you someone who has some really good drugs. You must truly work on choosing your attitude and making it a habit, because

honestly, life can really suck sometimes. By choosing not to be positive in bad situations, you will be sent down a rabbit hole of failure.

I washed cars for a dealership after my first year of college. I would always see the salesman rolling in brand new cars, leaving when they pleased, and making what seemed to be a very good living. I made \$9.50 an hour, worked 40plus hours a week, and shared a house with four other young guys. I sold anything to make some extra dough and wouldn't take my lunch breaks at work, so I could get that extra overtime on my check. In reality, most of it got eaten up by Uncle Sam anyways.

Every day, a salesperson would bring back their dirty demo (what we called the cars that the sales department would drive), and they would have us "lot boys" clean them. I would sit there and just think how stupid it was that I was back in the wash bay, while they were hanging around, waiting for their next big commission. I hated it and wanted more, and honestly, I felt like I deserved more.

I had no reason to feel like I deserved more. I hadn't really worked that hard to get a job, nor did I work hard at school, ever. I mowed lawns and shoveled walks for people around town for most of my elementary and middle school days. Then, in high school, one of the girl's I knew got me a job with her mom, who owned the pizza

place in town. That gave me enough money and freedom to smoke weed, hang with my friends, and pretty much be a punk teenager.

I probably did 10% of my homework myself and copied the rest of it from someone who was very book smart and always did their homework. Then, the night before, or sometimes even the class before the test, I crammed a shitload of information into my brain and hoped for the best. Seemed to be a good system. I guess if you consider a good system where you only have to do the minimum amount of work and get average results, then yes, it was a good system. I just always made sure I got the stuff done that other people wanted me to do, just so I could go do what I wanted to do. Oh, and like any other overworked, underpaid, neglected, mistreated teenager, I whined A LOT.

That is one thing I did work hard at: letting everyone know how much I didn't like or disagreed with something, and how I thought it was stupid. Of course, like a lot of people in this country, I didn't realize how good I really had it. One of my favorite sayings is, "You aren't happy unless you're mad." It was true, too. I was debt free, had no bills, and I was having buckets of fun. However, I was still unhappy and didn't see the bigger picture. I didn't see the bigger picture for a very long time.

I drove 18 hours away to a small coastal town in Oregon after I graduated from high school. I thought that was it. That was the answer. Run. Run far away from the rules, the parents, the teachers, pretty much anything I didn't like at that time. My plan was to find a job, be independent, and show all the naysayers that I wasn't just a stoner teenage punk, and that I was more than that. I was happy about my new start for about 24 hours, because that's about how long it took me to get an MIP and make a phone call to dad saying, "I need money to pay the fine."

I had several interviews but didn't get one job. I probably should have researched more before I moved into a town with one of the highest unemployment rates in Oregon. I also didn't think about how depressing the rainy season was going to be. So, there I was, jobless, broke, and wet. In conclusion, I started to whine again. I whined to everyone I cared about with a bunch of excuses for why I couldn't get a job and why I wasn't happy there. I wasn't happy unless I was mad, and I knew there had to be more to life.

The decision was made for me to move off campus. Maybe it was because the second time you get in trouble on school grounds for partying, they don't really want you there very badly. I remember in my meeting with the dean, who was saying, "Patrick, you have done great here

academically, almost a 4.0 every semester, but you can't seem to stay out of the extracurricular activities that aren't offered by the school." He pretty much was giving me the "You don't have to go, but you can't stay here" spiel.

I wasn't going to stay at the school or that town. I was sure of that. So, I gave the dean the deuces, walked to my dorm apartment, got on my laptop, and asked my old boss at the car dealership if he had any openings for me to come back and wash cars. They happened to need extra help, and I worked there the summer before I left for college. They welcomed me back.

I moved in with my oldest sister, because she was pregnant, and my brother-in-law had his own business, that kept him out of town a lot. Plus, it meant free rent, amazing meals, and I got to spend time with my family, which was something I didn't do very much when I was in high school (stoner punk, remember?). Again, I was happy for about a solid 24 hours, until I woke up the next day and headed back to the wash bay. The wash bay, overall, was a hideout for the lot attendants, because it was behind the dealership, and nobody went back there unless they worked back there, or if somebody needed something. It was kind of a dump, really, and anytime they called for a lot attendant to run an errand, I was out of there.

Overall, I wasn't very productive. Most of the time, we would wash one car an hour and otherwise, found ways to look busy. Therefore, I had plenty of time to watch the salesmen roll up in their 40k plus demos (that they didn't pay for), using free gas and getting free insurance. When they got tired of driving one car, they dropped it off for us to clean up their crap, while they hopped in the next. They had all of this, plus the potential to make six figures a year.

Pretty cool gig, huh? Like I mentioned earlier, I thought so. Now, as a 20-year-old "lot boy," I knew it was not getting me where I wanted to be in life, and it definitely wasn't getting me any extra chicks. By the way, did I mention I drove a black Volkswagen Jetta? It had an exhaust system on it, too, so I had that going for me. Disclosure: the Jetta also didn't get me any extra chicks. This is where I came to the point where I said enough is enough, and I deserve more.

For nine months, I tried convincing my general manager to give me a chance at sales. Not many other people had gone from the service department into sales and stayed very long after they had started. I was finally given my shot in one of the slowest months of the year and was given a 30-car sales quota in my first 3 months. I was excited and dressed as professional as I could, because I was ready for what seemed to be the answer I

had been looking for, the answer that would solve all of my problems, my very own genie.

This time, the happiness lasted a lot longer than 24 hours. After I got my first sale and made \$500 for talking to people and helping them buy a car, I was hooked. I was like, wow, this really is a cake gig. I was in my 40k demos, and believe me, I rarely drove anything that didn't have that sales price or more on it! I wasn't paying for gas or insurance, no rent went to my sister, I could leave when I wanted if I needed to run some errands, and honestly, we had a lot of fun. On top of all of that, I had a 401k match of 4% and made around 55k my first year off of pure enthusiasm and happiness. Everything was going just peachy, so I thought.

After getting my two years in with straight commission, I sold my car, and put down the other money I had saved up and bought my first house at the age of 22. I thought I was kicking ass and wanted to throw a housewarming party for all of the naysayers. I did throw a party, but naysayers weren't invited, because I had finally felt like I gave my all to something. I actually worked hard and earned it.

That was the first big accomplishment of my young career. I accomplished it, because I craved for more, and I put it in my head that nothing was going to stop me. I didn't really deserve that position over anyone else, because really, there were a lot of people who had more

experience than me, with better social skills, and definitely a better work ethic. Don't get me wrong, I truly did work for it and truly took the initiative to grant my own wish. However, as easy as it was for me to put it in my head that I was going to be successful, it was even easier for me to put in my head that I wasn't cut out to do sales anymore when things were going badly.

It wasn't long after, when the pity party started coming back, and the happiness started to fade. My girlfriend at the time moved out, and car sales were getting slow. New cars were priced competitively with the used, and that's all we sold, so it made it hard to compete with the guys down the street. That also made it harder to make the lush living I was making before. This is how I justified my lack of production, and I started to make even more excuses for why I wasn't selling as many units as the slump continued.

Since my attitude was consistently in the dump, I consistently had bad results. I would hide out in my office, stare at rental properties and business opportunities, or go on two hour "errands" when we were slow. I stopped making my phone calls, and I didn't walk the inventory unless it was to get a new demo. I would take a lot of time off to vacation with money I really shouldn't have been spending, but I didn't care, because I got bored and felt like there was more to life

than living on a car lot every Saturday, sometimes on my day off.

Like I mentioned before, this was a very good job, and I worked for amazing people, but the passion I once had was fading. Many people who had years of experience wanted to work for that dealership, because they had heard how relaxed it was compared to where they were at. I heard the salespeople at the other stores call it the “country club of dealerships.” I had it good, but again I found that I wasn’t happy, and I felt like I could never catch a break.

My attitude toward the job that I had dreamed of getting did a complete flip. I chose again to be bitter, instead of making the most of each day. I forgot what I had come from and what I had accomplished at a considerably young age. In conclusion, I once again made myself my worst enemy.

“If you look at what you have in life, you’ll always have more. If you look at what you don’t have in life, you’ll never have enough.”

-Oprah Winfrey

I took the wrong route of getting out of this slump by drinking, doing drugs, and partying a ton. I racked up credit cards, neglected spending time with my dogs, and

I really stopped trying to figure out a way to better myself, just accepting that there was nowhere else to go from there. I was destined to be a “lifer” as they would call it at the dealership. I would make a decent living with great benefits, work for great people, and spend 80% of my time doing stuff I really didn’t want to do.

I knew if time continued to fly by like my first three years of sales did, I would be a bitchy 65-year-old man, sitting at the showroom table, whining about everything under the sun in no time. I wasn’t going to be like those guys, but I could feel myself starting to give in to the crap. I found that I, too, was complaining about how things should be ran, how so-and-so got that car deal even though it should have be mine, and bitch, bitch, bitch, bitch. It was toxic energy that I let pollute my brain. I conformed to thinking like other negative people and justified why I wasn’t happy, because of what was going on in my life. Something needed to change, and I made that very clear.

When it comes down to it, and you catch yourself wishing for a genie in a magical lamp to make all of the life problems go away, remember: You are the only one who can truly grant the wish. The cool thing about being your own genie is that you get way more than just three wishes.

You can either control your mind or let it control you. When you start controlling the way you think, you can slowly shape those dreams into goals. I'm not necessarily saying quit your job today, because you are tired of it, and you have dreams of being an astronaut. Start small, find what you love, and focus on that in your spare time.

If you have a job, and you need it to take care of your family and pay the bills, then give it your full attention when you are there. Figure out a way to be productive at work, while having a good attitude about it. I promise you this, if you wake up and say, "Today is going to suck," then more than likely, it will. But, if you wake up and say, "I don't know what today has waiting for me, but I'm going to give it my all," I promise it will be rewarding. Maybe, the day won't turn out how you wanted it to, but that's okay, because you gave it your best, and that's all that truly matters.

Bruce Lee once said, "As you think, so shall you become." Take a second and think about that. Think about all of the things you don't like to do. For example, I absolutely hate folding laundry. I have been living off of wrinkle release spray for years, because I hate it so much. I will leave a load of laundry in the dryer for a couple of weeks, find the shirt I need, give it a good spray, and then throw it back in the dryer to get the wrinkles out. Sounds like a typical guy, I know, but for real, I HATE laundry. I would always put it in my head

that it was the end of the world if I had to fold my laundry and put it away. I continued to do this for quite some time, until I had a roommate move into my house, and I had to make sure the washer and dryer were cleared for her to use.

There I was folding my laundry, right after it got done for the first time in a very long time. It took me a total of five minutes. The whole time, I watched ESPN and didn't even think about how awful matching my socks was. I didn't realize it at the time, but I had made the most out of something I really hated doing by not thinking about the negative. I turned my attention to something I loved instead (watching sports), and it made the un-enjoyable task easier. After I finished the laundry, I felt a small sense of accomplishment and gave myself a high five.

I know this is a silly example but if you choose the correct attitude, it will always be easier to get through the things you don't want to do. If you find yourself in a moment where you really don't want to do something, but you don't really have a choice, then try to find a way to make the most of it, because I know for a fact, it's not the end of the world. You will always have to do things in your life that you don't want to do. It's just how the cookie crumbles.

I want to share a story with you that I first heard at one of my sales meetings. I'm not sure where it originally

came from, but it really made me think about my attitude and how I reacted in certain situations.

Allergic to Bullets

Jerry was the kind of guy you love to hate. He was always in a good mood and always had something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, “If I were any better, I would be twins!”

He was a unique restaurant manager, because he had several waiters who had followed him around from place to place during his career. The reason the waiters followed Jerry was because of his attitude. He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Jerry was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day, I went up to Jerry and asked him, “I don’t get it! You can’t be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?”

Jerry replied, “Each morning I wake up and say to myself, ‘Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood, or you can choose to be in a bad mood.’ I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim, or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it.

Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining, or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life.”

“Yeah, right. It’s not that easy,” I protested. “Yes, it is,” Jerry said. “Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It’s your choice how you live life.”

I reflected on what Jerry said. Soon thereafter, I left the restaurant industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life, instead of reacting to it.

Several years later, I heard that Jerry did something you are never supposed to do in a restaurant business: He left the back door open one morning and was held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found relatively quickly and was rushed to the local hospital.

After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullets still in his body. I saw Jerry about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he

replied, “If I were any better, I’d be twins. Wanna see my scars?”

I declined to see his wounds but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place. “The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door,” Jerry replied. “Then, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live, or I could choose to die. I chose to live.” “Weren’t you scared? Did you lose consciousness?” I asked. Jerry continued, “The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine, but when they wheeled me into the emergency room, I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, and I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, ‘He’s a dead man.’ I knew I needed to take action.”

“What did you do?” I asked. “Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me,” said Jerry. “She asked if I was allergic to anything. ‘Yes,’ I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, ‘Bullets!’ Over their laughter, I told them, ‘I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.’”

Jerry lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him, that every day, we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

The End of that Story

“Attitude, after all, is everything.” I could not have read something truer. I hope that story helped you like it helped me. What you think, you attract. When you find yourself in a slump and things aren’t going your way, make a change in the way you think. Insanity is defined as "doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results." Do not drive yourself to insanity. If you aren’t happy, and your heart isn’t in it anymore, or never was, it’s time to do something different. You do deserve more, even if you don’t think you do.

Take a chance, try something new, whether it would be a new career, new city, or maybe even something small, like a tweak in your routine. If you aren’t happy with that change, go do something else, again. Keep trying other things, until you find your happiness. Somebody once told me, “Wake up every day and do something you love.” If you go to bed each night and didn’t do one thing that you wanted to do, then what are you really living for? Yes, it’s good to provide for a family and make others happy, but what about you? Learn to love yourself first, and it will make it easier to love others.

“When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down ‘happy’. They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life.” -John Lennon

I have always been the class clown. I actually was nominated class clown of my graduating class. Looking back on it, it’s really not that flattering. I usually made jokes at the wrong moments and probably could have been more serious in certain situations. People would give me comments like “You’re stupid” or “Are you ever serious?” These types of people weren’t really upset at me; they were more upset with the way things were going in their own lives. Instead of trying to better themselves and find ways to change their attitude, they, in turn, would try and bring me down to their level.

These people remind me of Dementors from Harry Potter. They suck every bit of happiness from your soul, until you are a depressed vegetable. Don’t hang around Dementors. Cast a Patronus charm and bail. Try surrounding yourself with people who take work and learning seriously, but not themselves. They’re the work hard, play hard, type of people. People need that balance between work and play. That’s why I always thought it

was ironic that people would think it was weird, when I was constantly trying to have fun or making light of serious situations. Don't get me wrong. I understand there is a time and place for these things, but I also thought, "Why is this such a bad thing?" Yes, I embarrassed myself a lot and said a lot of stupid things, but not being serious all the time is not stupid. It always made me feel good to make people laugh. It gave me a high.

When you see people smile and laugh, it's contagious, and it makes you feel good, too. Life is too short to be serious, so stop it. Stop worrying and stop having a pity party for yourself. The only one who is going to RSVP is you. Instead, try making someone else's day, even if it is something as little as a compliment. Be sincere in how you do it, and I promise it will make you feel better and help you forget the bad things currently going on in your life.

Recap:

- Work for it; don't wish for it.
- Control your mind; don't let it control you.
- Find what truly makes you happy and do that.
- Make someone's day.
- Do one thing you love every day.

Chapter 2

Man, in the Mirror

I've always enjoyed hearing famous people tell their stories about their humble beginnings. All the stories I've heard usually have the same two things in common: They believed in themselves above all else, and it didn't happen overnight. If it was that easy, well, everyone would be successful. You must be able to believe that one day, you will reach your version of success. However, if you don't believe in yourself first, you will never make it. Success begins with you, so get out there, capture it.

One story, that I always enjoyed hearing, was about a guy from Dublin, Ireland. There, he worked as a plumber's apprentice, and in all of his off-time, he studied martial arts. Having his first professional fight in 2008 and winning by TKO in the second round, the 20-year-old was already well on his way. Four years later, he held both the lightweight and featherweight titles, and soon found himself signing a multi-fight contract for the UFC. He came out hotter than a pistol, and in his first three years, he didn't lose a fight, which landed him a shot at the UFC featherweight title. That title had been

held by Jose Aldo for four years, and Aldo hadn't lost a fight in ten years. Tough opponent, but to the man they called "The Notorious," he wasn't worried. His confidence was consistent, and never did it seem like he had any doubt about being the new champion. On December 12th, 2015, it was time for "The Notorious One" to back up all of his smack talk. It didn't take him long to do so, either. Thirteen seconds into the fight, Aldo met a clean left to the chin and fell to the canvas. Conor McGregor was the new featherweight champion and did so in the fastest time in any UFC title bout.

Not long after, McGregor made it very clear to the UFC and the fans, that he would next take the lightweight belt, too, and be a two-division champion, just like he had done in Ireland. Well, he wasn't wrong, because on November 12th, 2016, McGregor dismantled yet another champion with a TKO; this time in the second round.

His self-belief was unmatched, and it made it hard for his opponents to have any psychological advantage. With his hard work falling right in line with his consistent attitude, he felt unstoppable. He started to campaign to get a fight with arguably the best boxer of our generation. A fight with Floyd Mayweather seemed almost unrealistic. It was a lot of talk back and forth and not much action. Then, as the talk kept going with no

signs of dying, the match started to sound more and more realistic.

Crazy enough, terms were finally agreed upon, and the fight was set for the end of July in 2017. Nobody gave Conor a chance, considering he was fighting a boxer with a 49-0 record. McGregor had never boxed professionally in his life. If you were wondering, McGregor disagreed very strongly with these critics. He was predicting a TKO in the 4th or 5th round. Still, a lot of people didn't believe this would happen, but it was also very hard to rule him out, because he had done everything he said he would do thus far.

McGregor ended up losing the fight in the 10th round via TKO. However, he lost like a champion and surprised a lot of people. He landed more punches on Mayweather than Mayweather's opponents had landed in his previous two fights, pretty impressive for never boxing professionally.

I don't think that fight ever would have happened, if McGregor hadn't gotten so many people to support him. He made it very clear to everyone, that he would be successful, and that no one was going to get in his way. He would walk with confidence and would own the room. Some people would call his swagger arrogant, but I just saw a person who believed in himself. When he would be questioned on media days, he would say what he meant, and he definitely meant what he said. On one

particular day, McGregor stated, “My success isn’t a result of arrogance. It’s a result of belief.” That was interesting to me. It was interesting, because anyone could do what Conor did. It’s merely if you can put your mind to it and commit to the hard work.

“There’s no talent here, this is hard work. This is an obsession. Talent does not exist, we are all equal as human beings. You could be anyone if you put in the time. You will reach the top, and that is that. I am not talented, I am obsessed.” - Conor McGregor

This kind of attitude is probably why McGregor went from collecting a welfare check to now being worth roughly 27 million dollars.

I don’t care what religion you claim or who you pray to, but if you don’t believe in yourself first and have faith that you will be fine in unfortunate circumstances, then you have already accepted defeat. Find the power within yourself to keep going, no matter how bad things may be.

Do that. Be yourself with confidence. Whether it’s going to a big interview or merely just walking through a crowd of strangers, walk with a purpose, and own the room. Body language is 55% of communication, so if you are slouched over and have a sad face, people can read

that without even saying "Hello." However, if you have your back straight, shoulders back, and head up with a smile on your face, I would say that people will be a lot more likely to approach you without the fear of being kicked in the shin.

When I was little, my parents always made me order my own food at restaurants. I hated doing this, but I knew I wasn't getting squat if I didn't order. The first time I tried to order, I was hunched over, looking down at my shoes, and talking just loud enough so they heard I was saying something. After a small pep talk from the folks, I would sit up and speak louder, so the waitress could hear me.

I know this seems like a silly example, but I honestly know adults who still struggle with talking to other adults. It turns into a huge, awkward moment. Each time I had to order my own food, I thought it was the end of the world. It wasn't, and now I have gotten to the point where I can order a beer and a Fireball shot together without one ounce of fear. Talk about confidence!

Next, say what you mean and mean what you say. Always believe that what you have to say is important. This can only be mastered by using the right tone. Tone of voice is huge. It can make you sound like you are really pissed off, when you are simply replying to a question. One of my biggest pet peeves was people asking, "Why are you mad?" I would get mad, because

everyone thought I was mad. I knew I was fine, but it looked and sounded like someone peed on my cheerios.

If you have trouble talking to people, it's okay, because people can be scary. A lot of people aren't nice and are selfish. That doesn't mean you have to be, though. Here's a dare: In one day, with a smile and full eye contact, say "Hi" to at least one stranger. It doesn't have to turn into a conversation. It can be as simple as someone on the street who is crossing your path. Just hit them with a big smile and a strong "Hello." Ironically, you will find some people won't know how to respond, almost like you are speaking another language. However, it will lift your spirits, and it will open you up to talking with new people.

I know talking to people can be intimidating sometimes, but when you talk with enthusiasm and confidence, it doesn't make it nearly as painful. Every time I had to go out on that car lot and greet customers, I always had self-doubt and insecurities. I would worry that they would think I was a typical millennial, inexperienced and uneducated. I would think of every reason why I wasn't the right person to help them. I would run these thoughts through my head, and convince myself that I just wasn't going to survive the new encounter. Miraculously, I survived every greeting and faced a new personality without any harm.

Sometimes, I even made a friend. Getting out of your social comfort zone is a good way to grow. It will open up new doors to your future. As they say, "It's not what you know, it's who you know."

On occasion, I think we have a hard time opening up to new people, because of insecurities, and I also think we have a hard time handling certain situations with the people we do know well, for the same reason. We all have insecurities, and it's easy to let others see how we perceive the overall image of ourselves. We aren't smart enough. We're too short and have bushy eyebrows. There's also a rash on our face and a pimple on our nose. We're overweight or too skinny, and thinking of a million other negative ways we can judge ourselves. Stop doing that! Stop beating yourself up for being you. You can't always control the body you were born into, so start accepting the things you don't like about yourself, and start boasting about the things you do like. Be you. The world needs more of that. I think maybe it's time we sign up for an I.A. meeting (Insecurities Anonymous).

Insecurities Anonymous

Welcome to Insecurities Anonymous, where everything is in your head, and your flaws don't matter. In order to get over your insecurities, you need to first be able to admit them and accept the things that you don't like about yourself. You can't change everything, and there will always be attributes that you dislike. You might as well get used to who you are, because you are going to have to live with yourself for the rest of your life.

If it makes you feel better, I'll go first. I will write out a list of the things that I don't like about myself and I'm embarrassed of. Here we go:

- I am shorter than I'd like to be. Coming in at 5'7 and 3/4ths, I am technically below the average height for the typical male.

- I am the clumsiest person you will ever meet. Murphy's law is always on my side. My parents cut me off from owning any white clothing, because I would always spill something on them.

- I have oily skin, which has given me battles with acne.

- I talk too much and at inappropriate times. This also causes me to interrupt people often.

- I have above average-sized nipples. I would say that they are each a little smaller than a pepperoni.

- I have a face that makes me look as though I am 16 years old. This also includes facial hair that grows in patchy.

- I let what people think about me affect how I view myself.

These are just some of the many things I don't like about myself. There are many more, but I have gotten to the point where I don't care as much. I have been working on trying to realize the things that are great about me.

Here are some things that are good about who I am:

- I'm hilarious.

- I truly care about others.

- I am ambitious and hard-working.

- I am a pretty damn good cook. Chef Boyardee ain't got shit on this.

- I am thoughtful, and doing things for people makes me happy.

It's easy to focus on the things that you don't like about yourself. It's also easier for people to talk about the things they DON'T like about someone, rather than what they DO like about someone. Try to disregard the negative viewpoints about who you are and try to focus on the good. Work on accepting your flaws, and each day, focus on being a better version of yourself. Imagine if you put the same amount of time you put into loving someone as you did loving yourself. Loving yourself will eliminate unnecessary obstacles that are created by your mind. Give yourself approval, for it's the only one you really need.

“So, do you have someone in your life?”

“Yes. Me. I'm awesome. I think I'm the one.”

There will always be people who will make you feel small or stupid. I promise, it's not you, it's them. They have some sort of insecurity, and bringing you down makes them feel better. Dementors, I tell you. They are everywhere. Don't let them suck out your soul. These types of people won't pay your bills, fill your fun tank, or support your new ideas, so why in the hell would you listen to their negative feedback? Treat them as a hand of cards. Put the negative people in your life in the discard pile. The cards that stay in your hands are the people

who truly love you, support you, and listen to you, no matter the circumstance.

If you are able to shut out all of the outside voices and only listen to yours, then life is a lot easier to focus on your goals. People will always have an opinion on your goals and ambitions. If you believe what everyone else says, you'll never know what you are capable of. You'll only know what they tell you. YOU only know if you are doing the right thing or not, so forget them. It comes down to this: If it makes you happy, then you are doing the right thing.

Be confident and believe in yourself. What you do when no one is looking defines who you are as a person. It's your integrity. If you believe in what you are doing, then that is all that matters. You can't be duplicated, so take pride in who you are. If you have integrity, then you do what's right, you are trustworthy, you care about other people, you keep your word, and you are confident, not arrogant.

I heard a story once about a politician who went into a diner to get breakfast. He was a man of power with a big ego. He felt like people were below him, and that they should've respected who he was. The politician got his breakfast and noticed that there wasn't any butter.

He turned to the waiter and said, "Sir, there is no butter. Could I get some, please?"

The waiter said, "Of course. I'll be right back." Five minutes went by and the politician still didn't receive his butter.

Irritated, he stopped the waiter as he was walking by and again said, "Sir, the butter?"

Another five minutes went by and still no butter. The politician was getting angry and stopped the waiter as he walked by and asked, "Excuse me, do you know who I am?"

The waiter said, "I'm sorry, sir, but I do not know who you are."

The politician replied, "I am John Doe, the state senator, and I have done a lot for this state, so people like you could have a job. Could I get some butter, now?"

The waiter stood there for a second and then replied, "Well, do you know who I am, sir?"

The politician looked at him with a bewildered look and said, "No, I do not know who you are."

The waiter smiled and said, "I am the guy with the butter."

The point of the story is don't be a jerk. Have some integrity. It's okay to be confident, but don't be arrogant. The "A" in arrogant stands for asshole. Don't be an asshole. Drop the ego and be a person someone would

want to look up to. Whether you are a person of power or not, always do the right thing.

Year four of my car sales career came fast, really fast. I was in a slump, averaging a pathetic 7 cars a month and making about 15k less than I did the year before. I didn't know who I wanted to be. My heart wasn't in it anymore, and it was apparent to my coworkers and my managers. Since I wasn't selling much and didn't really want to be at work, I decided I would go on a four-day snowboarding trip instead. Good plan, right? Well, it gets better. I told my manager that I would work on my day off, which was Monday, and then take Tuesday through Friday off for the trip. The thing was, I didn't show up for work that Monday. I arrogantly thought it wouldn't be a big deal that I decided not to show up, because technically, it was my "day off." I was in the middle of loading up my gear, when I got a call from my general manager.

"Hello, this is Pat," playing dumb like I didn't know who was going to be on the other end of the phone.

"Pat, it's your boss. Why aren't you at work?" he asked, concerned.

"Oh, I decided to get on the road earlier, because the roads are supposed to be bad," I replied knowing I had completely disrespected his position.

“Okay, just thought you would let me know what was going on. Drive safe, and I’ll see you on Saturday.” I could hear the disappointment in his voice.

I was let off easy, and I don’t know why. I didn’t deserve to have time off, and I definitely hadn’t earned a simple warning. However, I did have a lot of fun and didn’t feel bad about what I did. I’m not sure what I was thinking. I can tell you, I wasn’t thinking about work at all. I was only thinking about what I could be doing, instead of being at work. I knew there was more in my life than being a car salesman, but I didn’t really know what I was going to do instead. I was scared to leave the security of my job to do something else.

At the start of each year, the sales crew was asked to write down their goals for the new year and how they were going to accomplish them. After, we each sat down and had a one-on-one talk with our GM about what we had written. I wrote down the things that I knew my manager would want to hear. My goals were to have X number of cars sold a month, work smarter, not harder, choose my attitude, and other stuff that sounded like I was going to be a different employee this year, compared to the year before. I knew I wasn’t. I knew I was going to entertain the idea of being a better salesman, but deep down, I knew it was time for me to go.

If you were wondering, my one-on-one meeting didn't go so hot. He pretty much told me, he couldn't believe I had the audacity to no-show on a day when I was averaging the least number of cars per month than anyone. I remember him specifically saying, "I could get any waitress in Billings to come in here and sell seven cars a month." That cut deep, but it was the ugly truth. I needed to hear that. I forgot the opportunity that he offered to me when I was just a punk lot boy. He then told me, "You have so much natural talent, but you don't believe in yourself. You are afraid of succeeding and being great at this. You are your worst enemy." The truth hurts, but the man had me pinned. I didn't believe in myself anymore. I truly didn't believe I could sell cars one more year of my life.

The first month of the new year, I sold, once again, seven cars. I gave off the image like I was trying harder, but mentally, I was still in another place. I was thinking, "Instead of plowing the car lot and brushing off cars, why can't I just be snowboarding?" Well, that's not how the world really works. We are taught to go to school our whole adolescence, then go to college for 2 to 8 years, maybe more, get in a bunch of debt, and then find a job that we have to work five days a week, just so we can pay back all of the debt. Don't get me wrong, I salute everyone who has gone to college and did something with their degrees. I went to school and work, and I

didn't have very much fun. People may say, "Well, it's not supposed to be fun." Well, my response is, "Why not?" There had to be a balance. I knew working five days a week doing something I didn't really want to do, and only getting two days to do something I wanted to do, seemed lopsided.

A majority of the people I knew, including myself, lived that life. They only got so many paid vacation days, two days off a week, and always had to make sure they gave two weeks' notice for a day off. My own father has done that for thirty years: mining underground for multiple days straight, getting a few days off, and then working multiple night shifts, twelve hours each shift. He did this year after year to support us and pay the bills. He did what he had to in order to take care of my sisters and me, so we could have a future. I love him for that, but at time I think he forgot to live his life, too. There wasn't a balance. I knew he didn't really have a choice, because of the circumstances. I just knew that I had to find that balance for myself.

So, I went snowboarding again. I asked for a day off during the week, so I could hit the big winter storm at the ski mountain nearby. They got hit with a foot of fresh snow, and I headed to the mountain, solo, to have what I thought was going to be a killer day away from work. I got to the mountain, started gearing up, and I just kept

watching the snow falling around me. There were only a few people headed to the slopes, because it was a business day, and everyone was at work. “Losers,” I thought. I felt lucky to get this opportunity to do what I wanted, instead of being obligated to do something I didn’t want to do. I took a deep breath of the cold air and headed to the lift.

I went to the back side of the mountain, to a spot that usually wasn’t open because of lack of snow. The day was perfect. I couldn’t have asked for a better day to be on the mountain. There weren’t very many people, it wasn’t freezing cold, and it was a powder day. I got my GoPro out to film the awesome day and to rub it into my friends, who were at work missing out. I strapped up and headed down the first run.

I brought the wrong goggles and couldn’t see very well with the shaded lenses, because it was a dark, snowy morning. I looked down to set my GoPro on record and looked up. Before I could react, my legs buckled. I did a somersault, and my snowboard stuck into the deep snow, but my body kept twisting. I could feel my ankle pop, and then everything was still. I sat there holding my ankle, thinking, “Did I just break my ankle?” I sat there for a few minutes and then tried to get up. It hurt, but not bad enough that I thought I truly had broken my ankle.

I made it to the top of the mountain and knew that my ankle was bad enough, that I needed to get back to the front side of the mountain and get it checked out by ski patrol. I headed back, but quickly realized that the last part of the trail to get back was upslope, and I needed a butt-load of speed to get up it, since I was snowboarding. I didn't have enough speed and found myself walking the last mile to the front side of the mountain. My ankle hurt badly, but I was walking, so I got to the front side and strapped in again and headed down the mountain to ski patrol. When I got there, ski patrol told me it was probably just a sprained ankle, so they wrapped it and gave me an ice pack. I immediately headed to the bar right after to medicate my wound.

I found out a week later, that I had broken my fibula and had torn the ligaments in my ankle, requiring seven screws and a plate to be put in. The break from my job, that I had been hoping for, came in a peculiar way. I wasn't able to walk for almost three months, and a majority of my job involved walking. I took advantage of the time off and knew this was a time for me to really figure out what my next move was. I figured I would work on myself, and read, write, and take the time to figure out who I truly was. I also wanted to know what I was truly meant to do in this life.

Those three months went by quickly, and I didn't really accomplish much. Yes, I read a couple of books and thought about what I wanted to do, but I never really came up with a plan. I just knew it was time for me to do something else. I remember telling people I wanted to do something else, and I would always get the same question, "What do you truly want to do?" I would say, "Well, I want to work for myself, making enough money, so that I can have the freedom to do whatever I want, when I want." I would get the typical response, "So how are you going to do that?" I would be stumped by that question, because I didn't really know how I was going to do it.

All I knew was that it was possible. I would read all the time about bloggers, who traveled the world full-time and did all of their business online. I heard of consultants, who would do all of their work on the phone and Internet, which allowed them to be anywhere in the world, as long as they had WiFi. There are ways to do it, and I knew how, but I just couldn't make a plan or take the first step in getting there. I still didn't believe I could do it, and I was scared to take a leap of faith.

I went back to work the first part of May 2017, and absolutely dreaded going. I was in a walking boot, still in pain, and my attitude was out of whack. I got so used to waking up and doing whatever I wanted each day, that it felt like I was being forced to go back. I knew I had to,

but I didn't want to. We all have obligations in life, and there are a lot of things we aren't going to want to do. However, as humans, we suspect that if we neglect these obligations, there are worse things to come.

I knew if I quit my job without a plan of action, I would be stuck with a mortgage, student loans, credit cards, car payment, and so on. I knew work sounded awful, but I knew I didn't have a choice. So, I went back. I tried to show I was making more of an effort, and that I was going to be a different person after my time off. I was a different person, but I wasn't a different employee. I still wasn't giving it my all, and was over what I was doing. I finally had to really look at myself and evaluate who I was at that moment, and who I wanted to be.

I started to make a plan of action, something I recommend if it is time for something new. I'm all for telling someone to just "go for it," but "go for it" with a plan at full speed. A dream without a plan is just a wish, and I was tired of just "wishing" for things to change. So, that's what I did. I had saved plenty from my 401k and knew I had enough equity in my home to be okay for about 6 months without a job. Disclosure: I don't recommend taking money out of your 401k, ever, but if you are able to do something bigger and better with that money and you are not just wasting it on stupid shit, then I say, "Go for it."

I gave myself two months back at my job, making sure this was the right decision. I needed to be patient, and make sure I didn't make a rash decision. Your emotions can control everything when it comes to making a big life decision. You really need to sit down and go over every scenario. How is it going to affect you in the long run? Your family? Your finances? Are you wanting a change just because you had one bad day, or have you been unhappy for a long time? You need to ask yourself as many questions as you can, before you make the leap toward a new opportunity. Write down the pros and cons and evaluate the situation.

It's easy to think that the emotion we are feeling right at that second is the answer to our issues. That's not always the case. Sure, your boss was a jerk one day, but maybe he or she was having an off day. Now, if your boss is controlling, micromanaging, condescending, and pig-headed, and you have given your absolute best with a good attitude, but nothing has changed, then it is time to move on to something new. That is just one scenario, and I know that there are a million other good reasons you might leave your current job to pursue another career.

My point is this: When you cannot concentrate on the one thing that consumes most of your day wholeheartedly, then it's time to go concentrate on something else. The cool thing about life is that we get to

choose what we want to concentrate on, what interests us, what draws our attention, and ultimately, what makes us happy. The greatest mystery of life is who we truly are. Go solve the mystery.

“We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same.”

- Anne Frank

The day finally came when I knew it was time for me to go. I remember sitting in my office and contemplating my plan, when I got paged by my boss to come to his office. Weird timing, for sure. I figured it was a sign, that I needed to let him know my plan. It didn't come as a surprise to him that I was putting in my final two weeks. He told me he had a feeling I wasn't going to stay much longer. My work ethic and attitude made it clear that I was unhappy.

When I left his office, I felt relieved that I finally made the plunge to leave my secure life and embark on a new "unsecured" type of life, a life of the unknown. I had a plan on how I was going to survive, but I didn't really know what I was going to do for a job, and for once in my life, I didn't really care, and I wasn't worried at all. I just

knew I needed to take this time to work ON myself and not FOR someone else for a change.

I didn't make it the full two weeks of my notice for leaving work. I think I made it 5 days. Each extra day being there just seemed like a waste, when I could be out there doing whatever I wanted. So, I gave another notice to my two weeks' notice and bailed. I said, "See you later" to my colleagues, and I got in my car, left, and never looked back. I could tell when I was leaving, everyone thought I was crazy, and that leaving was a bad idea, but deep down I knew, that it was time for me to decide.

The point of my story is that the materialistic things are a temporary fix to happiness. Happiness comes from within. No matter what I received, I still wasn't happy because I wasn't doing what I loved. If you are having a hard time going home after work and can't look in the mirror and say, "I did my best and I learned from today." Then I really think you should rethink how you are spending your time.

Recap:

- Believe in yourself, above anything.
- Own the room. Be confident in who you are.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Make a plan of action for what you truly want in life.

Chapter 3

Mission Impossible

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy made a national goal, that by the end of the decade, America would land a man on the moon and safely return him to Earth. Many people thought landing on the moon was an out-of-reach idea. It would cost a lot of money, and the thought that someone would leave our world in a spaceship and land on another piece of orbiting land without dying was just absurd.

People had their doubts, just because it had never been done before. Makes sense. If something has never been accomplished before, then it never will be, right? Of course, if you went to any history class, you would know this isn't true, but at the time, there wasn't any physical proof that it could be done. So, technically at that time, those doubters had a valid argument.

Eight years went by, and still no sign of a man on the moon. America had competition when the Soviet Union decided to take on their challenge of being the first country to put a person on the moon. Both sides had a lot of close, but failed, attempts. It wasn't until halfway

through the eighth year since President Kennedy's announcement, that there was some sign that it could be done. After the Soviets had several failed attempts, they decided to beat the US by bringing back lunar material with unmanned probes. However, during descent, the probe they launched, called the Lunar 15, crashed.

Two hours later, three Americans launched the spacecraft, Apollo 11, taking the men on a trip to the unknown, which would hopefully land them on the lunar surface. On July 20th, 1961, Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the moon's surface and was shortly followed by pilot Buzz Aldrin. Armstrong described the event as "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." They stayed for 2.5 hours on the lunar surface, leaving an American flag and later returning safely to Earth.

In this world, we have the choice to be believers or disbelievers. There are people who have their glasses completely filled with their favorite beverages, and then, there are the soul-sucking people who have their glasses filled with piss and vinegar. There are people who like to say words like "can't," "won't," and "impossible." Then, there are people who say "can," "will," and "possible." The believers find a way to make the impossible, possible. The disbelievers will always find an excuse for why it is impossible. Stay away from these people. Their minds are closed to the ideas of change and new

possibilities. They like only what they know, because it is secure, and it makes them comfortable. Go against the status quo and get uncomfortable. Be daring, because you will learn so much more about yourself, and what you are truly capable of. Remember this: Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.

If you can find a way to make up your mind and try something new, then you are halfway there. It's healthy for your success to talk about your ideas, instead of people. Disbelievers always have something to say about what others are doing. This usually is the case, because really, they are scared to try something that they have always wanted to do. So, when they see someone attempting to accomplish personal goals, it makes it easier for them to justify their current situation by trying to bring the positive person down to their level. You will find that these people sometimes will be your close friends or even family members. That's okay. It doesn't mean they don't love you or you don't love them. It just means that your paths are different.

If in the history of mankind, we only listened and abided by one way of thinking, then there would be a lot of things missing from this world today. The world would just be bland. We would eat the same food, wear the same clothes, have the same house, and so on. That's one thing that is so cool about humanity; not one mind is

the same. We all have a different path, and how we decide to go down that path is completely up to us. There will always be good and evil. Evil will always accept failures and let insecurities consume us. The “good” will continue to make mistakes, and, in return, we’ll continue to learn from them, ultimately resulting in more “giant leaps for mankind.”

“Don’t tell me the sky is the limit when there are footprints on the moon.” -Paul Brandt

Do it for yourself. Choose your own path without worrying what others might say along the way, because honestly, they aren’t the one who has to go through it. They are on their own paths, too, but people will always think that you should listen to their opinion about your journey, too. You will have plenty of your own roadblocks on your path, so there is no need to add more from soul-suckers. That can easily be avoided by politely listening to what they say, but not actually acknowledging what they have to say. You might think that’s a rude way to handle it, but it’s not. It’s rude for them to interfere with your goals and passions.

A lot of people wrap themselves in a blanket of negativity, because it makes them feel good, venting about all of the bad things going on in their life. Usually, this happens within their homes, after a nice meal, and a

hot shower. Sometimes, we forget about all the good going on in our lives and put all of our focus on the bad. Don't be one of these people; you are better than that. The people who cuddle up in negativity blankets are just upset about their life and are unwilling to make a change. As the saying goes, "If it were easy, then everyone would do it." Well, complaining and being negative is easy, and we all do it from time to time.

Remind yourself: Good things are to come, and all of this hard work isn't for nothing. This leads to many questions about who you truly are, and what you are truly made of. Only you can answer those questions. Be sure that you are honest with yourself, too. Don't hide behind the mistakes you've made. Put the mistakes behind you, forget they happened, and believe bigger and better things are coming. Along the way, make sure you are doing it for yourself.

There are two types of people in this world. There are leaders, and there are followers. Leaders don't let the opinions of others sway them one way or the other. Followers only take the opinions of leaders and mimic their actions. As a person, you have a choice to lead by example, instead of by opinion. You will never be perfect and that's okay, but you will be you, and that's all that matters. Take action and be yourself every step of the way. When I was little, my dad would always tell me "Be

a leader, not a follower.” Be a leader for your own cause, and who knows, maybe one day you’ll look behind you and see followers of your own.

“Whether you think you can or think you can’t, either way, you are right.” – Henry Ford

When you non-conform to the traditional way of thinking, people don’t fully understand your way of thinking. What they’ve been told is go to school, get an education, go to college, get an education in a specified field, get a job in their career field, work forty hours a week, save until they’re in their early sixties, and then retire; hopefully staying healthy enough to enjoy the freedom that they have longed for. You never, ever, need to live your life the way other people expect you to. When you go on your own and do something for yourself, people will criticize you, and that’s okay. That means you are really doing something right for yourself.

The more rude reactions you hear, that are based on your actions, are really just notches in your belt, because you are on your way to becoming your own person. You start being able to accept the good and bad choices you have made, because they are your choices. When you make a good choice, you pat yourself on the back, because you did well. When you make a bad choice, you

still should pat yourself on your back, because you just learned from it.

There are plenty of people who thought that the new path I decided to take was strange. I would get this question a lot, "So, what are you doing?" and I would reply, "I'm taking time off and enjoying the summer." They would look at me puzzled, and I could tell some of them thought it was absurd that a soon-to-be 25-year-old needed to "take time off." It bugged me for a very long time, that no matter how many times I explained my reasons for quitting my great job, selling my house, and moving to a new city were positive things for me, it only seemed like people were more worried about how my decision somehow affected them.

They didn't see that I was investing my time away from my day job to find out who I really was. I finally got to the point, where I tried to avoid the conversation on what I was doing. I didn't want to hear the Dementors' opinions of my plan or what they thought I should do, and how my plan more than likely wouldn't work. I honestly just wanted to be left alone, so the only person who influenced my decisions was myself.

I remember my girlfriend went out with her friends one evening, so I stayed home to work on the house I was trying to sell. Her friends asked her several questions about what I was doing, the details of my plan,

and how I was going to make my strategy work. She defended me that whole evening, telling them I had plenty of money to live off for the summer. I was currently remodeling my house to sell it and move to where she was living. I'd get a different sales job, and then buy another house, that I could once again remodel and sell or eventually rent out. Even after she told them my intentions, all they heard was that I was taking off the summer, and that I wasn't working right now. It actually got to the point where they were worried about the person she was dating, that I didn't have ambition, and that it was hard for them to see her date me, when she had so much going for herself.

It hurt. It honestly grinded me really bad for her to have to defend me, because there were people who truly thought I was just floating around with no sense of direction, and that I was a negative influence on her life. Her friend later messaged her, saying sorry for what she had said about me. It was difficult for her to see her friend with someone like me, who she thought didn't have any "drive".

There was nothing I could do about what she thought or how she felt about my new way of thinking. Believe me, I wanted to, but no matter how much I wanted to fight back at the soul-suckers, I knew I would never get anywhere. I finally just said, "You be you and I'll be me."

It was always funny to me, though, because no matter how many people would try and tell ME what I was doing was wrong, I never found myself telling them that what THEY were doing was wrong. I never once said, "So, you work every day in fear that if you don't do your job appropriately, you could potentially get fired? You spend a majority of your youth saving a bunch of money, so you can finally enjoy it when you are old? You have to ask permission to take time off to take your kid to the doctor, take a vacation, or even take a personal day, because you have worked your ass all week and deserve it?" I never once said, "Listen to what I'm doing, and you should do it, because it's the way it's supposed to be."

I never said any of these things to anyone, because if they were happy and wanted to live that life, then that was their choice. I chose not to endure it anymore. I was free from that style of living, but I still wasn't free from the outside voices. I still would let them control my thoughts, ideas, and actions.

I kept going with what I said I was going to do, which was whatever the hell I wanted. I continued to paint and do the remodeling projects I still had left in my house. I slept in every day, had no set eating schedule, went to new breweries, and tried new beers. I paddle-boarded rivers and lakes in the western part of Montana. I went

boating with my family and even camped in my car a few times. I drove to Seattle and hit a Mariners game and tried all the seafood I could. On our way back, we made a quick pit stop to unload some luggage, just to hit the road again to spend four days at a lake house. After, we made our way to Banff, BC, and did a three-day backpack trip in the heart of grizzly bear country. Later while there, we stayed in a 5-star hotel, that looked like a castle, sipped expensive whiskey, and soaked in the hot springs. I hadn't felt so free and happy in a very long time.

It seemed as I posted about what I was doing and how much fun I was having on social media, the more people would fire back. I started to get questions from my friends and family like, "Are you ever going to get a job?" and "How can you afford this?" I started replying with non-serious answers to not seem defensive, even though it ate at me. I had done more in those two months than a lot of the people who were questioning me had done in ten years. I remember when I came back from my vacations to continue to work on my house project. I would ask my friends if they wanted to make plans, and I would get replies, "Sorry, some of us have to work for a living." "Sorry, we can't all do whatever we want all day." It was like they were trying to make me feel bad for being happy.

One day, one of my friends texted me about what I had going on, and how I was traveling a lot and not taking care of my responsibilities. She even went as far as saying, "I really think you have your priorities out of line," and that I didn't really "plan" what I was doing. I remember when I started my first online business, I tried inviting all of my friends and family to like my page for support. I found that some people supported me, and I also found that a lot of them didn't understand what I was doing. Some of my friends said that I joined another pyramid scheme, and I had some family members ask if it was just another "thing" I was adding to my list of side projects. When I posted the website page on Facebook, I had a friend ask if I had been hacked.

It was continuously hard for the people close to me to understand, that I was doing things on my own terms. I remember telling my friends in a passive-aggressive way, that while I'm traveling and working on my own schedule now, they'll be excited to do the same in 40 years. I got the strong reply, "One day, you will have to stop living in fantasyland and get a real job." I kind of just took it as, "Well, I'm sorry that you feel that way," and went on with my day. I wasn't going to feel bad that they had to go to work, or that they felt like they didn't approve of what I was doing. I couldn't change the way they thought, and I wasn't going to try.

“We need to support the people who are involved in our life more, instead of the people on TV and on the Internet that we don’t know. Support from someone you care about is invaluable.” -Me

When I first started seeing my girlfriend, she had just gotten back from studying abroad in Greece. She talked about what it was like, all of the historic buildings she saw, and how much fun she had. She shared all her experiences with the different cultures, what she learned, and how her plan was to eventually do a year trip around the world. I thought it sounded cool, but I thought there was no way I was going to be able to do that. I had responsibilities: a good job, a house, two dogs, student loans, credit cards, and a mindset that told me I needed to keep saving money, so one day I could maybe retire early and go travel. I didn’t even realize it at the time, but I was a soul-sucking Dementor. I was that person who would feel bitter when other people were doing things that I felt like I wasn’t able to do, because I had “obligations.” I thought it was impossible for me to ever be free enough, so that I could do what I wanted, when I wanted.

Then, that day came on the mountain. At the time, I thought my life was over. Broken, needing surgery, and

not being able to work seemed like the recipe for disaster. I wasn't sure what I was going to do, and how I was going to be able to pay my bills. However, things worked out like they always do. The insurance I had bought right before my injury covered my bills and got me through that three months' leave of absence. In that time to myself, my way of thinking started to evolve. I could have died that day on the mountain. What if I would have hit my head, and no one was around to help me? I could have fallen in a tree well and froze. What if I wouldn't have had that insurance, and wasn't able to pay my bills? I don't know what would have happened, but I do know that if I hadn't gotten hurt that day, the way I viewed life would never have changed.

It is kind of like when your friend shows you a new song that they think is awesome, so they make you listen to it, and you just think it's alright. Then, one day, you are by yourself, and that same song comes on the radio, but you find yourself JAMMING to the song. It's just like that with life. I needed to find out for myself that there was another outlook that fit me better. I realized that I could go traveling if I wanted to, because there were ways to make money without having a traditional day job. Plus, I could choose how I would think about every life situation.

Disclosure: Choosing the way you think will not come easy and will take constant practice.

I still have a lot of negative moments and bad days, but I do have less of them. Life is too short, and I knew if I didn't start taking advantage of the small amount of time we are given on this Earth, I was going to regret it. I started to refuse the thought of regretting the things that I did. I decided that I was only going to regret the things I didn't do. That's one of the reasons I'm writing this book.

I had thought about writing a book for almost two years and never made any attempts. I kept thinking about it, but I was too worried what people would think about what I wrote, and at the time, my priorities were very different. I decided I didn't want to be on my death bed one day, whether it's sixty years from now or tonight, after I eat too many chimichangas, and drink too many Coronas, saying, "Damn, I never did that." I knew I could never take back any of the time I wasted or the mistakes I've made.

If I would have started my book when I first thought of it, it would be published and up on Amazon already. All I could do was take advantage of my new way of thinking, actually apply it to my life, and start now. There is no better time than the present to start the life you want. I once read a quote that said, "A year from

now, you are going to wish you started today.” That hit me hard, and I hope it does for you, too. Remember, there is nothing you can ever do about yesterday, and tomorrow might not happen, so always live for today.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” -Mark Twain

I once read a book called *The Art of Nonconformity* by Chris Guillebeau. The book goes over different ways you can live your life against the status quo. Chris has traveled to every country in the world, has an online blog, is an avid volunteer to the less fortunate, and has written several books on how to live the life you have always dreamed of by making money online. He talks about how a lot of people in this world are “walking zombies.” All they know is work, pay bills, and save what’s left (if there is anything left). They don’t venture out into the unknown and probably never will. They are just set in their ways, because it’s safe and secure. They will tell you what they are doing is the way to go, and what you are doing is stupid or impossible. His book is

what truly inspired me to just go for what I really wanted in life and to never look back.

In one part of his book, Chris talks about how he was helping a friend move out of her apartment. They had been discussing what he was going to do next and where he was going to go. She got bitter about his free way of living and made the comment, "You know, we can't all just travel the world like you can." In the book, he talks about how, really, she could have been traveling if she really wanted to. She was single, had a great job, made good money, but her priorities were different, and she chose not to travel. He chose to travel, and she chose not to, but to her, it was an exclusive thing that only he was doing.

There are always going to be soul-sucking Dementors or "walking zombies." There is nothing you can do about it. All you can do is take care of you and keep believing in your path. I remember someone asking me, "What do you really want to do for a living?" and all I had to say was, "I want to be happy doing whatever I want." I remember they looked at me confused, asking, "So what does that look like?" All I did was smile, because that's what it looked like: Me, smiling and happy, because I was doing what I wanted to do and not what someone else wanted me to do.

Just keep going, or like Dory would say, "Just keep swimming." Go against the current, challenge the status

quo, and be you and only you. Your path isn't impossible, and your goals aren't unreasonable. However, the longer you let other thoughts persuade the way you think, the more you will start to believe your path is impossible, and your goals really are unreasonable. I have told a handful of people about writing this book, because I won't let anyone else inside my head. The people I could tell will either have positive or negative things to say, but either way, it will hinder the way I think and what I have to say.

I want this whole book to be me and only me, not anyone else. I want to come out on top, like most people, but if I let people persuade me one way or another, I'll never get there. You are what you think, and I think you deserve more. I think I deserve more. Some people might read this book and think it's great. Some might read it and think it's bad. Some will buy it and never read it. Some people I know on a personal level, will see it, and move on with their day. Whatever! I don't really care, because I'm writing this book for me and anyone else who feels like there is more to life than work, pay bills, and die.

If, in the course of history, no one tried to reach their goals because of what others would say, there would be a lot of things missing in this world. We probably wouldn't know the world is round. We would still be using candles

for light, because there would be no electricity. If the Wright brothers wouldn't have tried to fly, and the automobile wasn't created, we would still be using horses and carriages as our main mode of transportation. We wouldn't have the Internet, which means no Facebook. All of these things exist, because the people who created them believed in their dreams. Just because someone may say an idea is stupid, crazy, or impossible doesn't mean it is.

“Build your own dreams, or someone else will hire you to build theirs.” -Farrah Gray

Find out what you truly want to do and figure out a way to make it happen. If you do like your 8-5 job or whatever it is, that's great. I'm happy for you, as long as you are happy and able to do the things you love, because that's all that really matters. However, if you feel stuck, and you feel unworthy, then please realize that is not the case. You deserve better, and as soon as you start believing that, you are already halfway there to the life you really want. Find a way to make what you love your job, and I promise, you won't work another day in your life.

“Always follow your heart in order to find what you love, but make sure you take your brain with you.” -Me

Recap:

- Your dreams aren't unreasonable or impossible.
- Only regret the things you didn't do.
- Find a way to mix work with what you love.
- People close to you will always have things to say.

They mean well, but sometimes, they won't understand your path, and that's okay.

- Choose your path for you and no one else.

Chapter 4

Lost Time Is Never Found

A week ago, there was an accident on the I-90 interstate. A man was driving his pickup truck from Salmon, Idaho to Missoula, Montana to see his girlfriend. On the other side of the interstate, a young woman hit an elk crossing the road. The elk went airborne, flew across the median to the other side of the interstate, landed on the windshield and roof of the man's truck, causing him to drive off into an embankment. The man was pronounced dead at the scene; he was only 20 years old.

On October 1, 2017, a gunman opened fire on a crowd of concertgoers at the Route 91 Harvest music festival on the Las Vegas strip in Nevada. Fifty-eight people were killed, and 546 people were injured. What was supposed to be a great night of entertainment turned into a nightmare for thousands of people.

Today, my grandpa went into a coma. He was fine just last week. I got the text message from my dad, "Just got a call; Grandpa is failing fast. It's pretty much a

matter of hours.” It's nothing I can control, or my dad can control, because it's just the cycle of life. If I would have known this was going to happen, I would have made more of an effort to see him or even just talk to him on the phone. I would have, because now I'm five hours away and can't see him, and I definitely can't call him.

I wonder what my dad thinks. Does he wish for moments in the past to be different with his dad? Does he regret not being there when he got really sick? I'm sure he's having a lot of thoughts of what he could have or should have done. Just 6 months earlier, he lost his mom, and now he's losing his father. Not only is his dad in a coma, but he has to go to work for a 12-hour shift tonight.

When my grandmother died, I thought about how I didn't truly know who she was. Yes, she was my only grandma whom I had somewhat of a relationship with, but I didn't really know who she was as a person. I didn't see her enough, because I made the excuse that they lived two and half hours away in a small, boring town. I never called her on her birthday like I said I would. I never tried. I regret that, because I didn't do it. I can't get any of that time back, and I hate myself for it.

Sometimes, all people want from you is you. They want to hear your voice and let you know that you are

thinking about them. I didn't do that. I wasted time that I could have had with two people who were a part of my family that I loved. I couldn't find the power within myself to put my own problems aside, to think that someone else needed my love, and that they didn't have much time left to receive it.

I knew a guy back in high school who was an unbelievable athlete; great football player and an even better track star. People enjoyed his presence, and the girls loved him. He had everything going for himself. He was set up to go to a good college and had a great family who supported him. In my eyes, he had it going on. The world was his, and he had the confidence that said, "Watch out, because here I come."

One day, he went for a ride on his motorcycle. An SUV was going too fast, didn't see him, and couldn't stop in time. He died at the scene and was only 19. He left the world without his family having the chance to say goodbye. I'm sure if they could, they would do anything just to have five more minutes of his time.

I loved baseball as a kid, and it was my favorite sport. All I ever looked forward to was the little league games we would play every weekend. I wasn't very big, but I loved the game, and my fundamentals were strong. The problem was that at 12 years of age, there were kids who had already hit their growth spurt, while some of us still looked like we just came out of the womb. There was a

kid that I always dreaded playing against, because he was a twelve-year-old in a man's body, and of course, he was their best pitcher. It always seemed that no matter what, he pitched against us. I was always terrified that I was going to die getting hit by one of his pitches. I remember he pitched a perfect game, which in little league was a big deal. When he would get done striking 3 up 3 down, he would come to the plate and hit a home run. He was an all-star. On and off the field, he was the nicest guy, who could talk to someone like they had been friends for years. He also did well in school and was a natural athlete in every sport he played.

A few years ago, I saw on Facebook that he got married to a sweet woman, and they looked so happy together. I hadn't talked to him since high school, and it was cool for me to see that he was happy and doing well. It was barely three months later, that he announced on Facebook he was sick; the doctors gave him 6-8 weeks to live. My heart sank. Here was a guy who seemed healthy, was newly married, and had a lot of great things ahead of him, but now he was sick? How could that be?

Well, it was 6-8 weeks later, and he passed away surrounded by his family. He was only 24. I remember when I heard the news, I couldn't believe it was actually true. Yes, I saw the post that he was sick. Yes, I saw the post of him saying he would enjoy anyone that he knew

to come and visit him during this hard time. Yes, I saw that as he got weaker, he posted that he couldn't take any more visits, because he was too exhausted. Still, I never saw him or even messaged him. He was my friend! I knew him for over ten years and had some great memories playing baseball with him, but I didn't make an effort to see how he was doing in the scariest moment of his life.

About 7 years ago, one of my best friends got in a bad car accident. He was in a car with a drunk driver, and they rolled the car multiple times. They both were life-flighted out to be treated. They both almost died and spent several months in the hospital recovering. When he talks about the accident now, he always tells me it was the best thing that could have ever happened to him. He also told me about how he couldn't imagine what his parents went through, getting that call early in the morning, saying that their son had gotten into an accident. Then, to the months of living in a hospital, his parents were there for him through every step in the ICU to completing his final weeks in physical rehab.

I remember going on a ski trip, just me and him, and we talked about how one day he would like to write a book about what his parents went through and their journey during that time. I hope he does. I think we all need that reminder on how precious life is and how quickly it can change. I know I cannot speak for him, but

I will say it really changed his perspective on life. He still has good days and bad days, just like the rest of us, but his appreciation for life is now at a higher level.

My girlfriend has a part-time job, where she takes care of a girl with a traumatic brain injury. The girl's injuries are severe enough that she needs constant care: help with eating, going to the bathroom, communicating, and walking. The girl's mother is always with her, doing everything she can to take care of her around the clock. Nine years ago, things were different. The girl had a bright future and was an excellent student, boasting a 3.98 GPA. She had plans to go to England to continue her studies and pursue her goal of writing fantasy novels.

One day, the girl was heading to work when her car hit a patch of black ice. It was spinning out of control and struck a sports car head-on. The accident crushed her front temporal lobe. She went into surgery immediately, and the doctors said if she did survive, there was a strong chance she would have severe brain damage. She fought through, but the doctors were right. Now, in her early 30s, she has a life-altering brain injury from the accident, that hinders her from continuing the life she once had dreams of living. In the local newspaper, a reporter wrote an article about the girl's graduation, and her mom talked about her daughter's

injuries and how it will affect her life. Her mother shared,

"This most likely will be the only major life event she will be able to 'celebrate,'" she said. "She's not going to date, she's not going to marry, and she's not going to have kids."

I'm not a parent, so I couldn't imagine what it would be like to lose a child or to have the fear that you might lose your child in a tragic accident. When we are young, it's easy to take advantage of the life we were given, because we are still young, and we feel as if we have the world in the palms of our hands. We don't realize how quickly everything can change. How can we go from one day planning a trip to England, getting a track scholarship, or going to a house party with our friends, to all of it being taken away?

It's sad that stories like the previous are what it takes for someone to realize how good they really have it. I'm awful about it. I'll complain about the dumbest shit, and then I'll hear on the radio how a woman struck another vehicle at an intersection I drive through every day, and was pronounced dead at the scene. I finally think, "Wow, maybe I don't have it so bad. That could have been me at the intersection who got hit by a car."

The stories I shared weren't meant to make you feel sad or depressed; they were meant to help put life in perspective. We are only given so many minutes on this

Earth, and that's only if we stay healthy and nothing tragic happens to us. Obviously, there are no guarantees that something tragic won't happen to you. You can't predict the future, and there is no crystal ball. You are welcome to hop on Facebook and do one of those "When will you die?" quizzes, so that you will be given some sort of prediction on how much time you have left. But hey, if that's what gets you to start appreciating the things you do have in your life, instead of being mad at the things you don't have, then I'm all for it. Just do it for yourself, and don't wait until something like one of those stories happens to you or to someone you love. Start changing the way you view your life now.

"You never truly understand how short life is until a life-threatening event affects you or someone you care about." -Me

Like I mentioned before, I still have a lot of negative thoughts. I catch myself going to a cynical assumption about how my day is going to go, before I even give the new day a chance. I think of the bills I have to pay, how the idiot at the light didn't go the minute it turned green, how out of the hundred check lines in Walmart, only four are open, and pretty much any other small thing I can think of that bugs me. I'll snap at my dog, because

she's in the way when I turned around, so I tripped. I let these small things bother me, because I guess I have nothing else to bitch about at the time.

I then hear stories like the ones I mentioned before and think, "Wow, I guess it could be worse." I could get sick, I could get in a car accident, and I could be in the wrong place at the wrong time when a shooting happens. I could die tomorrow. Shit, I could die right now, typing on this computer in some sort of tragic laptop explosion. It could happen; crazier things have happened.

Nobody wants to go before they are ready, and yet as people, we seem to focus on the bad things quite often. We forget that being in this world is a privilege, not a right. The world is constantly battling back and reminding you, that if you have one big slip-up, you could leave this world. You don't get to pass go, you don't collect \$200, and you don't get to say goodbye to anyone.

I recently bought a new house, and like normal, when you move into a new place, you put your name in the utilities and ask the neighbors what day the garbage is picked up. I had a lot of unpacking to do the first week and a half and bought a lot of new things for the house, so I had plenty of garbage building up. It got to the point where my dumpster outside was overflowing, but when I moved in, I had just missed garbage day, so I had to wait for the following week for it to be picked up.

The day finally rolled around, and my front sidewalk was starting to look like the city dump, so I was ready for the garbage guys to come and grab it. I came home for lunch and saw the garbage truck down the street grabbing the neighbor's garbage, so I went inside grabbed one more garbage full of trash and added it to the collection.

I was making a sandwich and talking to my girlfriend when the garbage truck drove up to my house. The guy in the back hopped off the truck, grabbed my garbage, and pulled it a few inches before stopping, leaving my dumpster with the garbage still inside. He hopped back onto the truck and headed to the next house. I thought, "That S.O.B!" I was pissed. I couldn't figure out why he wouldn't have taken my garbage, because they took everyone else's.

My girlfriend mentioned that it might have been too full. That could have been the case, because it was a little ridiculous, but I was still mad. I felt like, well, either way, it was their job to take my trash. I went back and forth fuming about what I was going to say to them. I played scenarios in my mind, how I was going to just rip his ass for not taking my garbage. So tough, I know. I didn't say much the rest of the lunch period, because I was so irritated about what had happened. I finally had enough

and hopped in my car and headed down the road to ask what the deal was.

They were at the end of my street, and I slowly pulled up to the back of the garbage truck and rolled down my window.

“Hey!” The garbage man turned around, saw me, and headed to my window.

“Are you guys not taking my garbage, because it’s too full?” I asked with annoyance in my voice.

“Are you the house on the end?” he replied.

“Yeah?” I said.

“The account is closed,” he said.

“The account’s closed?” I asked.

“Yeah. When you move into a new place, you have to open the account with the city, and then we can start taking your trash.”

My tough demeanor faded. “Oh, okay. Thanks,” I said as I rolled my window up and headed back to work.

Boy. Wasn’t I a complete, stupid idiot? I complained and bad-mouthed two guys for not doing their jobs, when, in actuality, they were doing their jobs. I just didn’t do mine. It was a lot easier to quickly jump to conclusions and blame people for what was happening to me. I ruined an entire lunch with someone, because I was too pissed off about something I could have merely fixed by making a simple phone call.

After I got back to work, I made the phone call to get my garbage account opened. After I hung up, I looked at my call log and noticed it took about 3 minutes, tops. The total time I spent pissed off and mad at the garbage guys was about 60 minutes. I'll never get those 60 minutes of my life back. However, I promise the next time a situation like that happens, I'll definitely think over the scenario differently. Lesson learned.

About two weeks later after the garbage mistake, I decided I needed to settle into my new house. I figured the only way to do that was to set up my man cave. I hung up my pictures, beer sign, beer cap holder, and of course, my bottle opener. I got my redliners all set with the chargers for my guests' phones, just in case. I hooked up the surround sound and got my PS4 locked and loaded for gaming days. The last piece was setting up the big screen TV. My roommate helped me put the TV mount on the wall, and we hung it up. It was late that night, so we didn't turn it on and just headed to bed.

The next day, I came home on my lunch break and had a few moments to spare, so I headed downstairs to turn on my TV and make sure everything was working properly. Much of the stuff had been in a storage unit for three months while I made my move, so I grabbed the remote, hit the power button, and all I saw was a spider web. The screen was completely cracked and wouldn't

show a picture at all. I just sat there and stared at it. I don't know if I was in complete shock or if I was doing everything from going completely crazy to setting it on fire in my front yard. This time, I thought a little more clearly and just turned the TV off and set the remote down. I didn't cuss it out, and I didn't set it on fire. I just headed upstairs and went back to work.

However, my day was completely ruined, and my attitude was shot. I made sure I told my coworkers what had happened, so I could express my frustration. They had some sympathy and gave me advice on what to do, but it didn't matter, because I was mad that this happened to me. I just thought I couldn't catch a break and felt like pouting would make it better. Maybe a TV god would start talking to me from above and grace me with a new Vizio, because I was down on myself.

I sat in my cubicle for that next hour, just staring at my computer, constantly thinking about how messed up it was that my TV was broken. I even went as far as to make a Facebook post saying, "Sometimes, you move across the state and spend two hours mounting your 60-inch TV just to find out the screen is broken. These are the moments you try not to throw it in the river and are thankful you have somewhere to live."

I got that off my chest and kept scrolling through social media, when I got a text from my best friend,

asking if I knew what had happened to a guy that we went to school with.

“What do you mean what happened?” I texted back.

He told me he saw stuff on Facebook about his family and friends posting "RIP." I hopped on Facebook to check it out and sure enough, that's what I saw. I saw that his sister, who graduated in my class, posting, "You will be forever missed." I saw much more just like it. An hour later, my buddy texted me again, saying he committed suicide. I was in shock. I sat there thinking about the last time I saw him, when he was a freshman, and I was a senior in high school. I didn't know him very well, but he seemed like someone who was full of life and enjoyed being around people.

I couldn't wrap my mind around it. Someone so young, with so much life ahead of him, left this world too early. His family didn't get to say goodbye or share that they loved him one more time, and all I could do was be upset that my TV was broken. How immature and selfish to think that my day was ruined, because this small hiccup happened to me, when there was a whole family and community of people mourning the death of a young man.

“You really start to value time when you realize that everyone you love will eventually die.” -Me

Say you have \$86,400 in your account, and someone stole \$10 from you. Would you be upset and throw all of the \$86,390 away in hopes of getting back at the person that took your \$10, or would you move on and live? We only have 86,400 seconds in the day, so don't let a bad 10 seconds ruin the rest of your 86,390. Life is too short, so don't sweat the small stuff.

I have been working on living by a system of whether or not I should get upset about something. I first ask myself, "Is this worth getting upset about?" and "Will this issue affect me in 5 minutes, 5 hours, 5 days or even 5 years from now?" If the answer is no, then I consider it a "small thing." I try to discard getting upset about "small things," because they aren't life-altering situations. If it doesn't life alter your finances, your relationships, or your health, then is it really that big of a deal?

Don't let an argument or a rude person completely ruin your day. That's not fair to you to take a perfectly good day away from yourself by being upset over something so small. You are wasting time that you could spend enjoying the things you love with the people you love, by trading them for anger, frustrations, and

negative thoughts. Put those little issues to the side, because more than likely, they won't be such an issue tomorrow.

"Don't sweat the small stuff, and it's all small stuff." - Richard Carlson

We are all our own worst enemies. I know I battle myself every day. Sometimes I win and sometimes I lose. When I win, I grow a little and become a better version of myself. When I lose, I take one step forward and three steps back; casting an evil shadow over my character, portraying me as someone I'm not. Don't do this to yourself. Don't let that shadow cover your shine.

If you continue to beat yourself up over your mistakes, sooner or later, you will accept defeat and bow out. You are human, so you will continue to make mistakes day in and day out. Strive for perfection with the realization that you will never be perfect. Try and find the upside of every lesson and make the most of your time, because time waits for no one. Time is an advantage that you can't get back, so remember, the clock is ticking.

"The clock of life is wound but once and no man has the power to tell just when the hands

will stop, at late or early hour. Now is the only time you own. Live, love, and toil with a will. Place no faith in tomorrow, for the clock may then be still...” -Unknown

I have a bad habit of buying energy drinks. I'll catch myself going to the gas station near my work, probably at least three times a week. Every time I go in there, it's the same guy working behind the counter. We usually have some small talk, since he's a pretty friendly person. Almost every time I go up to the counter with my energy drink, I ask, "How are you doing, today?" and about 90% of the time he replies, "Just living the dream." Every now and then, I'll reply, "Just someone else's?" He usually chuckles and says, "Yeah, exactly." I would go ahead and pay for my energy drink, tell him to have a good day, and go on my way.

I always thought it was interesting when people would say that they are living the dream, when they definitely are not. They only say that, because they are doing the exact opposite. They are living their nightmare, counting down the minutes until it's over, and they can leave work and go do what they actually want to do. The crappy thing is that they spend most of their time doing something they don't really want to be doing. That's not what life should be about. You should first make the time to make yourself happy and minimize

the time you spend on the things that don't make you happy. Yes, there will always be things that you have to do that won't make you happy, but when those times come, get them done and get back on track to what makes you happy, because being happy is the real priority.

When I moved, I got a job recruiting for a consulting company. It was strictly phone sales: 8-5, Monday through Friday, and a one-hour lunch from 12-1. I sat in a cubicle and was expected to make 80 to 100 calls a day, and if I needed to go to an appointment or needed time off to see family, I had to make sure I gave them enough notice. I didn't have time to do anything I wanted to do. By the time

I would get home for lunch, I would have about 30 minutes to make something to eat and unwind for a second. If I needed just a few more minutes to load some laundry or take my dog for a walk, it didn't matter, because I would be late for their schedule.

I felt like a prisoner in my own life. I knew I obviously needed to stick it out, because I had bills to pay, but I knew it was not a way to spend my time. I started doing other things to change my focus from how much I hated my job to enjoying other things. I would make time to check out the weather forecasts at the nearby ski resorts, I would build my online businesses from the app on my

phone, I would outline each chapter of this book as new ideas and topics came to mind, and I always made sure I talked to the people I loved and cared about throughout the day.

I slowly started to notice my days at work were getting better and more productive, because I was happier, and I was still putting the things that made me happy first. In turn, it was easier to do my job and get through the day, because my attitude reflected the happier thoughts I was having. Don't get me wrong, I still woke up in the morning thinking F-this, but I would slowly forget about it when I remembered what I needed to work on that day that would make me happy.

I'd go workout before I needed to work, and at lunch, I would read a chapter from a book or revise a chapter I had just written. I would have lunch with my girlfriend. After work, I would take my dog for a walk, and then cook dinner while I drank a brass monkey (beer and orange juice) and played J. Cole or the *Goofy* movie soundtrack. Every minute I get, I try and make it something that makes me happy, and every minute I have to do something that doesn't make me happy, I am still thinking about what I'm going to do next that does.

Focusing on the things that do make you happy will always keep your momentum going into tomorrow and focusing too much on the things that don't make you happy will always keep you stuck in yesterday's mud. If

you are going to go through the mud, drop that bitch in 4wd and baja right out, for there will be more mountains to climb tomorrow.

I may make it seem simple to come up with what you want to do and to be able to drop everything you have going on now, and just go for it. I know it's not, and I'm still not completely doing what I want to do right now. I still need a job to cover my bills. I can't just wake up whenever I want and hit whatever ski mountain that got fresh snow. I have to plan out my fun around my not-so-fun activities. That's okay, though, because I know that one day, the time I spent working on myself and appreciating what I have in my life will pay off.

I have read numerous times, that when you write out your goals, you have a higher chance of achieving them. There is something about the human brain that sees the goal written, and it leaves an imprinted image in the mind. Write out your bucket list, your financial goals, vacations plans, and anything else that you would like to accomplish in your life. Don't wait, once you write it down and imagine it happening, you are that much closer to making it a reality.

There are 86,400 seconds in the day. How are you going to use them? Are you going to work for something you truly crave, or are you going to use those seconds doing something you truly dislike? Either way, the time

is going to pass, and one day you will be at the end of your life. I hope you can look back and smile, because you accomplished the things you wanted to do. It's not that you are tired and don't have time to work toward the things you want. It's just that you aren't motivated and don't want to make time to work toward those things. So, don't let worrying about the minor things take up that precious time.

I've been told worrying is like walking around with an umbrella, because it might rain. So that tells me, worrying and being upset are just like the weather. The storm comes, and it eventually passes. It's the same with life. The drama and bullshit come in, and they eventually go away. Life is way too short to give into that crap, so keep striving for what truly makes you happy. Really, no one makes it out of this world alive anyway, so why worry about it?

Work hard and make the most out of the time you are given. Focus on those 86,400 seconds each day with the objective of reaching your goal. Remember, you will never be able to purchase more time, so be careful how you spend it. Fun Fact: You get the same amount of time in the day as Bill Gates, JK Rowling, Mark Cuban, Steve Jobs, and every other successful person in this world.

“Motivation is nothing without inspiration and inspiration is nothing without action. The

sooner you act on what inspires you most, the sooner you will see the results you want most in life.” -Unknown

I’ve needed to mature immensely to change the way I view my life. I think people believe that maturity is based on age, but I don’t think that is completely true. Maturity isn’t determined by your age. It’s determined by how you handle each situation. It’s your intellect. It’s being able to make changes, rather than complaining and making excuses. It’s being able to listen to another viewpoint with an open mind, instead of discrediting it, because it’s not the same as your own.

It’s being able to take criticism as advice, rather than as a shot to your character. It’s talking about ideas, rather than talking about people. It’s being able to put your mistakes and shortcomings behind you and making sure each day you are a better version of yourself. Maturity isn’t based on the number of years you’ve walked this earth; it’s based on your integrity. It’s who you are when no one is looking. So be caring, understanding, hardworking, and humble, for life is way too short to give into the bullshit.

I’ve had the quote at the top of this chapter tattooed on my arm for almost 4 years now, and I feel like I am just now really understanding what it means. The time

that goes by is gone, and you can never get even just one second back. So, stop regretting the things you did, because they happened, and start regretting the things you didn't do.

Don't let a 5-minute argument ruin your whole day. Do not hang up the phone upset and don't go to bed mad. Don't kill yourself for a job that would replace you tomorrow if you died today. Tell people in your life you love them, and that you miss them. Hug them when it's time to say goodbye, and hold them tight like you'll never see them again. Take the trips you want to take, make dumb mistakes, and strive for your version of success. Smile until your face hurts, laugh until you cry, ask that person out on a date, have that expensive plate of steak and lobster. Start the business you have always dreamed of. Write that book you always talked about. Spend as much time surrounding yourself with the people you love and embracing all the great things that you have in your life, and never, ever stop living.

“Don't waste your time in anger, regrets, worries, and grudges. Life is too short to be unhappy.” - Roy T. Bennett

Recap:

- You never realize how short life is until a life-altering event happens to you or someone you know.

- Don't sweat the small stuff because it's all just small stuff.

- Appreciate the things you have now.

- Make the things that make you happy your priority.

- Strive to take advantage of each day, so one day, you can truly live your dream.

Chapter 5

Puppy Love

I have been with my master since I was 10 weeks old. I still remember when he came and picked me up to go to my new home. I laid on his lap the whole way there. I don't really remember much, because I was so little, and I guess I slept most of the ride home.

I remember he would always let me play with bird feathers, because I was going to be his hunting dog. I always loved those play days when he would hide the bird, and I would go find it for him. He would always be so excited when I found it and brought it back to him. He didn't like it when I wouldn't drop it, though. He always had this black thing in his hand that would jolt me if I wouldn't obey or I would run far away from him. He didn't have to use it very much, though, because I didn't want to make him mad.

We always had a lot of fun. When the leaves fell from the trees, I always knew it was time to find birds for him. Then, when it got cold and the white stuff would hit the ground, he would get sick sometimes, and I always laid on his soft thing with him and keep him company. He

liked that, but for some reason, he didn't like when I would lay on him, so he always had me lay by his feet. The hot days would come, and he would take me for runs, and we would swim in the river. I always loved those days. There were a lot of times he was gone during the day, though. Master called it "school" or "work." I wasn't sure what that meant; I just knew it meant we couldn't hang out. When he got home from those places, I always got so excited. Sometimes, I could tell he wasn't himself when he got back, but I always did my best to make sure he knew I loved him.

One time, master left for the school place and didn't come back for a really long time. It felt like 7 dog-years.

When he did come back, he looked older and more mature. I was excited to be together again, because it's hard when your person leaves for that long; you aren't sure why they would leave in the first place. My master still leaves all the time. I worry that he will be gone for a long time, so when he does come back at the end of the day, I make sure I give him extra licks and wag my tail superfast. Sometimes though, I get too excited, and I follow him into his food place, so I get yelled at. I don't know why I can't be in that kitchen place, but I follow anyway, just to make sure he knows I'm there. It's not uncommon that when I follow him into a place, he turns around, and he steps on my paw, and then he yells at me.

I don't understand why it's my fault, either, but that's okay.

My master and I have been together 77 years now, and I have got to say it's been pretty awesome. He brings me bones, I sit by this box that produces this warm fire stuff, I have a cushy bed, and he always scoops up my poop. I wouldn't choose any other person in this whole doggy world to call my best friend. When he's home, I make sure I check on him about every five minutes, you know, just to make sure he's okay. Plus, I want him to scratch my ears. He gives the best ear scratches. Sometimes, he just tells me to go lay down, but sometimes I wait for him to tell me again, just in case he does need me.

He does yell at me, but that's usually because I did something wrong. I never get mad at him, though, because I can't help but get so excited to see him. It seems that now we are both older, he has gotten busier, and we do less fun stuff. That's okay, though, because he makes up for it by taking me for rides in the car. Sometimes we even go to this place where a bunch of other dogs and masters hang out. I don't even have to be on a leash there, and I can sniff everything. I still haven't sniffed everything there yet, but I will.

Today has seemed like it's lasting forever. The white stuff is falling from the sky, and I have been laying on this couch all day. These days are boring. We don't play

as much during the cold time, and when he does get home, it's too dark and cold to play. Oh! Wait one second! I think he's pulling in. Nope. False alarm. It was the neighbor. That master has two little yappy dogs that always bark at me when my master and I are outside in the yard. I think they are just jealous, because their master doesn't take them for car rides. Losers. Wait, wait, wait! This has to be him this time. Yep, here he comes. It's my master!

I'm going to be right at that door when he opens it, so we can hang, plus I really need to go potty. "Hey, master! How was your day? Want to play? Here's my snake if you want to throw it, and I'll go get it and bring it back to you. Oh, you don't want to play right now? That's okay. I need to go potty anyway, and then we can play later, or we can do whatever you want. I'm just glad you're home! I have been so bored without you. That mailman guy came by and knocked at the door, and I barked at him to let him know you'll be home later. If you need to change first, I'll wait to go potty. It's no biggie. Oh, you need to go potty? I'll be right out here when you are done. Hey, master! How was your potty? I need to go now, but if you need a second, that's okay. I'm just glad you're home!" I need to go now, because I think we are going for a walk!

Devotion

I learned a lot from Anne. She has been by my side since we were both pups. We have had our ups and downs, but one thing never changed: she's always loved me. There have been many times in my life, when I haven't been the greatest person or the greatest dog owner. I am so far from perfect, and I never will claim to be, but I bet if Anne could talk, she would tell you I am perfect. I'm sure if you asked your dog the same thing, they would give you the same answer.

The biggest thing dogs could teach humans is how to love without thinking. Their devotion is hard to completely understand. They don't think about your faults or your mistakes. They just want you and only you. Imagine if we as humans projected the same amount of love for someone as a dog does for its master.

Be Selfless

The cool thing about dogs is that they are a very selfless species. With the objective to serve, you won't find them putting themselves first very often. Their focus is to provide you with its joy and spirits without ever thinking, "What's in it for me?" When you are down, they will try and keep you up. When you are scared, they will protect. When you leave, their loyalty stands strong, waiting for your return.

Love is when you stop putting yourself first, take a step back, and put others in your place. You do things for them and help them, not because you want something in return, but because seeing them happy makes you happy. Their accomplishment is your accomplishment. You do these things, because you truly care about them. Think of the word “care” spelled with two “E’s”: Constant Attention Regarding Everyone Else.

Caring for someone is like a boomerang of happiness. If you throw someone your care and bring them joy, it will come directly back to you. On the other hand, if you throw them a half-assed attempt at caring, and it’s not sincere, well, the boomerang might just come back and hit you in the nuts (hypothetically speaking). My point is this: It always comes full circle. What you give is what you get. Try giving more, and I promise you will get yours. Be like a dog: be caring, loyal, and most of all, selfless.

Challenge yourself to do one act of kindness a day for someone else and see what happens. I guarantee you won’t be mad at yourself for doing it.

Forgiveness

Humans don't forgive easily, because forgiving is hard. We have pride, and we can be stubborn, and we can have a tendency to make sure someone knows they did you wrong. A dog will usually forgive you for anything you do to him (to a point). They see through your bad character and move on. There will always be people who hurt you, do you wrong, and betray you. Holding on to that grudge and anger won't do you any good. Move on from it and forget. Life is too short to stay mad at someone forever. We all make mistakes, and we all want to be forgiven for the hurt we brought someone. No matter how big the hurt is, try to forgive, because it will bring you peace.

“I can have a peace of mind when I forgive rather than judge.” -Gerald Jampolsky

Compassion

No matter how upset or sad you are, a dog always knows how to give you love and comfort. They are always looking to alleviate your pain and bring your happiness to the next level. They believe in you, even when you don't believe in yourself. They see the good in you, even when you feel like you are the biggest piece of shit. Attempt to do this with the people you love. Be generous and kind with the focus on relieving their pain. Believe in

them, when they don't believe in themselves. Support their dreams, even when they have lost hope. Remind them they are worthy and be their biggest cheerleader.

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without that, humanity cannot survive.” -Dalai Lama

Nonjudgmental

We all have regrets and things we hate about ourselves. We have all done stupid things and wish we could take them back. We are all fighting our own battles and have been through hardships. We have all talked badly about someone. We have all made a decision of what we think about someone, just by the way they look, talk, or even walk. We cast judgment too quickly, before we even get to know someone. The cool thing about dogs is that they don't judge you at all. They love you for you and only you. They don't listen to the rumors or hear the negative things you say. They just wag their tail when you come home and lick your face when you pet them.

Even when you are in the worst mood ever or just made the biggest mistake of your life, they are still there, waiting for you. They may have reservations, because they can sense something is wrong, but it does not define your character, thus they love you inside and out. They

always have a way of making you feel worthy, even when you don't feel the same way about yourself. Sometimes, I think we judge ourselves by the mistakes we have made in the past. That doesn't define you. How you grow from those mistakes does.

"Be the person your dog thinks you are."

- J. W. Stephens

Love Languages

There is a book called *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate* by Gary Chapman. The book explains five different ways people express and experience love which are called "Love Languages": quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service (devotion), physical touch, and gift-giving. Chapman explains that every person has a primary and secondary love language.

He explains that people tend to express their love for someone by the way they prefer to receive love. A better way to communicate your love for one another is to understand how each person wants to receive love. One must analyze how a person expresses their love for others, what they complain about most, and finally, what they request from their significant other most often.

An example would be if a husband's love language is gift-giving. He may not understand when he buys his

wife a dozen roses, that she doesn't perceive it as an act of love, but instead, just a nice bouquet of flowers that would look nice on the windowsill. Why? Because really, her love language, that she comprehends best, is acts of service. In return, she may try and use what she expresses, acts of service, to show her love for him.

However, he may not value the act of service as much as she does. He only sees it as a normal household chore. If she understood his love language and bought him a pair of boots that he has been needing, he perceives it in his love language as her way of expressing her love for him. Likewise, if he instead does the dishes and cleans the kitchen for her, she will perceive it as an act of expressing his love for her, because it is an expression she values.

I am by no means an expert on love or relationships, but what I have learned is that not talking about what annoys you and your loved ones does you no good. More than likely, you and the people who love you have no idea that actions can be misinterpreted. Communication is very important, but being honest is essential. Be honest about your feelings and talk things over. Sometimes, silence is good, and sometimes, it kills. Silence can kill a relationship. It's easy, when you don't know how someone is feeling, to fill your head with a bunch of negative assumptions. It will eat at you and

may even make you believe something that isn't true.

Don't have expectations without communication.

I love the movie *Forrest Gump*, and if you haven't seen it, you should, because it's definitely worth a watch. There's a part in the movie where Forrest is talking to his childhood friend and love of his life, Jenny. He is trying to explain how he feels for Jenny and makes the statement, "I may not be a smart man, but I do know what love is." What I take away from his words is this: You don't have to have any sort of intelligence to feel the way you feel and if that feeling takes no effort, then work hard to learn what makes that person tick.

If you love someone or something, love that person or thing wholeheartedly. If you love your work, then give it your all. If you love your friends, family, and partner, then love them with everything you've got. There may be times, when a person's love is foreign to you, so work on understanding their language. If you truly care about something, you will always find a way to make it work. If you want to truly appreciate someone you love, imagine a life without them.

"It would not be much of a universe if it wasn't home to the people you love." – Stephan Hawking

Recap:

- Love like a dog: be selfless, forgiving, compassionate, and nonjudgmental.
- Be the person your dog thinks you are.
- Learn the love languages of the people you care about, as well as your own.

Chapter 6

Empty Bottles

It's a warm fall night in a small town in Montana. Three siblings sit in the living room of their small house near the railroad tracks and watch their evening TV show. Their father, a hardworking and caring man, works a 12hour night shift at the underground mine. Their mother, a cashier at the local grocery store, engulfs herself with cheap beer and drama on the telephone. The children are young: the girls are 7 and 10, and the boy, 4.

For them, evenings like this are normal. They have to turn up the TV, just to drown out the yelling of their intoxicated mom. The kids are never really sure who she's talking about or who she's even talking to. Usually, it's her family or a friend who just lets her talk, because they accidentally answered and are too nice to hang up. However, this night is a little different. The mother drinks too much this night and falls on the floor. The kids try and pick her up, but even together, they aren't strong enough to get her onto the couch. The oldest sister tries to calm her siblings and let them know that their mother is fine, and dad will be home soon.

They continue to watch their show and let their mother sleep. The doorbell rings, and there is a flash of light through the window. The oldest goes to the door and opens it, greeting a police officer and some people in regular clothes. The police ask if their mother is home, and the oldest daughter tells them that she is sleeping on the floor. The police come in and go to the living room, where the mother lays and wakes her up. She wakes up, acting like nothing is wrong, and tells them she just decided to rest there, obviously too intoxicated to realize the police aren't fooled.

The people in casual clothes tell the kids to come outside and sit in the police car. They are confused about what exactly is happening and why they are being taken from their home. They are constantly told that everything will be fine, and that they will see their parents tomorrow. The mother screams at the police telling them, "You can't take my children!"

The kids are taken to a home where there are several other kids around their ages. They are put in a room, told to go to bed, and are reminded that everything will be fine. The next morning, they go downstairs and are given cereal for breakfast, but all the siblings are wondering is when they will get to see their mom and dad again. Soon after, they are taken to the courthouse. They walk in and see their dad and mom standing in the lobby, waiting.

They spring toward them. The sisters run to their father, hugging him tightly, and the young boy runs to his mother, jumping into her arms, not even understanding what has happened. He didn't understand that their mother had once again had too much to drink, or that their own aunt had called the cops, worried that something would happen to the children.

The father didn't know what to do about the situation. The woman he fell in love with was slowly changing into someone he didn't know. During the daytime, she would be fine, but when the sun went down, she turned into a drunken zombie who was loud, mean, clumsy, and incoherent. He figured if he kept showing her how great her life really was, then she would go back to the person he knew she was.

She really wanted to move to a bigger house; not one that was already built, but a new house that was all her own. So, her husband did what she wished, because he loved her. He got the plans for the house and started to build her dream. It was a long project, because he did most of the work himself. The family moved into the basement of the house, while he worked on the upper floors. Whatever he could do to save money to build the house his wife dreamed of, he did.

She still drank, and it progressed. Even as she watched her dream come true, she still held the beer can like it was a power drink. She needed it, and she craved

it. Those short moments when she was sober was like Christmas morning; absolutely beautiful with so much light.

There were the rare occasions she would get done-up, when they all decided to go to the city for shopping. She would curl her long beautiful brown hair, that complimented her tan skin and brown eyes, and top it all off with her favorite red lipstick. Her contagious laugh would draw others in, almost as much as her shining smile. They would sing country songs from her favorites, like Tim McGraw, Toby Keith, and Alan Jackson. In those moments, the family was happy, and they felt complete.

Those moments came to an end by the time they were headed back home. They always had to stop at a gas station on the way, so she could get her 30 rack of Icehouse. By the time the 45-minute drive home was done, she was already transformed into the other person. She was loud, stumbling around, and drooling on herself. She couldn't be told anything by her husband, because to her, she wasn't doing anything terrible. She would hop on the phone and start dialing anyone who would listen to her nonsense. The father would hang with the kids and act like nothing was wrong, but he knew they were aware, and no good parent wants to have their kids witness their mother in that state. So, he

would settle them down with a movie to get their attention away from their drunk mother. He would help her to bed, throwing her arm over his shoulder and walking her to the room. She always blamed him for her being that way, but he just ignored the static and put her to bed.

Years went by, and the dream house was close to being finished. It was a beautiful house that included everything the mother had asked for. It was hers and all hers, so she drank and smoked cigarettes in it as she pleased. No matter how much the kids would complain, she would make it clear that it was her home, and it was built for her.

On the nights she wasn't drunk by 8 o'clock, she would use her double oven set-up to perfection, making a meal fit for a king, and during those moments, her husband would feel like one in the castle he had built. However, the feeling of pride and accomplishment would slowly fade as he watched her go into a drunken spell at the dinner table. Head bowed and hunched over, she would drool out of the front of her mouth uncontrollably. The kids were so used to the dinner routine, that they would ask to be excused so they could start doing their dishes. Again, the father would help his wife to bed, and then be with his kids, putting on a movie or their weekly TV show.

Every holiday for this family was hard to celebrate. It would always end in a bad way. There were never friends or relatives who visited, and the family never left their home, because there was always "baggage." The mother was either drunk here or there, embarrassing the whole family. One year, the husband had the idea to make the Christmas extra special, surprising her by redoing her wedding ring that had broken at one point. He wanted to make it a fun surprise by putting a cinder block in with the ring box, so that when she went to unwrap the present, it would be extremely heavy and confusing.

They always unwrapped the presents under the tree on Christmas Eve, and then the presents from Santa were opened on Christmas morning. He saved that gift for last on Christmas Eve. He picked it up and put it on her lap.

Drunk and confused, she examined the present stating, "This can't be what I wanted."

It was going just like his plan, she was going to be so surprised to see her wedding ring redone and looking just like the day they said, "I do." She started to unwrap the present, revealing the concrete cinder block. Intoxicated and clumsy, she didn't even notice the small box holding the diamond. It fell out, landing on the floor, opening the small box, and exposing the ring. The husband and children watched as the shiny diamond slid

across the hardwood floor. He quickly jumped up, grabbing for the ring and checking it for damage.

She didn't flinch, not even realizing the sensitive moment. He handed her the ring, explaining how he had promised her for years that he would get it fixed. He seemed to pour his heart out at that moment, hoping she would realize that he still loved her more than life itself. She took the ring and put it on with a monotone expression. The "sober her" would have found it sweet and caring, but the "drunk her" didn't seem to care. It wasn't enough. She acted like she needed more. The 4000-square foot house, the 3 beautiful children, and the loving husband just weren't enough.

The bad moments started to snowball, happening one after the other. The middle sister would make breakfast for herself, because she woke up later, and everyone else had eaten. Her mother came downstairs, questioning what she was doing. The daughter explained that she was making pancakes, because everyone else had already eaten breakfast. Before she finished her last word, she was greeted with a slap to the face. Tears instantly rolled down her face from the shock of the anger her mother had shown.

The boy, not even a teenager yet, would ask to go hang out with the boy across the street, but wasn't allowed to, just because. He was a prisoner to his own mother. Never would he have any friends stay the night

like a normal kid, because he was embarrassed by how his mother would get when she would drink. He didn't want his friends to see her bouncing off the walls like a pinball, and definitely didn't want them to see her become a zombie, mouth gaping open with drool running down her chin.

He loved sports, but was only allowed to play one, because she didn't want to deal with him participating in something year-round. He always chose baseball, because that was his favorite sport, but she never came to a game, because she had drinking to do. Every time he stood on the field, he would look to the stands, hoping to see her there. However, he always saw those two girls and that man cheering him on. That was almost enough, but if she only knew how much it would have meant to him, if she could have made just one of those games, the picture would have been complete.

The oldest daughter always felt responsible when their father worked. She was always defending and protecting her younger siblings, filling in as the mother they never had. She would challenge and express her feelings toward their mother, because she truly understood the evil that had consumed the woman she once knew as a loving mother. It was a continuous battle between them. One night in her drunken stupor, the mother decided it was time for the oldest daughter to

move out. Just after turning 18 and only a month into her senior year, her mother started packing her bags while the father worked another night shift.

The boy and the middle sister stood there confused as to why she was doing this. "She's 18! Now it's time for her to move out," she said, drinking her beer and packing the boxes. The younger sister ran downstairs and dialed the phone, letting her sister know that she needed to get home as soon as possible, because their mom was packing her bags. It was another long night of yelling and screaming, so eventually, the oldest daughter took her clothes and left the house.

Again, the father came home to disaster. Every time he came home, it was like he had to sweep up a bunch of broken glass from a shattered family that was pieced together with the weakest glue. Happiness was as simple as getting a few minutes of quiet and a good night's sleep, without having to hear the arguments from their parents' bedroom. There were times she was sober enough to go to work, and they had their few moments together, with her laughing and joking with their father. He would be goofy and make them his famous pancakes, finding a way to make up for all of the bad moments when he wasn't there. He always kept his composure for his kids, and always made sure they knew he wasn't going to give up on them.

The years went by, but things never seemed to get better. There was more alcohol poured, tears shed, and rumors spread. The police would be in the driveway, attending to disturbances of a woman too drunk to function with kids inside the home. Battles would take place in the hallway, and the husband would sleep in the spare room to get away from someone he used to know.

The boy would try and walk his mother to her room at 3 am, because he had been listening to her banging on the door and yelling her husband's name the whole night. The oldest daughter moved three states away just to leave the noise behind. The middle sister filled her place, taking her younger brother to school, making him dinner, and even taking him to her high school parties, because she knew he would be better off with her there, than alone with their drunk and unstable mother.

The alcohol started to take its toll, and the woman started to get sick. Her stomach would hurt from the lack of nutrition and the heavy consumption. It came to a point where she was hospitalized and examined. It was obvious what was causing the bleeding in her stomach, but to her, she wasn't sick. She didn't have an issue, and she didn't understand what everyone was making such a fuss about. It came to the point where the doctor blatantly told her, "Kelly, if you keep drinking like this, you will eventually die." She looked at him with

emptiness in her eyes and would reply, “I don’t have a drinking problem.”

Her husband, standing next to her, couldn’t believe what he just heard. Everything he had been through, everything his children had been through, and even lying in the hospital bed barely weighing 90 pounds, she couldn’t admit to a doctor that she had a severe drinking problem. The woman he fell in love with was officially gone.

She was released from the hospital, and it wasn’t long after that she was back at it again: dialing the phone all night, drinking, and screaming nonsense. The father knew he had to get his kids away from this toxic environment, so he rented a double-wide trailer across town, and the three of them left, finally withdrawing from the condition they were in. Even so, they were followed. She still controlled their every move and manipulated their love. She told them the same lies as she had told before, that things would be different, and she was going to change and stop drinking. The kids weren’t convinced, but their father still held on and gave her another chance.

They moved back into the house he built, and for once, it seemed like things were different. They made an agreement, that they would take all of the alcohol out of the house and dump it in the backyard. It seemed like a great idea, until she saw her magic potion being poured

out before her. She argued that some of the drinks weren't bad, because they contained a lower percentage of alcohol. She just couldn't let it go. She was consumed. It was her drug.

The boy and his dad went grocery shopping a couple of days later. They headed down the aisle and stopped to put a 30 pack of beer in the shopping cart. The boy looked at his dad in dismay. He couldn't believe it. After all that had happened, all that they had been through, and he was fueling her fire? It was shocking. The dad told him that his mom was paying for it, so he was just grabbing it for her. "So that made it okay?" the boy thought. It wasn't okay, but it was apparent that the father couldn't let go, because he still loved her, and that meant getting her the one thing that ruined her behavior in the first place.

The day then came when the middle daughter graduated from high school. The mother came back from rehab, and she seemed healthy for the first time. She had put on weight, the bags under her eyes had faded, and her personality even seemed to have complexion, again. She hugged her kids like she was seeing them for the first time, and it actually felt like they might have a mother again. However, like history, the broken promises were repeated.

The middle daughter went to college, and now it was time for the boy to step up. His parents still fought, and he was finally starting to understand how bad it was. He sat in his room one specific morning, listening to the yelling in the kitchen downstairs. His father finally hit his breaking point. He gave her the ultimatum: the family or the alcohol. He made her choose, and she chose the alcohol. He walked upstairs, came into the boy's room and said, "Pack your bags. We are leaving."

Again, they left, but this time they went to a motel. Two days went by, and the father was once again in a bind. He couldn't afford to live out of a motel room and still pay a mortgage, so again, they went back. They went back into that house, but this time it was different. She needed to go. He filed a restraining order, and 48 hours later, she was out of the house.

You would think that that would be enough for her to realize that she had hit an ultimate low, but it didn't. She blamed everyone for how she was. It was everyone's fault that she was sexually abused as a child, that she had children and was depressed, that no one was there for her when she was sick, and that it was everyone's fault that they didn't understand why she was the way she was. What she didn't realize was that the people who loved her were there for her, they did love her, they did care for her, and that they tried everything they could to help her overcome her sickness. She chose to not change.

She chose to not be happy. She chose to give up on herself.

The divorce was finalized, and the boy and his father finally felt like there was a weight lifted. The daughters were finding themselves and living life. The boy would cook dinner for his father when he came home from work. He would stay in touch with his mom, because he still felt there was good in her. He had always been a mama's boy and still wanted to give her a chance. Good never came of it, and the promises were constantly broken. However, his father always came through. He reminded the boy of what true love was by his actions. He taught him lessons of life, took him fishing and hunting, they talked about girls, and most of all, they were there for each other.

The boy still craved that love from his mother. He made dates with her, but they always got canceled or turned into drunk events. He felt like no matter how much he tried, she just didn't want to be a part of his life. She loved the bottle more. It was her life. She felt that she could drown her demons, but really, the love of her family was enough to drown every demon and then some. She didn't understand that, because she thought all of those people were out to get her. It was pure insanity.

The boy was coming up on being fourteen years old and he was promised a day in the city with his mother for his birthday. You could probably guess by now, that a good day with his mother was unheard of, but he still had hope. She told him all of her plans: she would pick him up, and they would drive to the city, do some shopping, go to dinner, and then a movie. It sounded like a dream come true, and the almost fourteen-year-old felt like a kid in a candy store. He had never truly had a day like she had described to him.

The week of his birthday seemed to last forever. He was excited for that Friday to come, so he could celebrate his birthday with that one person who never seemed mentally available to him. When that Friday rolled around, he shot out of bed ready to go. He went to school happy as happy could be. When the 3:30 bell rang, he rode his bike home as fast as he could to get ready. He was ready to go and sat in the living room looking out the window every five minutes, waiting for her car to come into the driveway. He kept looking but didn't see a vehicle. "Maybe, she's just running late," he thought.

He sat for another hour staring out the window. He started to get discouraged, and his dad sat by wondering what he could do to make it better. He got up and went to the phone and called the boy's mother. She answered, and the boy could hear his dad's frustration in his voice. He heard him say, "You can tell him." His dad walked

into the living room where the boy was sitting and handed him the phone.

“Hello?” He said.

“Hey, I’m not going to be able to make it today. Something came up.” She said.

His eyes filled. “Okay, it’s fine.” He quickly handed the phone back to his father and ran to his room, so he wouldn’t see him cry. She didn’t even tell him happy birthday or sorry for her not following through with what she said. It wasn’t a surprise, but the boy really thought that was going to be the one time she would be there for him. He told himself from that day on, he wasn’t going to have a person in his life anymore who would hurt him or his family.

The years went by, and he didn’t speak to his mother again. He didn’t invite her to his high school graduation, didn’t let her in on his college plans, and definitely didn’t let her have his phone number. He closed that chapter of his life and wasn’t going to let the pain she had brought affect him from then on out. It wasn’t as easy as he thought, because maybe she wasn’t affecting him directly, but she was still causing pain. She would call his sister’s house several times a day, asking for money and help. His oldest sister tried introducing her mother to her first granddaughter, and she acted like the baby wasn’t even there. His father still worked on recovering

from the financial hit he took from the divorce and the dream house he built. As much as the family wanted to leave it all in the past, it wasn't that easy.

Ten years went by since he had stopped speaking to her, and the boy's life was going well. He went back to the city to get a tattoo and visit his friends. He left the tattoo parlor and headed through downtown, where he came up to the 27th Street intersection. It was a dirty area of town. There were two gas station, kitty-corner from each other that weren't well-kept. Homeless people hung out in front of them, haggling people who were pumping gas, asking for money and alcohol. He always would see at least one person on each corner with a street sign asking for something.

He rolled up to the stop light and observed the people at one of the gas stations. He looked toward the corner to read the person's sign, wanting to see why they were asking for money. The sign said, "Need money for a ticket to Havre." The woman was dirty, her clothes were stained, and her shoes were wearing out, showing that at one point they had color to them. Her three bags lying next to the light pole were probably the only things she had to her name. Her skin was a dark complexion, she had brown hair that was cut above her shoulders, and her face was one he had known. He felt like he had seen a ghost. The light went green, and the car behind him laid on their horn.

He circled back around the block to get a better look, and he came down the street driving slowly. He eased up to the street light and again it went red as he pulled up to the intersection. He sat and stared at the person, knowing that she couldn't see him through the tinted windows. No doubt, it was the woman that he used to call "Mom." When the light turned green, he drove away, once again leaving her and the memories in his past.

Don't Give Up

I don't tell you this story about my childhood to get attention or to get sympathy. I tell you the story, because everything about my mom was something I always felt could have been avoided. She gave up on herself and the people who cared about her. She had it all: the healthy kids, the loving husband, and the home of her dreams. It never was enough, because she always thought about the negative events that had happened in her life, instead of focusing on the great things she had. She tried to balance those negative thoughts by trying to drown them out with alcohol. She became her own worst enemy, and I think she finally just accepted that's who she was. She forgot that she had a choice regarding how she perceived her life. Instead of letting what happened in her past stay in her past, she let it dictate her present and future.

You will always have bad things happen in your life that you have no control over. You may not have control over what happened, but how you overcome the situation is completely up to you. You can either let the temporary situation be temporary, or you can make them permanent, affecting the way you view your life. You can either let it make you or break you.

Unfortunate events are just like a storm. In life, there is always going to be a storm. These storms consist of bad luck, rude people, financial problems, deaths in the family, personal health issues and many more unwanted issues. How we choose to deal with these challenges determines how strong we are as individuals. Once you figure out you aren't made of glass, it becomes easier to take on your life storms, but you just need to know you can do it. If you think you can, you will, and if you think you can't, well, you won't. Be a warrior, take on the storm, and believe you can. They can be dark and foreboding, but they always pass; the storm never stays forever. Don't let the storm stick around, let it pass and grow from it.

For a long time, I let the things that happened in my childhood dictate my attitude. I was negative, defensive, and really didn't see the good in any situation. It was easier to point fingers and blame others for my issues, than to suck it up and become a better version of myself. I finally realized that I was headed down the same path

as my mom. I was letting what had happened to me consume me for the worst.

One day, it clicked, and I realized that I had a lot of amazing elements in my life. I have good friends, loving family, a healthy body and mind, and I had the rest of my life ahead of me. It also scared the shit out of me that I was going in the same direction as my mother, so I used it as motivation. She made me stronger, and she also made me thankful, but most of all, she taught me how to not give up on myself and the ones I love.

When you are presented with a life-changing situation, decide how you are going to let it change your life. Will it make you head for the worst or will you become stronger because of it? I know you will make the right choice. Just don't give up and don't give in. The people who love you are counting on you to keep going. Don't let them down, but most of all, don't let yourself down.

THE DEVIL WHISPERS, “You can’t withstand the storm.”

THE WARRIOR REPLIED, “I am the storm.”

- Anonymous

Recap:

- Don't ever ever ever ever give up.
- Always be there for the ones you love and care about.

Chapter 7

Don't Throw Rocks in a Glass House

It's Okay to Not Be Okay

I watched a video on Facebook recently about a woman who had lost her husband, her father, and miscarried her child, all within 6 weeks. She talked about how for a long-time, people would ask her how she was doing, and she would lie by telling them she was “fine.” She felt that if she told people she was fine, it would be easier than telling people the truth about how she was actually doing.

She talked about how one day, she realized that it was okay to not be okay. She was going through shit, and she decided she was going to go through it. She made a choice to not let her life end, just because life decided to give her lemons by hitting her in the face from every direction. Instead, she mourned her losses and moved on to her new life. Of course, she missed the loved ones she lost, but she also found happiness in the life that was ahead of her.

There have been so many times in my short life, that I've wanted to give up and push away people who cared about me. I told them I was fine, and that I didn't need their help. I always lied, because it did feel easier than telling the truth, and I thought I was being a stronger person by not expressing my emotions. What really happened was I filled up like a balloon, until I had so much built-up emotion, that I would finally explode to the people who were there for me the whole time. If I would have realized talking about what was going on and finding solutions were healthier than bottling them up, I would have saved myself a lot of added heartache. Remember, that it is okay to ask for help.

Every time you go through hard things in your life, you will become stronger. If you can find the lesson within each challenge, it will make it easier to react in a calmer manner. The next challenge won't seem as bad as the last, and you will find you are actually happier with the things you do have, instead of the things you don't. When you go through these challenges and you aren't okay, remember, it's okay to not be okay. Yes, some people have it worse, but that doesn't mean what you are going through isn't real. It's real, and it matters. Once you accept a bad thing IS happening to you, the sooner you will be able to move on to the next chapter of your life.

“One thing about being at your all-time low, is you can only go up from there.” -Me

Make the Most of Every Situation

I got up early one morning to see that the snow they had predicted all week came in full. I grabbed my snowboard bag and headed to the mountain. The roads were horrendous, and the drive that usually took an hour and a half came in at a total of two hours and twenty-two minutes. “No big deal,” I thought. I still got to the resort parking lot early enough to take advantage of three feet of fresh snow. I pulled in the parking lot and noticed people were walking back to their cars with their gear. I looked at the mountain and could see the lifts weren’t running. “Well, isn’t that some shit?” I thought. I got out of my Subaru and asked the people parked next to me if they knew what was going on.

“The power is out. They are saying it might be a three-hour wait, before it gets turned back on.”

“Three hours?” I thought. That would make it afternoon before I would be on the slopes, and I needed to get back on the road by 2 o’clock to be back for an appointment. I was frustrated and disappointed, but I decided to put my gear on and grab my snowboard. I walked around the lodge to take a look at the slopes. When I came around the corner, I could see a line of

skiers hiking up the mountain. They were in knee deep snow, and it looked like a lot of work. To my left, two young girls were making a snowman. Farther down, I could see a group of boys chasing each other, having a snowball fight. Behind me, I could hear two guys talking about how much of a bummer it was that the power was out, and it was a perfect day to be skiing. I heard his buddy's rebuttal to the negativity by saying,

“Well, a bad day skiing beats any day at work.”

“Isn't that the truth,” I thought. I could be in my cubicle for eight hours, making phone calls and staring at poop-brown carpet walls. Sure, I wasn't riding the fresh powder, but I was on a mountain surrounded by people who were genuinely happy, considering the circumstances. I decided I might as well make the most of it, too. I went back to my car, grabbed my laptop, and headed to the lodge. I ordered a beer and a Fireball shot (my favorite combo, remember) and opened up my laptop, ready to start writing.

The people started to pour into the bar, and before I got done writing a paragraph, the place was engulfed in conversation. About an hour went by, and still no update on the power being turned on, but it didn't seem like people really cared anymore. They were drinking, joking, and playing music from their cell phones. I could faintly hear what sounded like someone playing the bagpipes amid all the chatter.

“Do you hear that?” I asked the guys sitting next to me. “Yeah, we were wondering what that was. I think someone is playing bagpipe music on their phone in here,” he replied.

It wasn’t coming from inside the bar, and I looked around trying to get a view outside. I leaned over, looking down the bar, so I could see out the window. Standing there in a kilt, in the cold, was a man playing the bagpipes. It was an interesting sight, and never had I seen someone having their bagpipes handy on a ski mountain. The man finished his song, and I could see he was headed toward the lodge. “He probably froze his nuts off with that kilt,” I joked to the guys next to me.

I turned back to my computer and continued typing. I hadn’t finished a sentence, when I heard the bagpipes again, but this time it was inside the lodge. I turned around and faced the artist. Every single person in the lodge turned their attention to the entertainer. People were clapping and going along with the song. I could feel the joy. The man finished his song, and the bar erupted. They clapped and cheered like they were at a concert.

The man finished playing his songs and thanked the crowd for their applause. I looked at the clock on my computer and saw that two and half hours had gone by. Still, no sign of the power going on, but by then, it had turned into more of a party than a ski day. A man stood

up in front of the bar and yelled, "Excuse me, can I please get everyone's attention." Again, the crowd of people turned. "If you want a beer, raise your hand, because I'm buying!" he exclaimed.

The crowd cheered, and probably 30 people raised their hands. Beers were being passed all around the bar. I took advantage of the offering and cracked the beer and said "Cheers!" to the guys sitting next to me. We took a big swig and slammed the beers down, and by some grace from the ski gods, the power came on. The lodge once again erupted, and people headed to the lifts to continue what turned out to be a pretty awesome day.

For being an unfortunate day, I felt pretty fortunate to experience it. The lesson I took away from that day was to always make the most out of every crappy situation. I definitely could have decided to stay pissed off, ignore the happiness around me, get back in my car, and head home, but I'm so glad I didn't, because I would have missed out. It's easy to say, "Boo-hoo. Poor me. I had a bad day."

Don't do that, because is it really that bad? The power being out sucked, but it was completely out of my control, and how I perceived the situation was totally in my control. Just like I had quoted before, "Whether you think you can or can't, you're right." Well, whether you think your day is going to be great or you think it is

ruined, you are right. The events do not make that choice for you, you make that choice.

“I am determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I may find myself. For I have learned that the greater part of our misery or unhappiness is determined not by our circumstance but by our disposition.”

- Martha Washington

Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover

A friend of mine shared a post on Facebook recently about a bad habit that I think we all have: judging others. I'm going to share the post with you, because I hope it will do you some good like it did me.

“As I was pulling into work, I was following this car. The sign in the back window said, 'Learning stick. Sorry for any delay.' Knowing this information, I was very patient with their slow shifting, and honestly, they were doing pretty well for still learning. Then I asked myself a tough question: 'Would I have been as patient if the sign hadn't been there? I can almost definitely say 'No.'”

We don't know what someone is going through. We don't wear signs that illustrate our personal struggles. You don't see signs taped to people's shirts that say,

“Going through a divorce,” or “Lost a child,” or “Feeling depressed,” or “Diagnosed with cancer.”

If we could read visually what those around us are going through, we would definitely be nicer. But we shouldn't have to see signs and have reasons to treat strangers with kindness. We should do it anyway, whether we know what is going on or not, whether they deserve it or not. Let's give everyone an extra dose of patience, kindness, and love....and have a Merry Christmas.”

It wasn't too many days later, and I was at work talking to one of my clients. We somehow got on the subject of life and how precious it is. He told me about what he had been through in the last 25 years. His wife left him, his daughter got sick, and he was unemployed, because his company decided to do lay-offs. He told me how he struggled to keep food on the table and take care of his sick daughter. He would go to interview after interview, explaining how he needed the job, and how he wouldn't let the employer down.

“They never really cared about what I had going on, because it wasn't their problem. They just judged me based on how I looked. Yes, I looked tired, and my dress shirt had wrinkles on it, but that didn't determine who I truly was. I am a hardworking man, a loving father, and

a caring person, but they didn't judge me based on that. They had no idea what I had been through. They didn't know that before those interviews, I was scared to leave my daughter for her health was down. They didn't know that I had washed my face and cleaned up at the McDonald's bathroom before that interview, because my water had been shut off. They saw my tired eyes but didn't see my pain. They didn't look any further into who I was because of my appearance."

What he told me that day truly broke my heart. I have judged people and made accusations without any facts to back it up. It's not my place or anyone's to determine someone's character, before you truly get to know who they are. It's not fair to make a judgment, before we know all of the information to give them a chance. You might have heard the saying, "First impression is everything." I disagree with that. That first time I meet someone, and they act in a manner that I dislike does not mean that's who they really are. I may have just caught them on an off day. Try and be understanding, because you never know what someone is going through.

"Judgment is critical, while observing is educational." -Unknown

Recap:

- It's okay to not be okay.
- Make the most out of every situation.
- Don't be so quick to judge, for you never know what someone is going through.

Chapter 8

How to Win Friends

I have associated with several different types of people. I have only associated with some, while I have become friends with others. Whenever I became friends with a different group of people, I would notice after a short amount of time, that I would start taking on their characteristics. Their habits, motions, and mindset would slowly start to become part of who I was. At times, it was good, and at times, it was bad. In middle school, my friend group played sports and did well in school. I also did the same and stayed out of trouble.

In high school, I went through different phases. At times I was hanging out with the wrong people, so I partied a lot and didn't care as much about my grades. Then, I had times when I still partied a lot, but did well in school. After college, I got back into hanging out with people who had no direction in life. They were still partying and doing drugs. I, of course, started to partake in their daily habits. When I started selling cars and started my first career, my group changed again. I started to focus on things I had never worried about before. I wanted to buy a house, contribute to the

company 401k, got Aflac insurance, and wanted to have what the other people around me had.

I have learned that no matter what people think, I am only going to associate myself with people who benefit me. If they don't benefit my future or my mindset, then I don't want to spend a lot of my time with them. I do have friends who are doing things I don't want to do and have goals that are completely different than mine. It doesn't mean they aren't my friends still; it just means that we want different things in life. I have noticed that when I do spend a majority of my time with people whose mindset and goals differ from my own, I start to lose focus on what I truly want.

Try and spend most of your social time with likeminded people. These people will automatically talk about things that interest you and your goals, because they have the same mindset. It will keep you motivated, talking to people who feel the same way about your overall goals. If you want to be an investor or entrepreneur, I recommend hanging around people who are also striving to be an investor or entrepreneur. If you want to party a lot and go to the club, I suggest not hanging around a bookworm who would rather be inside than going out. My point is, if you have an idea of what you want in life, then you should hang around people who build you up, not bring you down.

Talk about your ideas as much as you can with people who will listen and those who will bring you positive energy. Talk about people less. We all gossip and talk shit, and it is truly toxic for everyone. It will never completely go away, but try and decrease it as much as you can. When you bounce ideas off like-minded people, you will keep focused, and you will keep learning.

“You are who you associate with. Choose wisely.” -Me

Shut up and listen

Being in sales, I have developed a lot of relationships with strangers. The one thing I have always noticed with every single person I have ever met is this: they love talking about themselves. I enjoy going to the grocery store and sparking up a conversation with the people in the deli or the cashier. I always find it amazing how much a stranger will tell you about themselves in such a short amount of time. It makes people feel good when they are given the chance to talk about themselves. If you just find common ground that interests them, they will be more than happy to talk to you. Truly listen to what they have to say and be genuine. Don't just wait for your turn to talk.

It costs you nothing to give someone your time, and it could mean the world to them that you listened for five minutes. Ask about them. Ask about their day, and see how they are. A friend of mine introduced to me a way to ask people about their day. It's called the "rose, thorn, and bud" of their day. The rose is their favorite part of the day. The thorn is the worst part of their day. Lastly, the bud is what they are looking forward to tomorrow. Give it a try, because people love talking about themselves, and it shows you care.

Let them talk, and don't interrupt, either. This is a thing I am terrible at. I do it by trying to finish people's sentences when they are telling me something. Sometimes I don't even realize I am doing it. Then, I realize it later, and I kick myself for it. I always try to remind myself to talk less and listen more. I usually sit at home at night, thinking about all of the stupid things I have said. All I can do is try and be a better listener the next day. I notice when I do shut up, I get myself in less trouble. When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know, but when you listen, you are more likely to learn something. So, take it from someone who talks too much: Talk when it's appropriate and always listen.

I had mentioned in an earlier chapter that you can learn a lot from a dog, but one thing I didn't mention was that they are the best listeners. They will sit and listen to everything you have to say. They never talk about

themselves, and they never interrupt. They may not always understand, but hearing your voice is enough for them. They make you feel important, because they let you talk about anything you want to talk about. Like I said before, be like a dog, because overall, they are awesome.

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.”

–Bryant H. McGill

Smile

I am not a morning person, and I never have been. I would cringe early in the morning if I had to talk to people. People would say “Good morning,” and I would think “What is so good about it?” I hated it even more when I would run into a person who just could not stop smiling, no matter how grumpy I was. Their animation broke through my bad attitude, and it was contagious. It’s hard to be rude to someone who is sincerely smiling at you. You are more approachable when you smile. A smile is welcoming, because it says “Hello.” A frown or a mean look translates into “Eat shit and die.” Even if you smile when you talk on the phone, you sound happier. Give it a try. Show off your pearly whites more. No one likes a Mr. Grumpy Gills.

“Beauty is power; a smile is its sword.”

– John Ray

Remember Their Name

Everyone’s name is important to them. It is what our parents gave us, and it becomes what people know us by. It might be a name that has been in your family. It’s German, Irish, Dutch, Swedish, etcetera. Our nicknames derive from it. It is our label. When you remember someone’s name, it gives them affirmation that you value them. You made it a point to remember their name after you met them, and that is important to them; it makes them feel valued.

I know it’s easy to forget someone’s name after you meet them, because I have done it a million times. I found it is easier to remember someone’s name by repeating it back to them. For example, if someone introduces themselves and says, “Hi, I’m Patrick.” You in return would introduce yourself, but repeat their name first. For example, “Hi, Patrick. I’m Jimmy.”

Make it a point to train your brain to remember the names of people you meet. It’s an easy way to make someone feel important. It makes you feel that you are already in a mature relationship with the person, because you know who they are. They will be more open

to talking to you, because you recognized them by their name.

“A person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.” -Dale Carnegie

Let Them Save Face

All too often, I think we forget that we all make mistakes. We forget to look in the mirror and realize, that at times, we act in a way that we always complain about. We can make people feel bad about their mistakes in front of others, trampling on their feelings and making them feel small. At times, if someone else doesn’t know something that we know, we make them feel stupid by using a condescending tone.

There are many ways you can let people save face. If you are arguing with someone and you win the argument, let the person exit the conversation with grace. It doesn’t give you any more benefit to remind them of their defeat. If you use sayings like, “I told you so,” you are just reminding them that they were wrong. Believe me, when people realize they are wrong, they don’t need added input. It’s embarrassing enough to be wrong; you don’t need to throw salt on the wound.

There will be times that you will get the luxury of knowing a fact that someone else doesn't know. That doesn't give you the right to make them feel dumb because of it.

It's never fun when people make you feel stupid, because you don't know something that they know. You can't control what other people say or do. You can only control what you say or do. Don't trample someone's feelings, because they don't know something or made a mistake. At times, the things that bug us about others are things that we do unknowingly. Don't be so quick to point fingers to make someone feel small. No one knows everything, and no one is perfect.

Let them save face. Let them save that embarrassment. It doesn't bring you any benefit. Sometimes it's better to shut up and leave things unsaid. Respect their feelings and treat others how you want to be treated.

“Let the other person save face.”

-Dale Carnegie

Your Word Is Your Bond

There have been several times people have asked me to do something, and I would say I would do it, but didn't really mean it. I have been asked to hang out or to go to an event, and instead of telling the person I didn't want to go, I would say that I would go, so I wouldn't hurt their feelings. I would later come up with an excuse why I couldn't go and bail on the person. Sounds pretty shitty as I say it, but I know I am not the only person who has done this to someone.

I have also been asked to do a favor for someone, and there have been times when I didn't follow through. My intentions were there, but I would forget, and then it would never get done. It is disappointing to that person, that I didn't care enough to remember to do the favor for them. Disappointing someone is a bad feeling. It makes them feel like they aren't important. That's not fair to them, so don't be a flake.

I found two themes in both of these scenarios: Your word means nothing, and that person now trusts you less. If you are consistent in letting people down, you will find that people won't look to you for help and won't want to invite you to anything. People need reassurance

that you are there for them. You can say you are going to do this and that, but until you actually do it, it's all just talk. Your word is your bond, so when you tell someone you are going to do something for them, they expect it to happen, because they trust you. If you can't do it or don't want to do it, you owe it to your friendship to be honest. So, remember, actions always speak louder than words.

“Your value is nothing if you cannot honor your word. If you do not mean what you say, you are the meanest person on the Earth.”

– Harbhajan Singh Khalsa

Is It Too Late to Say Sorry?

There are going to be many times in your life when an apology is due. You have to be able to admit that you did something wrong and that you possibly hurt the other person's feelings. An apology is a hard thing to give, because sometimes, it feels like you are accepting defeat, but it's not defeat. If you actually did something to offend that person, it's just the right thing to do.

One thing that has always helped me understand how or why I upset someone is by putting myself in their shoes. If I flip the scenario around and put myself in their situation, then it is easier to see why they would be upset. For example, if you made plans with your friend 2 weeks ago, and then a half hour before you are supposed

to meet up, you bail on them to go do something else, your friend will more than likely be upset with you, because you decided to choose that instead of following through with your plans. To you, it might not be a big deal, because you did give them a heads up, and your friend didn't seem upset on the phone.

Then, a couple of weeks go by, and your friend finally tells you that they are upset, because of what happened. Your friend asks you, "How would you like it if I made plans with you two weeks in advance, and at the last minute, I call and cancel to go do something else? Would that make you feel very good?" By putting yourself in their shoes, it helps you realize you wouldn't have wanted to be treated that way, so it was unfair for you to do that to them.

It takes a big person to realize and admit that they did something wrong. When you do realize that you hurt someone's feelings, apologize. When you do apologize, be sincere. People can see through the bullshit, if you don't really feel bad for what you did to them. When you do give your apology, do not follow it with "but." For example, if you say, "I am sorry I bailed last minute on our plans, but I didn't think you would care." When you follow an apology with "but," you are doing two things: One, you are not being sincere about feeling badly.

Two, you are making an excuse for why what you did wasn't a big deal, and that they shouldn't be upset. If you can put yourself in their shoes, admit you did something wrong, and apologize with sincerity, you will find that it can mean a lot to a person. At times, they may not accept your apology, but at least you did the right thing. Follow four steps to help clear your head of guilt:

1. Admit you were wrong.
2. Apologize with sincerity.
3. Don't follow the apology with "but..."
4. Move on.

It can be hard to put the ego away and do these four steps. However, if you can, it will bring you peace. You can wipe the slate clean and move on with your life. Don't sacrifice your relationships, because you were too hardheaded to say you were sorry. It's never too late to say you are sorry, because if you are still thinking about it, then so are they.

"Never ruin an apology with an excuse."

-Benjamin Franklin

On the flip side of things, there will be times when you aren't the one in the wrong. You will argue with a person, who is, in fact, wrong. Arguing can be intriguing, especially when you know you are right. However, there is never a winner of an argument, only two fools. It is

silly for two people to engage in negative banter, but we all have done it on several occasions. So, when it does happen to you, try and take the loss willingly. Be the bigger person and accept the defeat, even if you are right. Save yourself the energy and the headache. It's not worth it, so don't waste your time on it.

**“Arguing isn't communication, it's noise.”
-Tony Gaskins**

Mind Your Own Bees Wax

I don't know why our curiosity is drawn to another person's business. For some reason, we crave to know what is going on in other people's lives. We hear drama all around us, and sometimes, there is no way of escaping it. I think sometimes we go looking for it, because hearing about other people's problems helps us forget about our own.

We talk bad about someone without knowing all of the facts. We let things that have nothing do with us become a part of our lives. We all do it. I'm definitely guilty. Sometimes I want to know about something, just because I want to know. It's silly, but I do it. I don't know if it's boredom, or because it mends my insecurities. Either way, it's not necessary.

If someone wants you to know something, they will tell you. If they do tell you, don't go blab to everyone else about what they said. That's not your place, and it's none of your business. They told you, because they trusted you and saw you as a person they could come to. Don't take advantage of that. You will always hear about things others are doing that you don't agree with. If it doesn't affect you, then it doesn't matter. The business your nose should be in is your own. Don't give advice unless asked. If they want your help and for you to be in their business, they will let you know. Respect their personal life, because after all, you would want the same in return.

“A friend is someone who gives you total freedom to be yourself.” -Jim Morrison

Overall, every person you meet is for a reason. They will teach you who you want to associate with, and who you want to keep a distance from. It will form new relationships that are beneficial to your future. You aren't always going to vibe with everyone and not everyone is going to like you. It's just how it is. It's life. You will learn to leave toxic people in your past where they belong, because you have been there, done that. Learn about yourself and decide what you want out of life. Find those people who are like-minded and like you for you. Those are the ones who will support you, love

you, care for you, keep your secrets, respect you, and most of all, help you grow. Surround yourself with people like that. Like I mentioned before, you are whom you associate with, so choose wisely.

You know what time it is.

Recap:

- Surround yourself with like-minded people.
- Talk less and listen more.
- Smile and remember their name.
- You get no benefit out of making someone feel small. Let them save face.
- Stay true to your word.
- If you do find the courage to say sorry, be sincere.
- Mind your own business.

Chapter 9

Boss vs Leader

When I washed cars, I had two different managers. The first manager had some good attributes as a person, but he wasn't a good manager. He complained a lot. He didn't listen to his employees about their complaints, and told people what to do, without really caring about his employees at all. He was there to make money and had a "my way or the highway" mindset.

Being in the service department was hard, because there seemed to be a lot of turnovers, especially in washing cars. It wasn't uncommon for someone to only work there 2 weeks to a month before quitting. When this did happen, the first manager would just order another person to fill the spot, or he would make it clear that everyone needed to work extra to make up for the lack of help. This caused frustration among the employees, because they don't get paid to do extra work. You only get paid the same every hour, no matter how

much you do. Disruption in the employees causes disruption in the business, and ultimately, it's counterproductive.

It was no surprise when the service manager got fired. It also wasn't a surprise that nobody gave a shit and were happy to see him go. We then got a new manager and to our surprise, his managing style was quite different. He would listen to his employee's complaints and opinions. He knew what they had going on in their lives and was understanding. The biggest perk was that he was always willing to drop what he was doing to fill in where he was needed.

When a lot attendant called in sick and the crew got behind, he was the first one there to help wash and vacuum the cars. When the service department was closed on a Saturday, but there was a big snow storm, he would come in on his day off and plow the lot. He was a salaried employee, so he didn't get any extra pay for coming in on his day off and doing the work. He did it because he knew it needed to get done. He never took any extra credit for the things he did, because he didn't do it in hopes of getting something in return. He was humble and never made it seem like he was above anyone else in the company. He would converse with a lot attendant the same way he would with his own boss. He saw everyone as an equal.

If you are a leader, you see the members of your team as other people, someone just like you with feelings, a family, and a personal life. A boss will only see a member of the team as nothing but a number.

When a team is a man down, a true leader will always fill in when needed. You won't hear them say, "Well, that's not my job." Instead, you will hear, "How can I help?" They do this because they don't see themselves as a person of power, but more as a person who can make things better for everyone. Leaders always lead by example, not by opinion. If you ever watch any great athlete, whether it's Tom Brady or LeBron James, all team leaders have something in common. They make their teammates better.

Leaders are also the hardest workers in the room, and their work ethic is contagious. It makes other members of the team work harder. When you lead with good intentions, others will follow willingly. When a boss uses condescending tones, control, and makes it clear they don't care about the members of their team or company, the people will at some point leave.

When I was promoted to sales, I also felt like I again upgraded leaders. This was a man who saw the full picture. He believed that having a good attitude is the pure foundation of success. Without a good attitude, a person forgets the good in their life and ends up turning their attention, more to the bad. Whether it's at work or

in your personal life, the level of your attitude is ultimately up to you. He made it very clear that a person is always their own worst enemy. He always would say, “Consistent efforts produce consistent results.” I thought it was cheesy. But, what he was saying was, if you always have a consistent attitude, whether it’s a good one or a bad one, you will always consistently get the results of whichever perspective you choose.

So, to my understanding, a good attitude walked hand in hand with success, while a piss poor attitude rides the path to failure. It was hard for me to fully commit to this way of thinking, because I didn’t fully believe that I could have a good attitude, no matter what the issues were in my life. I remember when I first started with the company, I was given a book. The book was called *Fish!* By Stephan Lundin, and yes, there were parts with fish in it, but that’s not what the book was actually about.

The book takes place in a city you might have heard of before, Seattle. The story is about a woman who manages in a toxic work environment. There wasn’t much life, fun wasn’t really a thing, the employees were miserable, and they whined a lot. They were the least productive branch of the company. The manager finds herself in a pickle. It was bad enough that she had no control of her department, and her employees didn’t

really respect her, but adding to it, she had corporate breathing down her neck about their numbers. Feeling hopeless with no plan of how to change the situation, she sneaks out of her office and goes for a walk.

On her walk, she ends up in another place you might have heard of before, Pike Place Market. She strolls through the market and notices a lot of whooping and hollering. Curious by the commotion, she heads off to the fish market. While there, she sees the employees with these large fish, throwing them around and doing tricks. She thinks, "Wow! Look how much fun the employees are having while they are working. Not only are they working, but they are working with slimy, stinky fish all day!"

To make a long story short, the woman is approached by a good-looking fish market employee. She starts to ask him about how they have so much fun, considering they work with slimy, stinking fish all day. They make plans to meet up, so he can show her the philosophy that they use in his workplace. Believe it or not, he called it the "FISH Philosophy." She hoped that if she applied the philosophy to her employees, it would help her rid the toxic energy from her work department and increase their productiveness.

The FISH Philosophy Principles

Choose Your Attitude

This is the most important principle and pretty much what the whole book is about. This starts the minute you wake up in the morning, even before you take your morning pee. It's easy to wake up and instantly start thinking about all of the things you don't want to do that day. If you can see the light in every situation, it will make you happier with yourself and surroundings. In order to do so, you have to choose. You have to make the constant decision day in and day out, that you will have a good attitude.

When you choose the right attitude, you start to appreciate more of the little things. You also forget to sweat the little things. You will bring more positive energy to your personal life and workplace, because a good attitude is contagious. Choosing your attitude will also help you with challenges. With an attitude of patience and understanding, you will see every challenge as a lesson, instead of a hardship. This is important in life, because your mind will always be the first to disrupt your potential. Attitude is a choice, so again, choose wisely.

“Our life is what our thoughts make it”

-Marcus Aurelius

Be Present

It's easy to get distracted. We all have a butt-load of stuff going on in our personal and work lives, making it difficult to give complete focus to the task at hand, when it is needed the most. Showing up is half the battle.

When you are in a meeting at work, don't look at your phone or get lost daydreaming. Focus on each task during the day at your job, so you give your best work.

When you are home and taking care of your kids, listen to them and give them your time. Truly focus in on what they have to say. The point is this, make sure whatever is the priority in your life at the moment, be focused, listen, and be fully aware of what is going on. It's hard for me to give my best work when I am thinking about everything else but work. It is hard for me to respond to someone when I wasn't really listening, because I was texting someone else while they were talking. Be present in your work life and your personal life. Don't just go through the motions.

“Past and future are in the mind only - I am now.” -Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Make Someone's Day

This is a very self-explanatory principle, but it's hard to put into action. This is because people tend to get caught up in complaining about their own life so much, that they forget to think about someone else. Making someone's day can be as simple as giving a compliment or doing a favor. It will make you feel good to change a person's day around. Not only does it make the other person feel good, but in return, it will make you feel good about yourself. Take a "Mr. Grumpy Gills" as a challenge and figure out a way you can help them turn that frown upside down.

Acts of kindness can go a long way. When you make someone's day, it shows you are thoughtful enough to think about them. It doesn't always have to cost you something, either. Something as simple as a compliment can completely turn a person's day around. You can send them a card or give them a phone call, just because you want them to know you are thinking about them. Doing them a favor takes a chore off their hands, which can lower the stress they might have. Give it a try, and they will appreciate it.

If you know them well enough, you should be able to tell when they are in a bad mood or having a bad day. There are times we ask if there is something wrong, and

then we get the reflex response of “Nothing” or “I’m fine,” and we stop there. Take a little more action and sacrifice some of your own time to find a way to brighten their day. You will never go wrong by trying to do right. Do it because you want to, not because you feel obligated. Start by just throwing out a compliment to someone once a day. I think you will be amazed, not only by how they react, but also by how it will make you feel.

“Be the reason someone smiles.”

- Roy T. Bennett

Have Fun

It is very important throughout life to have fun. Besides being able to afford to take care of themselves and family, people go to work so they can afford to have as much fun as possible. One thing people forget to do is have fun at their job. Any job can be boring if you make it boring. The people at Pike Place Market deal with fish all day, but they found a way to make their job fun. Life is too short to not have fun. Having fun in a work environment lifts attitudes and increases productivity. If you have to be at work, you might as well have as much fun as you can while you are there.

I recommend the *Fish* book to anyone, because it is something that should be applied more in your personal

and work lives. It's an easy read; probably wouldn't take longer than an afternoon. I think people get so caught up in how much they don't like their job, they forget to have fun, make someone's day, be present, and ultimately, they forget how to choose the right attitude.

“My philosophy is: If you can't have fun, there's no sense in doing it.” – Paul Walker

As I write this, I hate the job I have. But, I don't forget those four FISH principles, because when I apply them to the job I hate, my work is more productive, and the day doesn't feel like such a drag. One thing I have noticed is that if I don't choose the right attitude, then I don't apply any of the other principles to my day. It makes sense. I mean, if my attitude is in the dumps, then I won't want to have fun, I won't be present and focus on my work, and I definitely won't want to make someone else's day, because I'm too busy bitching about mine.

Work on waking up and thinking that it is going to be a good day. Have as much fun as you can, but don't forget to work hard and be focused on the task at hand. Lastly, any time you have the opportunity to make someone's day, do it. These are little choices we can make every day, that can make a huge difference in our lives. The mentor I had made this very clear, and he

didn't just say it, he believed in it, and he did it himself. A good leader will always lead by his/her example, not by their words.

As I mentioned before, I left selling cars and moved on to the next chapter of my life. When I found a job in the city I moved to, I was met with a whole different type of boss. This person was a complete 180 from what I was used to. One of his mottoes was, "If you make them mad, then you are closer to the money," which is the complete opposite of what I had been taught. He didn't care about his employees. It was only about the money. It was a sink or swim atmosphere.

In the first 4 months I was there, 7 people left the company, including two managers and the vice president. The people either quit because of the environment or they were fired, because they weren't working how he wanted them to be working. Yes, there are times people need to get fired, because they lack effort or because they break company policy, but this was a different matter. Whether these people left because they got fired or quit, the real reason was the same: There was no leadership.

They didn't have the direction, and they weren't seen as people. It was like a revolving door. The people who worked there were only seen as the next body who would do the job, and when the job wasn't done the way he wanted it done, it was time to throw them out and bring

in new bodies. It was a toxic system. Every day, I felt like I was the next person to be tossed through the revolving door, because I didn't do the job his way. Every person is different. We are all unique in our own ways. We all have different strengths and weaknesses, and because of that, we all learn differently. Some things that might click for me, could be complete gibberish to the next person. That's okay. No one will ever be able to understand or learn exactly how someone else will, but this boss didn't get that.

I remember when I first started working there, a consultant who had only been working in the business for four months had already made the company \$42,000. I understand you don't know much about this company or what they did, but understand, that was a healthy amount of money for the owner in a short span of time.

The salesman was doing well, but he had a history of concussions from the sports he used to play. The past concussions would give him migraines, and sitting in a cubicle, staring at a computer screen all day, was making them worse. He started to leave early and had multiple doctor appointments during the week, so he had to leave work. There were some days when he couldn't come into work, because of the severity of the migraines. Because of the time he had to take off to deal with his health, his

sales started to decline. It wasn't that he wasn't present at work, because he was. He came in and did his best, but he also had the challenge of managing his health.

This went on for only a month when he got a termination warning, because he wasn't producing enough sales. He tried to explain to the president of the company that the reason he had been missing work was because he had doctor appointments. On top of that, staring at the computer screen for eight hours a day increased his migraines. He tried to explain that he was trying new medications in hopes that his migraines would decrease. No matter how much he explained what was going on in his life, all the president of the company heard were excuses. He didn't try to find a way that he could help his salesman, because he just assumed, he didn't want to do the work.

The next day, the salesman resigned. I remember him talking about how it wasn't worth sitting around, wondering each day if he was going to get fired because his sales were down. He felt that if they were going to assume he was being lazy instead of realizing he was going through health issues, then he would rather spend his time making money for someone who actually cared about him. A guy couldn't blame him. He said his goodbyes to his former coworkers and left.

I remember the next week. The president of the company came in to visit, and he had asked why the

salesman had resigned. We told him it was because of his severe migraines, and that he needed to take care of his health. We told him this, because we actually knew that was why he left. We knew his integrity. The president scoffed at the explanation. He said, "That's not why. He just didn't want to do the work." About a month later, he hired two new bodies to fill the offices. He probably did this, because he knew only one of the two might make it longer than a year.

I look back at this, and I am still amazed by what had happened. That salesman was talented, hardworking, and productive. Instead of the company's president bringing him into his office and asking him about how he could help, he threatened his job if he didn't start producing more sales. A boss will use fear of loss of employment as a motivation strategy.

A leader will always have their door open, asking what they can do to make you successful. A boss will also forget that just like themselves, their employees have other important things going on in their lives besides work. A boss is just about the money. To a boss, they only see one way of doing the work. If it isn't done their way, then they will throw you out and get a new body in. It's counterproductive, but they don't care, because you are just a number to them.

There's a reason why in 4 months, I saw 7 people leave that company. There was also a reason why in 4 years selling cars, I saw the same amount of people leave. By now you can probably guess why. There was strong leadership at one, while none at the other. If you rated it on a leadership scale from zero to strong leadership, it was a negative 10.

A leader always knows that if they put the people first (employees and customers), then the money will always take care of itself. In business, you are always selling one of two things: a product or a service. It doesn't matter which one you are selling, because you will find that if your people are taken care of, business will be good. You know why? Because the customers and the employees are happy. If you don't take care of those people, you will always be taking one step forward and three steps back. You will be battling bad company reviews, and you will always be losing good workers.

In order to be a good leader, you need to know how to lead. Here is how I think the characteristics of a leader align:

"L" is for *learn*. A leader needs to be constantly learning about themselves and the people who follow them. A leader needs to not only learn about what works for them, but also what works for their followers. A leader decides their own limitations by how much they are willing to learn. If they are egotistical and only see

things in their own way, then they restrict their potential.

They always have to adapt. A leader will always adapt to new things. If there is a new technology that is introduced, they adapt to it, even though it is unfamiliar. They also adapt to different personalities. They realize that not everyone learns or works the same way. They have to adapt to each person differently.

However, a person learns or works, a leader must be able to adapt and figure out a way in which they can lead that individual in a way that they understand. You may have seen the comic strip of a bird, monkey, penguin, elephant, goldfish, otter, and dog standing in a line. They are facing a man sitting behind a desk, and he says to the animals, "For a fair selection, everybody has to take the same exam: Please climb that tree." That comic strip portrays how a boss thinks versus how a leader thinks. A leader will adapt to each person's intelligence in order to help them be successful.

"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." - Albert Einstein

The "E" means *evaluate*. A leader evaluates every situation, good or bad. Only when a good leader

evaluates the situation do they make a calculated decision on how to react. They put aside their emotion and rationalize based on what is the best for everyone in the group.

“For teachers, as for students, the most effective evaluation comes from someone who sits beside us and helps us grow.”

– Carol Ann Tomlinson

"A" represents *accountability*. They take accountability for their actions, what they say, their team, and they take accountability for their attitude. If they mess up, they own it. If their team fails, they take responsibility. They never point fingers or place blame. They don't make excuses, but they do find solutions to the problem. They show up day in and day out, trying to make things better. Lastly, they move on. Mistakes as a leader will happen. Learn from them and get over it.

"Accountability is the measure of a leader's height." – Jeffrey Benjamin

The "D" means a leader never stops *developing*. They work on themselves and always strive each day to be a better person than they were yesterday. They learn from their mistakes and keep growing as a leader and as a

person. When they work on their weaknesses, they grow, mature, and evolve for the best.

“If we develop in-depth knowledge, it will enable us to give our best to others and help to make a better world.” – Ben Carson

"E" can remind you that leaders *earn* everything they get. Nothing is ever handed to them. They earn the right to be a leader. With their integrity, they translate what is expected of them. If their work ethic and intent are good, then they earned that. If their work ethic and intent are obsolete, then they don't earn the right to be a person of leadership. You get what you give, and a leader always gives his/her all.

“You don't get what you deserve, you get what you earn.” – Sonya Teclai

"R" is for *respect*. We have all been taught the Golden Rule: Treat others how you want to be treated. A leader always respects others, because they realize that they aren't above a single person. They see things from the other person's point of view. To get respect, you have to give it. There is a part in the movie *Remember the Titans* where the captain of the football team is telling

his teammate that he has a bad attitude. The teammate responds to the captain's remark, "Attitude reflects leadership, captain." Not everyone is going to like you or the decisions you make, but if you are kind, hardworking, and caring, they will respect you. If they don't respect you, that's okay. Just make sure you respect them anyway. As long as you know your intentions are in the best interest of yourself and others, then it doesn't matter what people think of you as a leader.

"Show respect even to people who don't deserve it; not as their character; but as a reflection of yours." – Dave Willis

Overall, it's been humbling to have had experienced two completely different styles of management. When I went from a mentor who truly cared about me to a boss who didn't give a shit about me, I realized who I wasn't going to be. I refuse to be that guy people despise. I want to be seen as a person who actually cares about people. I don't think some people realize that no matter what, there are people who watch you and see how you act. How you treat others, your work ethic, your attitude, and your actions are seen by people.

You don't have to be in a position of power to be a leader. You can be a leader just by doing the right thing.

You lead by example. You remember the Golden Rule and treat people how you want to be treated. You give back. You help. You take accountability and never stop growing. You are happy for others when they succeed. You take advice as much as you give it. You strive to be a person that people can look up to. That's a leader. It's someone who will give up everything for the greater good; whatever that may be.

If you don't want to be a person who is a leader, that is okay. You don't have to be. It's not a bad thing. It's your choice, but I will say that if you don't want to lead, at least surround yourself with some people who are good leaders. They will help you grow and keep you on track, so you can achieve your goals. Every great leader learned their habits from someone else; they just tweaked them to fit their own style. Follow those people who make you better and adapt their habits. If you want to be a leader, never stop working on yourself. Keep making mistakes. Keep learning. Stay positive and do good. The world will never have enough leaders to inspire and help, so motivate as many as you can, while you can.

**“If your actions inspire others to dream more,
learn more, do more and become more, you are
a leader.”** **--John Quincy Adams**

Recap:

- Help out, even when it's not your responsibility.
- Follow the Golden Rule.
- Go FISH: choose your attitude, be present, make someone's day, and have fun.
- Work on attaining the characteristics of a
L.E.A.D.E.R.
- Care about the people who follow.

Chapter 10

Let's Get Fit

When I graduated from high school, I weighed about 120 pounds soaking wet. I was scrawny and looked like Justin Bieber. Most people I met when I started my freshman year of college thought I was about 12 years old. I look back at pictures, and I really did. At the school, I had a roommate who was on the wrestling team. He was my height, but about forty pounds heavier. As a wrestler, he enjoyed wrestling even when he wasn't at wrestling practice or wrestling an actual wrestler, so I would get my ass kicked a lot.

For about two months, he would try and get me to go to the gym, so I could beef up. I wasn't about that. Weed, alcohol, and Taco Bell sounded better. Plus, I had an insecurity about going into a gym, because I knew I didn't look big, nor did I know what to really do in the gym. Somehow, he finally talked me into going with him. More than likely, I was tired of girls thinking I was a small-boy genius in college. I worked out with him that day and was so sore the next day that I couldn't straighten my arms out. I looked like a T-Rex, because

my arms were literally bent at a 90degree angle. It was pathetic, really, but it came as no surprise, because I hadn't really worked out or had a diet regimen since my freshmen year in high school. I lived off Mountain Dew, chips, weed, alcohol, pizza, and cereal. When I went to college, I stayed loyal to that same regimen.

I ended up going to the gym with my roommate the rest of that week....and the week after that. Before I knew it, I started to notice I was getting compliments. It made me feel good, and my confidence grew. Staying fit started to become a priority for me. It was now a part of my routine. Six years later, it still is. I have had times, like when I broke my ankle, when I stopped working out for a while but as soon as I was able, I got back at it. Fitness has become such a big part of my life, that I feel awful if I don't go to the gym. In my mind, I think I am getting fat, I feel sluggish, and don't have much motivation. When I exercise, I feel rejuvenated, confident, and I have the energy to get things done.

I am no scientist, but I do know that exercise plays a huge part in helping your brain be healthy. When you exercise, your body releases chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins interact with the receptors in your brain that reduce your perception of pain. It helps reduce stress and gives your body a positive feeling. The release of endorphins in the brain

act as a natural painkiller. So next time you think popping some pills is a great idea, go workout instead.

I know going to the gym or working out from home is a pain in the ass. We are all busy and have other things to do. If you can put aside 25-30 minutes each day for some sort of physical activity, that is way better than nothing. Half of the battle with working out is convincing your mind to do it. The human body is more relentless and durable than we let ourselves think.

My least favorite type of exercise is cardio, always has been and probably always will be. I will run for about five minutes and tell myself I am too tired to continue. I have to constantly tell myself to keep going, because once I am done, I feel so much better. Your mind will always give up over 100 times, before your body will. Push yourself.

Make a workout plan to do at least 30 minutes of some sort of physical activity four times a week. It's easy to make the excuse that you don't have time to work out, but I'm sure there are several times in a day that you spend 30 minutes doing something that is not productive at all. If it means sacrificing TV time or beers with the buddies, then, oh well. Investing time in your health is more important.

The second part of fitness is your diet. Going on a diet sucks. I have gone on several and have stayed true to few. A relationship with a diet is something that I have

cheated on several times. When I have stayed true to a diet and started to see results, it was harder for me to cheat on it. You are what you eat and drink, and if you are eating like crap, well, you are going to feel and look like crap. If you are drinking beer and sugary drinks instead of a lot of water, your body will reflect that. Drink more water, not beer and Fireball. Water, more water.

Think of your body like it's a car. Your mind is the engine, and your body, well, is like the body of a car. If you don't take care of the engine and don't change its fluids properly, you might have a decent body, but it won't be moving, because the engine is running like shit. If you don't take care of the body, the engine might still be working, but again, it won't be going anywhere because the body is shot. The body of a car or the engine doesn't work without the other. It's no different with the human body. If you don't take care of both your brain and your body, you won't be functioning properly.

Take care of yourself. Don't take advantage of the brain and body you are given. If you aren't happy with the way you look, then convince your mind to commit to making a change. Work out, get some sunlight, meditate, eat things that are good for you, drink lots of water, breath in some fresh air, have sex, and get enough rest. Maybe not in that order, but you get what I'm saying. Stay consistent and continue to challenge your body. You

will be amazed how you can transform your mind and body by doing the right things. If you feel like an ugly caterpillar now and aren't happy with yourself, make a plan of how you are going to change. If you stay true to yourself and commit to creating a better version of yourself, then one day, you will go to bed as an ugly caterpillar and wake up as a beautiful butterfly.

Recap:

- Drink more water, not Fireball and beer.
- Do some sort of exercise at least four times a week. It releases endorphins and helps with stress.
- You are what you eat.
- Take care of yourself.

Chapter 11

The Money, the Money, the Money Is Mine

I think at times, there is a common misconception on what wealth really is. People sometimes think because someone is a doctor, they are wealthy. People may also think that because teachers often receive lower salaries, that they are not wealthy. This is not always the case in either situation. Wealth is not based on how much money you make in a year at your job. Wealth is based on how long you can survive without having that job. How long could you pay your bills and pay for food without any sort of income? For some people, this could be two weeks and for others, it could be two years.

Your wealth will continue increasing as your debt decreases. The more streams of income you have, the less risk you will have of not being able to pay your bills. Invest for the long run, letting your money work for you. Don't buy things you don't need and don't overpay. There is a big difference between price and value. Price is what you pay, and value is what you get. Buy things of value. If you don't buy things of value that you actually

need, then the day will come when you are selling things you don't need in order to pay for the things you do need. Just because something is expensive, doesn't mean it's worth the price tag. Do your research and buy things where the quality and price match up.

I have gone through many phases during my financial career. It has been like an elevator business; there are a lot of ups and downs. I have had \$40k in my savings account, and I have had times where I have had no money in my account. Even worse, I have had times when I have had a negative amount of in my account. Money can give you the impression that it is the key to happiness, but it's not. I always would think, "Oh, when I get this big paycheck, I will be happy, and I won't be so stressed." However, that never happened, because there was always something else to worry about.

Your attitude on how you perceive your life is completely a choice. If you appreciate the things in your life, care for others, and work hard, I would say that is a good prescription for a happy life. It isn't about the money in your account, but your purpose on this Earth. Don't chase the money but chase the dream. Chase your dream until you can be financially free to live the life that you want. Keep striving for your version of success while taking care of others, and I promise, the money will always be there.

Recap:

- Don't chase the money. Chase the dream.

Chapter 12

Leaving Your Legacy

Well, this is it: the whole enchilada. I want to thank you for getting this far. Like I have said several times before in other chapters, I am no expert in any of the matters I have addressed. And after all, what the fuck do I know? All I can tell you is the mistakes I have made and the lessons I have learned.

Not one person on this Earth is perfect, but that doesn't mean you can't work on becoming the best person you can be. It all really comes down to this: How do you want to leave your mark? Will you choose your attitude and make the most of every day? Will you leave behind nothing or will you leave behind something you worked hard for and were proud of? Of course, this is all up to you, but I want you to realize that you have the potential to do anything you want.

The biggest thing in this world that keeps us from reaching our full potential is fear. There will always be something to fear. We fear that we might fail or what people might think or say. Fear is an illusion; it's not

real. When we fear something, it is only in our mind. Insecurities derive from fear, because we don't think we are good enough to achieve what we want.

Right now, I fear that my business won't work out, and I'll lose my house and my car, and go bankrupt. I fear that this book will be for nothing. I fear that if I fail, people will talk about how I failed and how I wasn't good enough. Yes, I am scared, but that doesn't mean I'm not going to try. I have to face my fears and self-doubt and believe that it isn't for nothing. Whether I fail or not, I will learn and move on.

Life doesn't end just because you fail. Life begins on the other side of fear. Thomas Edison failed over 10,000 times before he made the patent for the electric lamp. Did he really fail, though? No, he actually succeeded in figuring out 10,000 ways how not to make a light bulb. If you fail, take it as a success, because now you will know how not to do something. Keep going and face your fears, because your success awaits on the other side.

Potential just means that you haven't done it yet. If you do want to reach your dreams and goals, then you have to give it absolutely everything you've got. It merely comes down to how bad you want it. If you truly want it, then you have to make sacrifices at first. This might mean partying with friends happens less, no more eating out, staying home instead of going on a trip, and it will definitely mean getting less sleep. Work your day job, so

you can pay your bills. Then at night, work on making your dreams a reality. Make the sacrifices now, so you can relax later. Now you have the choice to either do it or don't do it. Don't waste your potential. Go for what you want to do. You owe it to yourself.

There are so many successful and famous people who started with humble beginnings. At age 25, Mark Cuban was a bartender. Harrison Ford was a carpenter until his 30s. J.K. Rowling was a 31-year-old single mom on welfare, until she came up with the idea of Harry Potter. Manoj Bhargava was a 30-year-old taxi driver when he came up with 5-hour Energy. Oprah had been fired as a TV reporter, and now she is worth over \$2 billion.

All of these people had something in common: They saw a bigger picture. They knew in their minds that there was more to life. They convinced themselves that their goals were attainable. They got there, because they worked their asses off. They didn't just wish things would change; they took action. They were their own genie in a bottle and granted their own wishes. A lot of people thought Elon Musk was crazy when he wanted to come out with an electric power car. They thought he was crazy, until he did it. He's successful, because he puts in more time trying to achieve his goal than the normal person. He understood the value of hard work.

“Work like hell. I mean you just have to put in 80-100-hour weeks every week. This improves the odds of success. If other people are putting in 40-hour workweeks and you’re putting in 100-hour workweeks, then even if you’re doing the same thing, you know that you will achieve in the four months what it takes them to achieve in a year.” – Elon Musk

So? How bad do you want it? If you can spend less attention to the time wasters such as Netflix, video games, negative people, etc., you will have plenty of extra time to work on yourself, instead. Do the things that will help your mindset. Read every night before you go to bed, put together a business plan, write down your goals, or listen to motivational speakers. Those ideas you have at 2 a.m. when you can’t sleep, are the ones to go after. Stop putting barriers in your mind. Knock down the barriers and exceed your own expectations. Become obsessed with the dream and make it your number one priority.

“Success and rest do not sleep together.”

-Russian Proverb

Quit complaining about the bad things in your life. Don't let them control you. Change your mindset, so you can take control. Think about where you will be when you are 60, 70, or 80 years old. Did you do the things you wanted? Did you chase your dreams? Did you take risks? Did you take care of the people you loved? Did you give back? Go for what you want now, so you don't have any regrets when you are nearing the end of your life. You were put on this planet for a reason. It wasn't just so you can spend a majority of your time working to pay bills and to make the guy at the top more money. There is a one in ten trillion chance that you were born, so take advantage of the precious life you were given.

You and only you know who you truly are as a person. It is your integrity. It's who you are when no one is looking. It doesn't matter what anyone else says or thinks. I understand it is easy to let others influence your thoughts, but try and discard all of the crap. Any toxic crap, just throw it out the window, because it doesn't do you any good. If you are going after something you believe in, then that's all that matters. You aren't crazy or selfish for wanting more for yourself. Keep your friends for friendship, but when it is time to focus on your dreams, the only thing that should matter is that it means something to you.

“Don’t chase people. Be yourself, do your own thing and work hard. The right people-- the ones who really belong in your life-- will come to you. And stay.” -Will Smith

We all have the same amount of time in a day, but we all get a different amount of time on this Earth. How we choose to spend each day is completely up to us. Time does fly by, and we can never get one minute back. You can always find a way to make more money, but you will never find a way to buy more time. Take advantage of every minute, trying to become the person you want to be, while spending every minute you can with the people you love and care about.

It’s easy to get caught up in the toxic crap, and I know I have wasted a lot of time worrying and complaining about silly things, but it is all about realizing there is more. There is more than complaining about that boring job, that person who was mean to you, or the bills that are overdue. Instead, if you focus on those things that are irreplaceable, you will find more value in life. Focus your energy more on the positive people in your life, that great idea, that beautiful sunset, and the tiny amount of time you have on this planet.

It all comes down to making a choice: do I want to be happy or not? If the answer is yes, then congratulations! You are well on your way. If the answer is no, well, then

you are going to be a miserable sucker for the rest of your life. It may seem harsh, but until you make the choice to accept all the good and the bad in your life and be happy with what you do have instead of what you don't have, then you will always be miserable.

It's really that simple. It's all a choice. You will never be happy, if you base your happiness on materialistic things. If you think buying a house will make you happy, it will temporarily, but eventually, you will want a bigger house. Get a fast car, and you will just want a faster one. Get a good-looking partner, and you will later want someone better-looking. You will never be satisfied. But, if you base your happiness on how you influence people, who you surround yourself with, the places you travel, how good a friend you are, or how good a lover you are, you will find it is easier to be happy, because you have a true significance. It's about being a person of value.

Being a person of value isn't about leaving a legacy, so people will remember your name. No one really needs fame. Leaving a legacy is about passing your knowledge and values on to others. If you do that, then you won't have to worry about people remembering your name. In return, the world will have more people who want to make the world a better place, instead of there being a bunch of walking zombies who do the same thing day in and day out, without purpose. If you can find your

purpose, you will find that you will always be happy. This is because no one's purpose is to be unhappy.

If you don't know your purpose yet, don't worry. It will come. I haven't been sure of my purpose for a majority of my life, but I do know everything happens for a reason. I believe in fate, and every struggle I have had and every person I have ever met have been for a reason. They have always led me to the next important part of my life. When I was kicked off campus and left college, I started washing cars, which led me to selling cars, which was my first career. In that career, I learned a lot of what I have put into this book from my mentor. There came the point where I was unhappy selling cars and didn't know what I wanted in life.

Then came the day on the mountain when I broke my ankle. Again, I was confused and unsure of myself, so I came back to work and quit a month later. I took that summer, thinking I was going to find myself and my happiness. I had fun, but then another hurdle hit. I was running out of money, couldn't find a job, and my house hadn't sold. Oddly enough, all in a week I sold my house, had money from the profits, and a company called me for an interview. I interviewed and got offered the job a couple days later.

Three months went by, and again I was unhappy with my life and was running out of money, because I hadn't made a commission. I had self-doubts and wasn't sure if

I was cut out for the position. Then, you can probably guess, but shit buffed out. I made a huge commission at the end of the third month, which saved me from getting fired. I thought everything was all good, until I got a termination notice from my boss for not making enough calls. Confused and angry, I quit. I left and went on to start my own business.

All of these events in my life have been for a reason. Overall, it brought me to start writing this book. There have been many times I wanted to quit. I thought it wouldn't amount to much. I finally figured out my purpose wasn't about the sales or about becoming rich. My purpose is to help people see their life from the other side of the spectrum. If this book doesn't make me money, that's okay, because if I can influence just one person, it will be worth it. That is my purpose. That is how I am going to leave my legacy.

Now it's your turn. If you think things will never get better, you are wrong. Suffering is temporary, and it happens because of self-doubt. If you can learn to see the bigger picture and start serving something greater than yourself, you will defeat suffering. Don't let the person you are now, stop you from becoming the person you are meant to be. Great things take time, so be patient. Figure out what you want to do and go for it. Measure your success in your own way. As long as you are chasing your

passion, taking care of your health, and positively affecting everyone around you, then I promise, you will find your purpose. Good luck and I'll see you on the other side.

“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” —Mark Twain

Recap:

- Sacrifice.
- Face your fears.
- Work your ass off.
- Find your purpose.
- Give back.
- Leave your legacy.

Do it for YOU!

Wait, there's more.

The Stuff at the End that No One Reads

I can't thank you enough for being a part of this journey. Like I had mentioned before, I had thought about writing a book for years, before I finally forced myself to start. When I first started, I knew I had a lot to say, but I wasn't sure how to say it. I had to completely rewrite the first two chapters, because my ideas were everywhere, and I didn't make it clear what my point was.

As I got farther into it, I found that my best ideas for this book weren't when I was sitting down writing, but they were any time and every time I wasn't writing. It was when I was in the shower, at work, or hanging with my friends. I would see a quote on Facebook or Instagram and would think it would be a good fit for what I was talking about in my book. Every time this happened, I would go to my phone, where I had each chapter labeled, and I would type the idea or thought in the appropriate chapter, so I wouldn't forget. Writing is tough, and writer's block is a real thing. The creative mind isn't something that you can turn on with the flip of switch, but rather something that never turns off.

As I continued to structure an outline for the book, I kept realizing that I hated the title. Almost every other time I opened up Microsoft Word and started typing, I

would end up saving my work under a different title. Each time, I felt like it didn't have the right meaning behind it. Sure, they made sense, but I wanted to make sure I captured my audience.

I started to realize that my audience was anyone and everyone, who didn't want to live to work, so you can make a lot of money, retire at 65, and then start living. I figured out it was about taking the risk to make your dreams a reality. I started writing down my dream, so it would become a goal. I had to look in the mirror and really decide who I was and what I wanted out of life. I battled criticism from people and almost quit numerous times. As I kept going, I started to understand more about life. I understood that time was precious, how to really love and appreciate, how to be a better friend, how take care of myself and finances, and ultimately, how to be a person of value.

Some people who read this may think that I cuss too much. I had thought about taking all of it out, but decided not to, because life doesn't sugar coat anything, so why should I? I wanted to be as real as possible. The real world does not give a shit about hurting your feelings. Like I mentioned before, once you figure out you aren't made of glass and that the world isn't fair, it will make it a whole lot easier to get through life challenges and help you quit bitching so much.

Overall, I am just an average guy from a small town in Montana, but I am also an average guy who wants to live an extraordinary life while seeing the world with a positive outlook. When you do choose your attitude, have integrity, and take care of people, all the other bullshit doesn't matter. I finally realized that each day I was closer to leaving this world, and that scared me. I'm not scared of dying, because everyone dies, but I'm scared that I will leave this world not being happy with who I was as a person.

Whether you succeed or fail, remember that everything you are doing isn't for nothing. You have to try. Do it for yourself to give your most to everyone you love and of course, the person in the mirror. Plant the seeds now, and hopefully, one day it will bear Fireball whiskey fruit, so you can relax all day, every day. Cheers!

A Special Thanks

I would like to personally thank Karmen Ruffatto for the time, and effort she put into reading, and editing this. It means more than she knows. She made me realize that I have no idea where a comma goes. My next book will be better I promise. I told her that if this book did somehow make me rich, then I would build a brewery in our hometown and name it "Karmen's". I hope it happens.

I would also like to thank my family for reading the first prints of my book and catching my errors. The love and support I received was overwhelming. One thing, I love about family, is that no matter what, they have your back, I want them to know that I love them with all of my heart.

Do it for YOU!

Until next time.

-P.R.D.

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