MARTIN MEADOWS

The Ultimate FOCUS Strategy

HOW TO SET THE RIGHT GOALS,
DEVELOP POWERFUL FOCUS,
STICK TO THE PROCESS,
AND ACHIEVE SUCCESS

The Ultimate Focus Strategy

How to Set the Right Goals,
Develop Powerful Focus,
Stick to the Process,
and Achieve Success

By Martin Meadows

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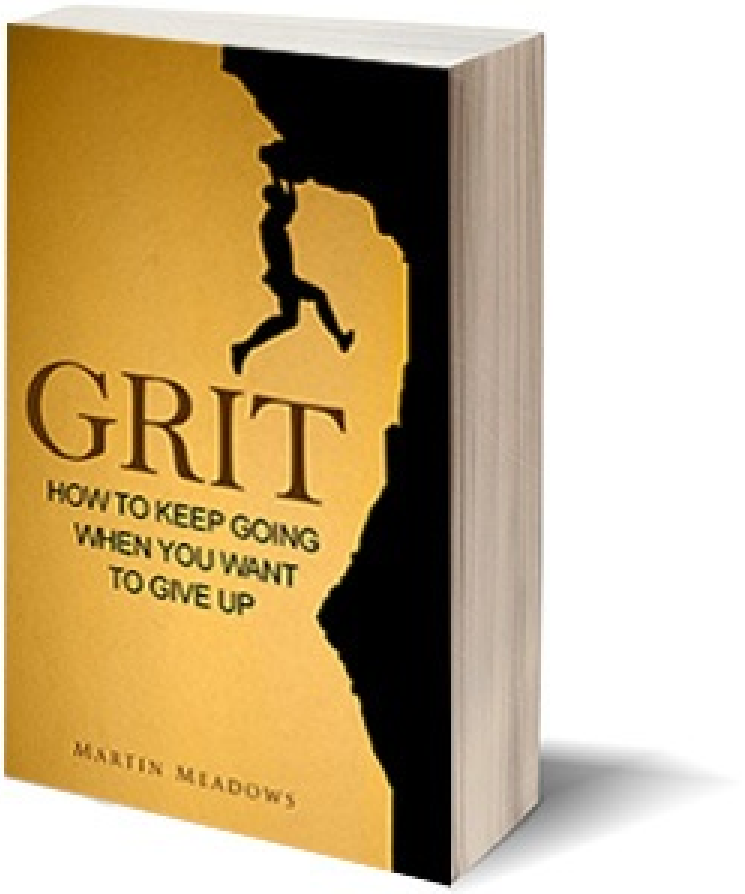

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Could You Help?

About Martin Meadows

Prologue

Jack was a penniless 18-year-old, living in his parents' basement, when he decided to become a millionaire. "I'll make my first million by the time I'm 25," he promised himself. Fired up by a vision of financial independence that would allow him to travel all over the world, he started learning about ways to make money online and launched his first website.

Sara was a 30-year-old mother of two who had a few (okay, a *little* more than a few, she'd say with a wink) pounds to lose. After hearing about a low-carb diet and the newest workout program at the local gym, she set her goal: "I'll be back to my college weight in 12 months."

Charles had been working for the same IT company as a customer support representative for six years when he was fired due to budget cuts. The bills wouldn't get paid by themselves, so he took up a job as a security guard while he looked for a better job. When he stumbled upon an article that mentioned that local companies were willing to offer a premium salary to people who spoke Mandarin Chinese, he enrolled in a free online language course in Mandarin Chinese.

Valerie was a successful CEO of a pharmaceutical company. She had a big comfortable house in the suburbs, a supportive husband and two beautiful daughters, yet, something was amiss in her life. Ever since she graduated college, she had been dreaming about owning a small organic farm and living a simple life. Her friends considered her crazy for even thinking about quitting her job. One day, while browsing through a magazine about country living, she read an article about a couple who moved from New York to a small farm in New England. Her mind was set: she would start looking for a suitable property and make her lifelong dream come true.

Seven years have passed since Jack, Sara, Charles, and Valerie set their goals.

Today Jack works part-time as a pizza delivery guy. He still dabbles in online business, but the most he's been able to earn in a single month was a hundred bucks.

Sara is embarrassed to admit that she hasn't lost a single pound. In fact, she's added another 20 pounds. To make the matters worse, Sara's doctor is worried about her high blood pressure and sugar levels.

Charles is no longer a security guard, but his new job — phone support for a particularly despised company — is nothing to brag about. He has recently heard about a new, lucrative opportunity for Mandarin Chinese speakers. What a shame he hasn't stuck with his resolutions!

Valerie is still a CEO of the same company, living in the same house with the same happy family. At a first glance, her life is perfect, but she's still unsatisfied. She has given up her dream of moving to the countryside, consoling herself by reading articles about country living. "It's too late to move," she says to herself. She'd hate uprooting her family, and besides, her friends are right — she'd be crazy to quit her lucrative job to pursue a silly dream of living on a farm.

These particular stories are fictional, but similar things happen in real life on a daily basis. People set important goals for themselves, but fail to achieve them.

What makes it so hard to stick to your resolutions? Why do people who care so much about bettering their circumstances fail to do so?

If your story is even slightly similar to the story of Jack, Sara, Charles, or Valerie, you might be wondering what's wrong with you. How is it possible that several years after setting your goals, you've yet to accomplish them or (even worse) you're farther away from them than before?

Before I answer this question, let's pause for a second to clarify one thing: There's nothing wrong with *you*. You're perfectly capable of achieving your most important goals.

However, what you *do* need to fix is your approach. If you change *that*, you can get completely different results and finally achieve the success you desire so much.

And what exactly do I mean by fixing your approach? It all comes down to developing the ability to overcome distractions and focus on your goals over the long-term. The strategy that I reveal in this book (the Ultimate Focus Strategy, aka UFS) comes with tools that will help you set the right goal, develop powerful concentration, become fascinated with the process and stick to it until you reach your desired outcome.

I used this particular strategy to overcome extreme shyness, get in shape in less than twelve months after years of negligence, launch a successful business after six years of failures, release several bestsellers, learn two foreign

languages, travel to exotic destinations, dramatically reduce my fear of heights, and accomplish numerous smaller goals I've set for myself over the years.

However, please don't think that I have figured it all out, that successful habits run in the family, or that what we're about to discuss is the ultimate recipe for success. I'll be the last to say that the Ultimate Focus Strategy is a magic pill.

I had the privilege of not being born in a poverty-ridden country. I was lucky to grow up in a peaceful period of time, when all of the most important tools that I use today on a daily basis (such as the Internet) spread all over the world. Lastly, I benefitted greatly from stumbling upon some self-help and business books that have been guiding me over the years. Without them, I wouldn't be where I am today.

The Ultimate Focus Strategy is by no means a "quick fix" or a miracle answer. It's a framework that can help you achieve your objectives, but it won't save you from effort, pain, failures, fear, sweat, and countless other things that everybody has to experience on their journey to success. If you're looking for an easy way out, I'm afraid I can't help you.

If you're still reading, chances are we're pretty similar to each other. You understand that success requires sacrifice and that the only way to live a successful life is to embrace the challenges. If you have this mindset, there's nothing that would prevent you from applying my strategy in your life and reaping the same benefits.

As you'll notice throughout the book, I won't save you from some hard truths. I'm not here to pat you on the back and shout from the speaker's podium that you can accomplish everything just by thinking about it. My strategy can dramatically increase your chances of success, but it still takes time, energy, and a tremendous amount of self-discipline, mental toughness, and grit.

Interested in learning more? Cool. Let's turn the page and have a longer chat…

Chapter 1: The Fundamentals of the Ultimate Focus Strategy

Before we dive deep into the Ultimate Focus Strategy, you need to know what it *is* and what it *is not* as well as when it *will* work, and when it *will not* work.

The Ultimate Focus Strategy (UFS) is a framework I created after unconsciously applying the same process to various goals in my life. It has four components (which we'll discuss shortly) and consists of an abundance of tools, tactics, and tips I've discovered along the way.

It's not a single habit that you can develop in four weeks. It also isn't a step-by-step blueprint that fills in all the blanks for you, because each situation is different. You'll benefit the most if you listen to your gut and take whatever you find in the book that feels like it is a good fit for you and apply it in your life.

Lastly, while I can't guarantee that you'll surely achieve your goals (only fake gurus do that), I'm pretty sure that even if you only apply just a few tips from this book, it can make a huge difference in your life. If you're open to experimenting and changing your approach, you *will* benefit from this strategy.

3 Situations in Which the Ultimate Focus Strategy Is Probably Not For You

Let's be clear. It's possible you don't need to change your strategy at all. In that case, I suggest you ask for a refund on this book. Seriously, if you find yourself in one of the groups I'm about to list, you might not benefit from my book and I'd rather not waste your time.

Here are the three instances in which you don't need my strategy at all, or you won't find it as valuable as other people would:

1. You're much closer to your goal today than when you started

If you're much closer to your goal today than when you started, your strategy is obviously working and you don't need my book — unless you feel stuck and can't move past the plateau.

For example, if five years ago, you set out to build a business that would generate $10,000 in monthly income, you've recently crossed the $5,000 mark, and the business is doing well, you probably know what you're doing. It's only a matter of time to reach your goal and it's better to stick to what's working for you than to change it.

On the other hand, if you feel like you're moving in circles and you've yet to exceed $1,000 in monthly income, my strategy can be of great help to you.

As another example, if your primary goal is to lose 50 pounds and you've already lost 20 pounds, feel great, and don't have any challenging issues to deal with, my strategy is probably not for you, either. Your approach is clearly working for you, and it wouldn't make sense to change it.

If you're struggling to stick to your diet or if you're stuck after losing a few pounds, though, you'll definitely find my strategy valuable.

2. You expect a quick fix

As I've already mentioned, the Ultimate Focus Strategy is not a magic pill. If you've been looking for that mythical book that solves your every problem without action on your part, this book isn't it.

Also, please understand that even if you embrace the strategy, it will likely take you months, years, or even decades to achieve certain goals. My strategy will help you stay dedicated to the process, but it won't magically shorten your journey when there's little or nothing you can do to speed up the process. If you want to become a surgeon or an astronaut, you can't learn it all and get all the formal credentials in a few months.

Another important caveat is that this book focuses almost entirely on taking action. If you think that simply changing your beliefs or using positive thinking will make you successful, you can return the book now. With all due respect, I mean it. I'd rather set the right expectations for you than hype my approach as the ultimate answer to all of your problems.

3. You lack conviction

It's normal to have doubts about whether you can achieve something or not. However, without the most basic knowledge about how to have a success-friendly mindset, I'm afraid I won't be able to help you at the moment. You'll benefit from this book more if you come equipped with some additional fundamental knowledge that I don't cover here.

I suggest reading my free book *Confidence: How to Overcome Your Limiting Beliefs and Achieve Your Goals*, in which I cover the topic of self-efficacy, a necessary trait for personal development. It's a short read that will teach you all of the basics you need to know to develop a proper mindset.

You can then return to *The Ultimate Focus Strategy* and expect a much better return on your investment after you learn how to adopt basic success-friendly beliefs. Whether you read *Confidence* or any other title about developing the proper mindset is irrelevant. I only strongly recommend that you avoid reading books that only come with feel-good affirmations and little substance in the form of practical advice you can apply in your life.

Now that the disclaimer is out of the way, let's dig deep into the fundamentals of the Ultimate Focus Strategy…

Four Components of the Ultimate Focus Strategy

The Ultimate Focus Strategy consists of four main components. Here they are:

1. **Start.** This step includes an incredibly important process of finding the right motivation, choosing the right goal and preparing yourself for the journey ahead.

2. **Focus.** This step is the core of the strategy. It discusses why you absolutely must dedicate yourself to one path, in order to reach your goals.

3. **Get Fascinated.** The third step of the strategy discusses an important shift in your mindset that must take place in your everyday life in order to radically increase your probability of success.

4. **Stick to It.** The fourth step focuses on perseverance and staying faithful to the process even when everything goes wrong and you can't seem to overcome all of the hurdles.

I'll cover each component of the strategy in a separate chapter. I'll start each chapter with a general description of the given component, and then cover it in deeper detail and addressing common situations, doubts, fears, and questions to help you get your head around the framework.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE ULTIMATE FOCUS STRATEGY: QUICK RECAP

1. The Ultimate Focus Strategy is a framework that consists of four components and numerous tactics, tools, and techniques to help you achieve your most important goals.

2. There are three instances in which you might not need the Ultimate Focus Strategy.

The first one is when you're already close to achieving your goal or have made great progress. Generally speaking, if you don't feel stuck or your strategy is generally working, it doesn't make sense to change it.

The second situation is when you're seeking a miracle answer to all your problems. UFS is not a quick-fix and it won't magically change your life without effort on your part. Moreover, be aware that while the strategy can help you stay dedicated, it won't shorten your journey in cases where you need to pay your dues to get what you want, such as attending a medical college to become a doctor.

The last instance in which the Ultimate Focus Strategy won't help you is when you lack conviction or the belief in your abilities. It doesn't mean you'll never accomplish your goals, though. It only means that the strategy is not for you yet. Start by developing some basic success-friendly beliefs first and then return to UFS after they have become deeply ingrained.

3. The four steps of the Ultimate Focus Strategy are: Start, Focus, Get Fascinated, and Stick to It.

Chapter 2: Step 1 — Start

The Ultimate Focus Strategy starts with choosing a goal or goals that will become the central focus in your life. You want to choose as few goals as possible, because the more goals you chase, the more time it will take you to achieve each one.

Pursuing as few goals as possible doesn't mean you're not allowed to do anything else besides working on them. Having a limited focus means that you dedicate the majority of your time, energy and your brain's capacity to as few vital objectives as you can. If you have any other goals, they take a back seat or fade into the background. You can work on them when you have free time, but never at the expense of your primary goal or goals.

Imagine I put an empty glass in front of you and give you three jars. The first one contains sand, the second one contains pebbles, and the last one contains big rocks. If you fill the glass with sand first, you won't be able to fit in the pebbles and big rocks. If you reverse the order and start with big rocks, you'll fill the glass with no problem.

Big rocks are your most important goals, pebbles are your secondary goals, and sand is everything else that might be nice to have, but that you wouldn't particularly care about if it didn't happen.

Limiting yourself to as few goals as possible is the primary feature of the Ultimate Focus Strategy that makes it so effective. Most approaches tell you how to balance your time and energy across numerous goals in your life, but they unrealistically assume that a person can be at the top of their performance when their resources are divided between five or ten different goals of varying importance.

(Smart) Sacrifice Is Necessary

Since you need to limit your focus to as few goals as possible, you'll probably have to give up working on other, less important goals. If you're afraid to do so, ask yourself if spreading yourself thin until now has produced the kind of results you've wanted to achieve. If not, wouldn't it be a good trade-off to sacrifice these nice-to-have (but not really that important) goals in exchange for reaching your ultimate objectives?

For example, let's say you're working on three main goals in your life:

saving money to buy your dream house in the countryside, learning how to play golf (or any other skill you'd like to master because you enjoy doing it), and working out at the gym to build a six-pack (or any other fitness-related goal that isn't essential to optimal well-being).

If you decide that buying your dream house is the most important goal for you, you'll have to accept that — because they cost you additional money and take time to pursue — you may have to postpone learning how to play golf and find alternative ways to develop a six-pack. Even worse, you might not be able to achieve those other goals at all while you're working on your primary goal, because you won't have enough time, energy or money to devote to them.

This is the hard truth about the Ultimate Focus Strategy that you must accept: you *must* make sacrifices in order to develop a powerful focus, and the more you're willing to sacrifice, the more focused and effective you'll be. However, your sacrifice has to be smart. You must never sacrifice essential health-related and relationships-related goals. Once lost, health and relationships can be hard or impossible to regain.

You might still be confused how a person can limit their focus, so let me give you an example from my personal life.

Back in 2011, I spent a couple of months living on a small (inhabited) tropical island in Mexico. My goal was to radically shake up my everyday routine by throwing myself into a completely different culture. While I was there, I didn't have access to proper fitness equipment and (back then) I wasn't aware that I could train effectively by using only my body weight, so my fitness levels suffered. My finances also took a hit, as living in a tropical paradise is generally not going to give you a productivity boost. However, I gladly accepted the trade-off for the experience of living in such a radically different place.

When I got back home, I vowed to focus on building a successful business, and secondarily, on overcoming shyness and getting into shape (I was obese, so this was a necessity and not just a nice-to-have objective). I worked on these secondary goals whenever I had free time, but for the most part, I was focused on building a business and I structured my life around that objective.

I told myself that I wouldn't travel again until I had started a successful business. I enjoyed traveling, but sacrifices had to be made so that I would be focused on my business instead of planning my next trip. Moreover, my finances weren't in the best shape, and they weren't going to improve if I continued to divide my attention between traveling and running a business.

During the next five years, I didn’t leave my hometown for non-business purposes except for one weekend trip. It might sound silly that telling myself I couldn’t travel would make any difference, yet it was an important vow that kept me in check and reminded me what was important during that period of my life — not my passion for traveling, but building a business.

In addition to sacrificing travel, I also spent less time learning Spanish (which had been an important goal of mine before I made that trip) — and engaged much less often in one of my favorite pastimes: reading fiction (I switched to business books).

Despite setting my priorities, I still wasted the first three years before I made any real progress, but we’ll continue that story in the next chapter. What’s important for now is that I made smart sacrifices to help me focus on my most important goal.

However, how do you actually choose which goal or goals should have priority?

How to Set the Right Goal or Goals

The goal or goals you choose to focus on have to be so important that they can transform your life. They also need to provide more benefits than neglecting your less vital goals. In other words, as an example, you have to feel good forgoing or delaying becoming a great golf player and going to the gym to develop a six-pack in exchange for moving into your dream house.

Some of the most common transformational goals include:

1. Getting in shape: losing weight, exercising more, replacing bad habits with healthy ones. If your long-term well-being is in danger, no other goal is as important as following your doctor’s orders. Forgo any other goals and make it your top priority.

2. Building a business, advancing your career, or rebranding yourself. This includes learning skills and acquiring the credentials that are needed to change your occupation.

3. Finding a significant other, starting a family, taking care of your children, and other goals related to relationships. Just like taking care of your health, this can be sometimes more crucial than any other goal. Saving your marriage is more important than developing your career.

4. Learning a skill or developing a trait that will produce a profound change

in your life or give you more opportunities, such as eliminating procrastination from your life, learning a foreign language, overcoming shyness, becoming a professional public speaker, overcoming a paralyzing phobia, etc.

5. Big lifestyle goals, such as traveling the world, buying a house, moving to your dream location, etc.

Ensure that you can't imagine your life without making this goal or goals come true. This is imperative; if you don't think of your goal as a *necessity* in your life and an *absolute must*, you won't achieve it.

When I set a goal to become a successful entrepreneur, it wasn't just a wish. There was *no possible* scenario in which I wouldn't eventually own a profitable business. I was *unable* to imagine myself working for somebody else.

If you don't have such a deep conviction and desire for the goal or goals you want to achieve, reconsider them. The entire strategy is based on the assumption that you'll either eventually make it happen or die trying (and "eventually" here means that you'll try over and over, even if it's going to take you decades). I can't define these important goals for you — it's *your* responsibility to take this important first step.

3 Techniques to Have More Clarity About Which Goal to Pursue

What if you have several goals you'd like to achieve and you're unsure which ones can wait? Here are some techniques to help you make the right decision and limit your focus:

1. Flip a coin

Okay, I admit it sounds like a ridiculous gimmick, but please approach it with an open mind. If you need to decide between two goals, assign goals to each side of the coin and flip it. You'll know which objective is closer to your heart before the coin even lands because you'll find yourself rooting for it. Pay attention to that inner response that occurs while you're waiting to see the outcome of the coin toss.

If you don't have a coin nearby, use an online randomizer or take two pieces of paper, write down the goals and ask another person to choose one of them without showing them the answers. Again, pay attention to what you are hoping the result will be.

This approach often works better than analyzing each goal and trying to make a logical decision. I suppose it's because when it comes to setting goals, your gut often knows best.

2. Think about your most important values

Another technique that can help you narrow down your list of goals or prioritize them is to think about your key values.

For me, one of my top values is personal freedom, hence my goal was to become a successful entrepreneur.

What is it for you? Is the current state of things preventing you from fully embracing your most crucial values in your everyday life?

For example, if excitement is one of your top values but you work in a soul-sucking corporation, it will clash with your values for the rest of your life until you do something about it. This indicates that finding a more exciting job might be a good goal to choose as your primary objective.

3. You have unusual patience for it

It's generally easy to assess whether somebody cares about something if one looks at their patience for it. If you have a history of giving up after experiencing the first failure, chances are good that the goal you've chosen is not your true priority. On the other hand, if you refuse to give in (even when everybody around you doubts in your ability to succeed), it's an indicator that you're working on the right goal.

I can't count the number of failures I've had on my entrepreneurial journey. As painful as they all were, I couldn't stop and always got back on my feet.

What's important to note here is that your patience must be long-lasting. Many people go on a diet in January only to give up in February, wait until next January and start again. A person with true patience for this goal wouldn't give up in February and wait until next January, even if they completely messed up their diet and had to start all over again.

Ambitious or Realistic?

Setting new goals often feels like engaging in a battle between the positive version of you (thinking you can accomplish anything you want) and the negative you (pointing out that you'd be crazy to think you can achieve such ambitious goals). Where's the sweet spot and how do you know when the goal is

appropriate for you and when it's just a pipe dream?

In his book, *Bold: How to Go Big, Create Wealth and Impact the World*, successful entrepreneur Peter Diamandis talks about the concept of "the line of credibility."[1] The basic concept behind the idea is that whenever we hear about a new idea, we either place it above the line (accepting it as possible) or below it (dismissing it). When we accept an idea without any doubts, it has (as Diamandis calls it) "super credibility."

To give you a quick example, imagine you've heard that an extremely successful billionaire is launching a space transport company and plans to go to Mars. In addition to his vast business experience and capital to launch such a venture, he plans to hire the world's most renowned rocket engineers and scientists. Now compare your response to that situation with your reaction to your friend Bob telling you he plans to do the same. Unless your friend Bob is one of the wealthiest and most connected people in the world, you'd probably dismiss his idea right away, while it was easy to accept the idea of that first person doing it as viable.

Now, what does it have to do with you?

You can apply the line of credibility to yourself to discover when a certain goal is possible to achieve and when it's probably too ambitious. And let's be realistic here: some goals *will* be too ambitious for you. I have absolutely zero talent when it comes to creating art. Becoming the greatest painter in the world is an impossible goal for me and no amount of self-help bromides will change this fact.

How do you establish your own line of credibility? Ask yourself if you have any experience in the field of your life that you'd like to change. The more experience you have, the more ambitious you can get with your goals. If you have little to no experience, it pays to be more conservative and wait with big goals until you're more competent. Examples:

1. You're 50+ pounds overweight and you have no idea how to eat healthy or exercise. In addition to that, you've never exhibited much willpower in any area of your life. Looking at it realistically, a goal to lose 50 pounds within three months is below your line of credibility (sorry to have to use "tough love"). Losing 50 pounds within a year? Now we're leaving the magical realm and entering the real world.

What if you know the theory behind losing weight and are able to exert

willpower in other areas of your life? Then perhaps you can be a bit more ambitious with your goals, aiming to lose 50 pounds within 6-9 months.

2. You've had some success in the business world and exceeded six figures in yearly profit. Now you'd like to double your numbers within a year. You're already among the top earners, have experience and a profitable business, so your goal is above your line of credibility and you have a fair chance of success.

What if you're yet to start a business, have no business experience, and set a goal to earn in the mid-six figures in yearly profit within 12 months? Better reassess your capabilities. You *can* by all means reach this goal, but your timeframe is unrealistic by all standards.

3. You've never tried learning any foreign languages. Forget about ambitious goals like fluency within 3 months. Instead, set a more reasonable goal to develop basic communication skills within 3 months. If you already speak another language and want to learn a third one that is similar to the one you already speak, then three months to fluency might be possible.

To explain it a bit better, I'll share with you two personal stories that will better portray the difference between realistic goals and those that are too ambitious.

In preparation for a trip to an Arabic-speaking country, I set a goal to be able to carry on simple, everyday conversations in Arabic within six weeks. While I did have experience with learning languages, I had never tried learning a language with another script that was so far removed from what I had already known. I didn't know what I was signing myself up for. I failed to reach this goal because it was too ambitious. I set my goal prior to gaining any working knowledge about the reality of learning Arabic. In other words, it was below my line of credibility.

Now let's compare that with a completely different goal. In 2016, I promised myself that I would try skydiving. While I had absolutely zero experience jumping off airplanes, I had experience with stepping far outside of my comfort zone. I suffered from a fear of heights, but had been slowly accustoming myself to heights by hiking in the mountains and rock climbing.

I accomplished my goal and did the static rope jumps (meaning solo jumps, without an instructor strapped to me). That might not have been the case if I hadn't had worked on overcoming my fear of heights prior to skydiving. Can you imagine a person who's paralyzed by fear 30 feet, or 10 meters above the

ground jumping off an airplane several thousand feet higher? For such a person, even *flying* in a claustrophobic, rattling airplane (with its open doors clearly displaying the horrifying drop) would be far below their line of credibility.

Now, this is not an exact science and won't always apply as easily to less quantifiable or unquantifiable goals, such as saving your marriage, becoming a great parent, or moving to a foreign country. Still, it can be of help to figure out whether you're realistic or too ambitious with some of the most common goals like losing weight, building a business or learning a specific skill.

Ask yourself if you have any resources at your disposal (experience, connections, etc.) that make it more realistic to achieve a given goal than it would be for an average person. If not, stay on the safe side and set more manageable goals.

How to Find the Right Motivation

I've written extensively about how to find the right motivation in my other books, but the strategy wouldn't be complete without covering this topic again. The following subchapter is partly adapted from my other works, where I discuss the same concepts.

The most essential thing you need to know about motivation is that there are three types of motivation. Each comes from a different source and provides a different strength of motivational effect. Let's start with the first, weakest type of motivation.

1. Extrinsic Motivation

You might have started your diet because you wanted to have a flat stomach that you could show off at the beach.

Maybe you want to become an entrepreneur because of the status associated with being a CEO of your company, running a startup, or mingling with the powerful and wealthy.

Or maybe you want to change your career to a more lucrative one, purely because you love seeing bigger and bigger numbers in your bank account.

All these things are a manifestation of *extrinsic (or external) motivation*.

Psychologists Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci define extrinsic motivation as "a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome."[2]

In other words, when you're doing something primarily because you want to get a reward (often tangible), you're extrinsically motivated. You're also extrinsically motivated when the desired outcome is to avoid some form of punishment. Grades in school are a form of extrinsic motivation — you either become motivated positively by good grades (you want to get more of them) or negatively by bad grades (you want to get fewer of them).

You can easily find out if you're being extrinsically motivated by asking yourself if you'd still work on a given goal if you were the last person on Earth. Would it still matter to you to drive a sports car? To have a lot of money? To have a flat stomach? If not, you're most likely externally motivated.

While extrinsic motivation is the most common type of motivation, it's also the most fickle one. If the reward is gone or the danger of punishment goes away, the motivation goes away with it. Moreover, if the process of pursuing the goal becomes too challenging, your desire to, say, have a flat stomach might not be enough to persist in attaining it.

That's not to say that this type of motivation is useless or that it's bad to be motivated partly by vanity. It can still have its place in your plan; just don't make it the primary reason why you want to achieve your goals.

2. Intrinsic Motivation

Maybe you started a diet because you wanted to get healthy and feel better about yourself.

Perhaps you're learning Mandarin Chinese because you love the challenge it poses.

Or perhaps you want to become a great surfer because it's simply a lot of fun.

This is *intrinsic motivation*. It's stronger than extrinsic motivation because it comes from *within* you, and is not dependent on an external reward or punishment.

Psychologists Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci define intrinsic motivation as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards."[3]

Intrinsic motivation is fueled by what you feel inside. It can be a feeling of

fun, a desire to overcome a challenge or improve yourself, or the need for independence and control.

Intrinsic motivation is the most common type of motivation, and absolutely has to be a part of your reason why. If possible, you should enjoy working on your goal, even if it's difficult and comes with its share of sweat, pain, and tears.

British billionaire Richard Branson once said, "My golden rule for business and life is: We should all enjoy what we do and do what we enjoy."[4] This is indeed one of the golden rules to follow. If you enjoy what you do, it's easier to become good at it. And again, you don't have to love every single part of the process. I most certainly don't like everything about my self-publishing business, but it doesn't change the fact that I still want to grow it and help people around the world improve themselves.

Canadian-American billionaire Elon Musk often refers to his intrinsic motivation, also. He is motivated by challenges. In his words, "I think life on Earth must be about more than just solving problems… It's got to be something inspiring, even if it is vicarious." This inspiration, or a need to have a challenge in your life or make your wild vision a reality, is another good reason to work on your goal.

Like Branson, Musk also believes in enjoyment: "People work better when they know what the goal is and why. It is important that people look forward to coming to work in the morning and enjoy working."[5]

Constant improvement is yet another type of intrinsic motivation that can keep you going for a lifetime. As Sergey Brin (co-founder of Google) said, improvement has no bounds: "It's clear there is a lot of room for improvement, there's no inherent ceiling we're hitting up on."[6] That's what makes self-improvement such a good reason why: no matter how good you are at something, you can always become better at it.

A word of caution regarding extrinsic and intrinsic motivation:

Because of the *overjustification* effect, *extrinsic* motivators (such as money or prizes) can *decrease* a person's *intrinsic* motivation to perform a task.[7] The activity stops being about enjoyment, personal challenge, or self-growth, and becomes purely about what tangible things you can get from it.

For instance, in certain sports, the performance of many professional athletes declines after signing a multimillion-dollar contract. Their "hunger" disappears overnight. For this reason, it's of vital importance to prioritize

intrinsic motivation over extrinsic motivation and be careful not to give too much weight to external rewards.

When you compare intrinsic motivation (which is an endless source of inspiration) to extrinsic motivation, which is fleeting, it's clear that intrinsic motivation will serve you longer and better.

However, there's one more way to strengthen your resolve and be unstoppable. It's…

3. Prosocial Motivation

If you want to grow your business because you want to support your family, you're motivated *prosocially*, for the benefit of your loved ones.

If you run a non-profit organization, you might be motivated by the need to help the needy, educate children, save the environment, or otherwise change the world for the better. It's not about you; it's about the others.

In a paper on intrinsic motivation and prosocial behaviors, Adam Grant (professor and bestselling author of *Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success*) suggests that the desire to help others makes us go the extra mile.[8]

Prosocial behavior is more effective as a motivator than intrinsic motivation alone, but for the best results, you should combine both. In the author's words, "Employees display higher levels of persistence, performance, and productivity when they experience prosocial and intrinsic motivations in tandem."

For instance, my strongest prosocial motivation to succeed in business was to make enough money to help my parents realize their lifetime dream of moving to the countryside. As teachers, they would never be able to afford buying a plot of land and building a house. Nothing in the world would have stopped me from helping them.

My extrinsic motivators were never even ten percent as motivating as this goal. Even my powerful intrinsic motivator — a deeply felt necessity to be an entrepreneur — was still second to helping my parents, who have spent so many years taking care of me to ensure I would get everything I needed to succeed in life.

Whatever or whoever you want to support, I can't overemphasize the power of prosocial motivation. Think beyond yourself, and you'll have one of the most powerful allies on your side.

Tie These Motivations Together

To have a strong reason why, I suggest tying all three types of motivation together to have multiple sources of inspiration to keep going. You can achieve your goals without a clear extrinsic or prosocial motivator, but intrinsic motivation is a must.

Re-read your reason why periodically to remind yourself why you're pursuing a given goal, particularly when you feel doubt.

To give you an example of what a reason why can look like, here's my personal reason why I want to drop my body fat percentage to below 10%:

I want to drop my body fat percentage to below 10% because it will tremendously help me improve my climbing performance, thus making practicing my favorite activity even more enjoyable.

Having a more chiseled physique will make me feel more motivated to maintain healthy habits. In addition to that, I want to look at myself in the mirror and be proud of my body.

Consequently, I'll enjoy a better sense of well-being overall, and that will translate to me being more positive. This will then positively affect my relationships and make for greater happiness, not only for me, but also for important people in my life.

One of the most important values in my life is personal growth. Reaching this goal will help me develop more self-discipline, and that will make me a better person overall. Moreover, one of my personal rules is to always keep my word. If I never break a promise to anybody, I can't break a promise to myself.

Note that:

1. I don't focus much on extrinsic motivation in my reason why. I generally don't find it motivating to do something for the sake of showing off. I need an inner-oriented motivation that is tied to something important in my life — in this case, climbing. I had been struggling to stick to this particular goal (drop my body fat below 10%) until I came up with improved climbing performance as a primary reason why.

2. Even though my goal borders on vanity, I could still find numerous powerful motivators, including a prosocial reason for doing so. Since achieving any important goal in your life will likely make you happier and increase your life satisfaction, you can always count it as a prosocial motivator: a happy person

makes other people happy.

3. I referred to one of the most important values in my life — growth — to motivate me to reach the goal. I need to be congruent with my personal philosophy, so referring to this important principle (as well as to my personal rule of always keeping my word) is another strong motivator. This is crucial, because as performance coach and bestselling author Tony Robbins points out in his book, *Awaken the Giant Within: How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical and Financial Destiny*, "One of the strongest forces in the human personality is the drive to preserve the integrity of our own identity.[9]"

Please be aware that while coming up with a powerful reason why is a strong aid in helping you reach your goals, it's not infallible. Unlike some self-help authors, I won't claim that a solid motivation is always enough to reach your objectives because it's not. There are more factors at play, and we'll cover them all in the rest of the book.

When to Start

Now you know how to set the right goals, how to prioritize them, and how to make sure they're realistic enough for you. There are two questions that remain: *when* to start and *how* to start. Let's start with the first question.

This might sound like heresy in the self-help world, but sometimes there *is* a better time to start than now. The advice of "just do it" or "start now" is not always sensible. Whenever I choose a new goal to pursue, I ask myself these three questions before actually taking the first steps to make it a reality:

1. Will the current negative circumstances pose a big challenge for a newbie?

More often than not, you probably won't regret starting sooner than later. However, in some instances, waiting might be a more reasonable option. Here are some real-world examples:

1. If you want to learn how to invest in stock options, it might be a good idea to stay away from the market if it's currently more volatile than it usually is. Even seasoned investors can have a hard time handling wild upswings and downswings, let alone complete beginners. It doesn't mean you need to give up on the goal; just stick to investing in a demo account until the waters are safer for a newbie.

2. If you're sick or injured, going on a diet is often not a good idea. Your body needs to recover. Creating a caloric deficit will put additional stress on you, thus prolonging the recovery and possibly making it even more difficult to stick to your new diet. Ask your doctor first before you decide to cut down on calories.

3. If you have too many responsibilities, deal with them first. Trying to, say, launch a new business while having dozens of existing obligations to attend to will be at best a half-hearted undertaking, and at worst, a complete waste of time. I understand you're fired up to work on your new goal, but you'll do better if you create better circumstances first.

Now, please note that this rule applies to specific situations that can make it challenging for a newbie to start. This is not about waiting for the perfect circumstances. A skydiving instructor won't let a newbie jump off an airplane if there's a hurricane, but neither will he wait forever for ideal weather. Also, if there's no way to create better circumstances, grit your teeth and try working on your goal anyway.

2. Have I slept on it?

Many self-help gurus like to preach excitedly in their videos about how you should start it *now*, *right away*, with no thought on your part. I've found from my personal experience that it's helpful to sleep on any new goal you have chosen, before taking action.

First, the next morning you'll probably see it from a slightly different perspective, which might give you better ideas on how to proceed. There will be more logic involved in your thought process and not be mostly from your emotional side. Second, if you're not even half as fired up as you were the day before, chances are it was only a spur-of-the-moment idea that doesn't lend itself to a long-term plan.

It might sound like a good idea to give your notice on a whim and start your own company, particularly if you don't have to support a family. However, the next day, when you realize you've yet to come up with a business idea, you might regret your premature resignation. That's why you should never make any *big* decisions right away, regardless of what the gurus say.

3. Am I fine with the dark side of working on or accomplishing this goal?

This is the final filter that you must apply to your decision-making process

before committing to any goal. When you're excited about setting a new goal and changing your life, it's easy to fall victim to confirmation bias, in which you exclusively seek information that confirms your beliefs, while rejecting alternative or contrary knowledge[10].

For instance, if you believe that genetically-modified organisms are the work of the devil, you'll search exclusively for anti-GMO arguments. and discount every piece of information that goes against your beliefs.

In goal setting, you might have a tendency to seek only the positives of reaching a certain goal. You imagine living in a luxurious mansion with perfect ocean vistas. You portray yourself as a CEO of a big foundation supporting children in need. You envision a perfect six-pack and women admiring you because of your great shape. You see yourself as an internationally-renowned musician or artist. You smile at the thought of working from a tropical beach, bragging about your new "office" on social media.

But did you stop to research — and accept — that all of these accomplishments will require numerous (often extremely uncomfortable) changes and that reaching these objectives comes with a set of new problems?

The goal of becoming a multimillionaire will most likely require you to dedicate your life to a business. Unlike being in a 9 to 5 job, your business is your baby. It will become one of the most important things in your life. Even if you go on vacation, you'll still think about it or possibly need or want to continue working. Are you fine with this fact? Do you realize that when you finally become rich, some friends will envy your success and turn away from you? Are you prepared to deal with the dissonance between your wealthy lifestyle and the lifestyles of other people?

If you want to achieve an ideal physique, are you aware that people who look like that have to pay a lot of attention to what they eat? Do you accept that you'll no longer be able to eat your favorite treats whenever you feel like doing so? Do the benefits of having a perfect physique outweigh the inconvenience of paying close attention to your nutritional habits and potentially becoming a hindrance in your social life?

If you want to become a bestselling author or musician, are you aware of the thousands of words you'll have to write or the hundreds of songs you'll have to record? Do you accept that as a musician, your life might be filled with touring the country for a few months each year, only to head back to the studio, record a new album and go on an another tour? Are you okay with the fact that

in order to become a bestselling author, you'll have to write on a daily basis, even if it's the last thing you want to do?

If you're aware of all the negative aspects of the goal you'd like to achieve and you still want to continue, then you can be reasonably sure that you won't give up soon after you encounter the first obstacle. But there's one more action we need to discuss: taking real-world action after you complete all of the due diligence in preparing for it.

3 Steps to Get Started

When I was conducting research for this book, one of the most common questions coming from readers was, "Exactly how do you start?

One of my readers wanted to launch a location-independent business that would allow him to work (with a laptop and Internet connection) from anywhere in the world. It's a common goal for many people in today's hyper-connected world where, for many professions, it no longer matters where you do the work. Yet, he had no idea where to start. And he had every right to be confused; there's so much information about his goal that it's easy to get lost.

This is just one example of a person who's stuck in the "Start" stage of the Ultimate Focus Strategy. There are many more stories like that — of people who have a deep desire to get started, but are too confused as to how to actually do it. Here are some practical suggestions that will help you get started:

1. Should you have a different starting point?

There's no need to explain that the best way to start is to break your goal down into small steps and take it from there. However, before we discuss how to do *that*, it's a good idea to consider whether it would be beneficial to accomplish a *different* goal before progressing to the goal you now have in your mind.

Note that it doesn't mean you have to change your entire strategy — it just means choosing a different starting point that will later on aid you in reaching your ultimate objective.

For example, while lead climbing is the "purest" form of rock climbing (you carry the rope with you and clip it to each quickdraw along the way, risking a relatively long fall), a newbie would do better by learning how to top rope climb first (a safer way of climbing in which a rope is secured above the route and falls are short), develop basic climbing skills, and only get started with lead climbing once they can safely top rope various types of climbing routes with

good technique.

It might be tempting to start right away with the most exciting form of climbing, but a more intelligent and safer choice would be to focus on an easier goal of learning how to top rope climb properly first, and then progress to the harder variation.

If you wanted to climb Mt. Everest, you wouldn't start with a trip to the Himalayas, either. Obviously, you would have the ultimate goal in your head, but you'd start with easier expeditions first. If you had zero experience with mountaineering, you'd begin by simply hiking in the mountains.

Likewise, if you wanted to build an eco-friendly, sustainable, off-the-grid house, you wouldn't immediately rush to Home Depot and start constructing the house. You'd set a goal to gain basic knowledge on how to build a house, perhaps enroll in a workshop about eco-friendly house construction, assist with a few projects, and then — equipped with the right knowledge — start working on your original goal of actually building your house.

At the moment that I'm writing this book, I'm also working on a goal of planting a small forest. I didn't start by buying hundreds of saplings and planting them randomly on a barren plot of land. I set a goal to first educate myself about forestry, and only then — after equipping myself with sufficient theoretical knowledge — embark on the actual journey of designing, planting, and helping the forest grow.

Think deeply about your starting point, and only take it from there once you're sure it's the most optimal first step for you.

2. Strip it down

If you're starting out with a new goal, you might be confused as to how to begin, especially when you discover there's a multitude of different approaches you can take. "Paralysis from analysis" ensues and, instead of getting started, you get stuck, unsure about how to begin.

Whenever I set a new goal, I try to strip it down to the one most important piece of advice, action, habit, or skill that is necessary to make it a reality. It's easy to figure out the common theme if you spend a few hours reading articles dedicated to the subject or addressing good questions to people who know what you need to know from having made the journey themselves.

For instance, if you're new to climbing and start reading articles about how

to become a rock climber, you'll quickly notice that the number one tip (aside from climbing a lot) is to pay attention to your legs. Therefore, there's your first step: go to the climbing gym and focus as much as you can on using your legs instead of your hands. You don't even have to learn how to belay. Just go bouldering, so you don't use your need to have a climbing partner as an excuse.

If you want to become a great writer, it all comes down to reading and writing a lot. You can enroll in a writing workshop, read books about writing and do all kinds of writing exercises, but for the purposes of getting started, simply writing something — anything — is the best way forward.

If you want to build a business, you can spend several lifetimes reading business books and researching potential business models. And while there *is* substance in making sure you choose the right business model for you, if you have little to no experience with entrepreneurship, your first step should be to sell something — *anything* — just to get a taste of how making money on your own feels.

The purpose here is to figure out one simple action you can take right now and *do* it, instead of wasting days or weeks trying to figure out the most appropriate approach. Once you take the first steps, momentum will take care of the rest. If you find yourself in need of changing the strategy, it will be easier to readjust with freshly-gained real-world experience than if you were still stuck, researching theory.

3. Get support

One of the most common reasons why people don't get started on their personal goals is because they don't have external pressure and/or guidance.

If you start learning a foreign language by taking a class with a native speaker, you can't make an excuse that you don't know where to start; just follow your teacher's instructions. On the other hand, if you try to figure it out by yourself, you easily might never start, because of being overwhelmed by the amount of knowledge you need to acquire.

If you can't afford to hire a teacher, join online forums dedicated to the goals you'd like to achieve. It can be a fitness forum, a forum for entrepreneurs, a forum about parenting, a forum for travelers, etc. Don't be afraid to ask for advice, but if you decide to ask for it, vow to take action when a credible forum member replies to you, instead of replying with a "yes, but" and a list of excuses.

If you're so lucky as to have a person who has achieved the goal you want

to achieve in your social circle, have a coffee with them and ask them to tell you how to start. Once you're given a set of instructions, don't question them — follow them. There's no reason to dilly-dally if you have obtained a map directly from a person who's been on the same journey.

How to Transform Goals on Paper into Real-World Actions

You're the type of a person who loves to envision their perfect future. In fact, you're addicted to it. You have dozens of goals, each described in great detail. You know exactly what kind of a supercar you'd like to drive, or how big your biceps will be when you finally gain 20 pounds of muscle. How fluent you'll be in that foreign language. How great a parent you'll be when you finally find more time for your children. Which exotic locales you'll visit when you save enough money for a trip.

The problem is, you know in perfect detail what you'd like to have in your life, but not how to translate your wishes into real-world actions.

How do you break out of this vicious cycle?

The primary reason why people can't escape it is because dreaming big goals feels good, but actually *working* on them is overwhelming. You with a perfect six-pack abs? Sure, sounds awesome. You paying attention to your diet every single day for the rest of your life? No, thanks, I'd rather keep dreaming about it.

The best way to handle this problem is to focus on tiny steps and tiny wins.

As a rock climber, whenever I climb a high wall, I avoid looking down or looking all the way up. I limit my vision to the nearest footholds, handholds and the next piece of protection where I can clip in the quickdraw and rope. This enables me to focus on what's important right now, instead of worrying I won't reach the top or how far I am from the ground. One move after another, I slowly climb the wall — often despite paralyzing fear.

In goal setting, you can use the exact same approach.

If you want to learn Spanish, don't think about how long it will take you to reach proficiency. That's irrelevant for now. You're not right near the top of the wall — you're at its bottom. The handholds, footholds, and quickdraws (words, grammar rules, pronunciation rules, etc.) that you need right now are right around you. Use them and slowly ascend, instead of looking all the way up and

becoming discouraged that there's still such a long way to go.

If you want to write a book, focus on the words you have on the page right here, right now. All writers suffer from time to time from the syndrome of looking all the way up — fantasizing about finally finishing the book or staring at a blank page and worrying that there's still so much to write, they'll never be done with it. If they just focused on their daily word quota — be it 100 words, 500 words, 1000 words or more — they would slowly get closer to their goal, just like a climber on a wall.

If you want to make better financial decisions and achieve financial independence, this is not about how many dollars you still need to achieve your number. It's about what you do today, right here, right now. It's about producing more than you consume and saving and investing the rest. It's about not buying that new widget that you don't need. It's about educating yourself today — even if it's a short article about the fundamentals of investing — rather than calculating that it will take you 37.5 years to save your first million.

To fuel your motivation when taking tiny steps, set tiny wins. In climbing, a tiny win can be clipping your rope into the next quickdraw or grabbing the next handhold (even if you fall a second later). I've been working on some routes in my climbing gym for weeks, and sometimes even months. A tiny win for me can even be when I climb a part of such a route more efficiently than I did before, even if I fall in the same exact spot.

In learning languages, a tiny win can be successfully putting together a grammatically correct sentence. In learning how to play the guitar, it can be learning to play a new song or just a short part of it. In finances, you might count surpassing $50 or $100 in savings (or eliminating $50 or $100 in personal debt) as a tiny win. If you have a dream to start a non-profit organization, a tiny win can be having a meeting with one person who might help you make your idea a reality.

It doesn't have to be anything big. We're talking about *tiny* wins that you can have on a daily or weekly basis.

Ensure that you always win, even if the win is so tiny that others can only see it with a microscope. A feeling of triumph, regardless of how small it is, will keep you scaling that wall all the way up because, in essence, success is all about gaining and maintaining momentum.

Doubts and Fears You Might Have at This Point

Below I’m going to cover some of the most common doubts and fears you might have at this point and give you practical advice on how to handle them.

1. How to balance several goals at once

In an ideal world, you’d be able to choose just one or two main goals to pursue and push any other goals to the side. You’d work on them only when you had some spare time and energy. However, not everyone has such a luxury.

One of my readers is in a doctoral program to advance her career. She has two teenage children and a husband with whom she would like to spend more time. She would also like to get more involved with her church, spend more time with friends, and play more sports. Moreover, she’s 50+ pounds overweight and needs to do something about it.

Where do you start in such a situation? Should she really ignore her weight gain until she finishes her doctorate or ignore her family to get more involved with her church?

In the case of this particular reader, I need to be frank: her list of goals is too long. While the Ultimate Focus Strategy can work with multiple goals, there’s always a trade-off and it will take you more time to reach all of your goals than if you were to limit your focus to just one, two, or (in a pinch) three goals.

Let’s imagine that you need to work on multiple goals at once. First, try to prioritize which goals are more important than others, even if they’re only slightly more important.

For instance, in the case of the reader in a doctoral program, her primary goals might be finishing her doctorate, spending more time with her family and losing excess weight (this one can be coupled with playing more sports). Putting off her goal of getting more involved with her church and spending more time with friends until she finishes her doctoral program is a trade-off, but it’s better than spreading herself so thin that she probably wouldn’t be able to make good progress with any of the goals.

As we’ve already discussed, health and relationships should go first because once lost, they can be hard or impossible to recover. This means that her family and losing weight should be slightly higher in her hierarchy than her doctoral program.

Therefore, when implementing the next steps of the Ultimate Focus

Strategy, she would apply them first to her family time and losing weight. Please note it doesn't mean she'll fail with her doctoral program; it just means that when forced to sacrifice something, she'd be okay with choosing her family and health over her career.

According to those priorities, whenever hard-pressed for time, her most important tasks for the day would include doing at least one action to spend time with her family and take care of her health, even at the expense of failing an exam.

Next, try to figure out a way to work on several goals at once. Find a common ground for all of them if possible, or at least a way to make them work together in harmony.

For instance, she can spend more time with her family *and* lose weight. She can even play more sports or hang out with her friends by doing things like:

- A monthly one-day hiking trip with family and friends. It accomplishes all things at once except for working on her doctoral program, which (in this example) is her secondary focus anyway. If it were her primary focus, though, she could ask herself if there's any way in which she can involve her family to help her finish her doctoral program.

- Practice sports with her friends, spouse or even the entire family. She can play tennis with her husband, take her kids to a climbing gym, or go for a walk with a friend. All these activities will also help her lose weight. She can also review material for exams while on a treadmill or a stationary bike.

- Take healthy-cooking classes, in which she'll get to spend time with her family and also learn how to cook meals that will help her lose weight. Then, when she's actually cooking the meals in her kitchen, she can listen to recorded audio notes regarding her doctoral subjects.

Granted, it will require more creativity on your part to combine these different areas of life and still progress with your primary goal, but it can be done. However, the more narrow your focus is, the more effective the strategy will be, so if you can, put off some less important goals while you focus on what matters the most right now.

2. I'm afraid of failure

A common problem I often see among people who hesitate to get started is that they're afraid of failure. What's interesting about this is that most children

don’t suffer from this fear. They get started, they fail, and they try again, whereas an adult will carefully consider whether they can do something or not. In addition to that, if there’s a risk that they’ll make fools out of themselves because of a potential failure, they won’t even try.

I don’t need to tell you that failure is a part of success, do I? You’re deeply aware of it, yet you still feel the fear. I’d love to eliminate it for you just by writing some powerful, empowering words, but unfortunately it doesn’t work like that. The only way to deal with a fear of failure is to repeatedly expose yourself to failure so you can get used to it and lose your fear of it.

I used to be an extremely shy person, particularly among women. There was no way I would talk with an attractive female unless I was forced to do so — and even then, I tried to come up with a solution that wouldn’t involve me talking with her.

This particular fear was nothing else but a way of protecting my ego from a hurtful rejection. When I set a goal to overcome my shyness, I deliberately invited failure into my life by approaching as many attractive women as I could. As you can imagine, there was no way an awkward shy guy could successfully flirt with every single female. After surviving numerous rejections, I realized I was no longer afraid of rejection and failure.

Why don’t you go and deliberately fail like I did? Allow yourself to start learning something new and be willing to suck at it. I strongly suggest making a fool of yourself periodically, and deliberately making yourself vulnerable by doing things such as the following:

1. Not being afraid of asking a question — even if you think it’s stupid — when learning something new. When I was taking a skydiving course, I wasn’t afraid of asking the most basic questions if I wasn’t sure about the answer. It was my life on the line, and I’d rather be considered a fool than find myself hitting the ground at 122 miles (or 195 kilometers) per hour.

2. Embracing and acknowledging awkwardness. It happens to all of us. You say something stupid. You don’t observe a local custom in a foreign country. You mistake a stranger for a friend. You find yourself staring at an exotic meal, unsure of how to eat it. Embrace all of these situations. Acknowledge you’ve made a mistake or don’t know what to do.

3. Not taking yourself too seriously. Don’t be afraid to laugh at yourself. Be a good sport when others play a prank on you. Don’t take everything that other

people say personally. They just might be having a bad day or they don’t mean it the way you take it.

4. Trying things (particularly in sports) that are outside of your abilities, just so you can fall on your butt, get back up, and try again, just to fall again. There’s something grounding (pun intended) in falling on your rear end. You can’t hide the fact that you’ve just fallen. It builds humility, and humility is a part of success.

Go and fail now. A repeated exposure to failure will diminish your emotional response to it in all areas of life, making you a more resilient and persistent individual.

3. I’m afraid of success

As strange as it sounds, people are often unconsciously afraid of success, and that makes them not only hesitate to start, but also to sabotage their efforts.

Fear of success is in essence a fear of changing the status quo. You know who you are now, and even if you’re battling with problems, at least these are known problems. As they say, a known devil is better than an unknown angel.

Getting started on a new goal is scary because you’re leaving your safe and comfortable surroundings and venturing into the world of unknowns.

How will you look when you finally lose weight? Will your personality change because of it? Will people judge you?

What will happen if you launch a successful business and no longer have to work for somebody else? How will it affect you, your family, and your friends? Will they support you or turn their backs on you, envious of your success?

What will happen if your foundation is discovered by a well-known journalist and suddenly you have dozens of interviews to give and thousands of donations to process? How will you perform as a president of your organization then? Will you be able to distribute the money in the best way possible?

What are you going to do if your screenplay attracts the attention of an internationally-recognized director and your work will have a chance to become the next big Hollywood production? Will you be able to handle the fame that comes with it? Will you be able to handle all of the complicated legal issues? Will the movie turn out as you hope it will?

All of these doubts and fears are valid, but they’re not a good enough

reason to stop working on your goals. Success — just like failure — is something you must accustom yourself to, and that can only happen when you have the real-world experience of it.

Imagine yourself standing in front of a hanging bridge. You take the first step and feel the bridge slightly swaying. You take a few more steps and slowly get used to the rhythm in which the bridge moves from one side to another. Each step brings you closer to your destination. You gradually get the hang of walking on the suspension bridge, but making just a single step doesn't turn you into a person who is completely capable of crossing the bridge with no fear. It's the sum of those steps, and their cumulative effect on you as you progress through that part of the journey.

In goal setting, a personal transformation also happens gradually. There's no need to be afraid that one day you'll wake up a completely different person and you won't recognize yourself. All of the changes will happen slowly, on a day-to-day basis, and you'll have plenty of time to say goodbye to the "known devil" of your status quo and welcome the "unknown angel" of positive changes.

Next Steps

Okay, you've discovered your most important goal or goals and you know how to start. Time to take a seat and wait for them to materialize with no further action on your part.

Just kidding.

Don't fool yourself that finding the right goal will be enough. Deeply caring about your goal is a must, but it doesn't automatically guarantee that you'll achieve success.

For many years, my primary goal in life was building a profitable business. I couldn't imagine myself as an employee. I would do everything and anything so I didn't have to have a regular job. I had the first step of the strategy, "Start" covered. I cared deeply about this objective and took the first steps.

Still, despite caring so much about my goal, I wasted most of those years essentially going in circles. When I adopted the next step in the Ultimate Focus Strategy, everything changed within two years.

What did I do? Here's where the next step comes into play…

STEP 1 — START: QUICK RECAP

1. The first step starts with the most important characteristic of the Ultimate Focus Strategy: you need to have as few goals as possible, so you can develop powerful focus instead of spreading yourself thin. Sacrificing less-important goals will give you more power to work on the most crucial objectives.

2. When choosing a goal for the Ultimate Focus Strategy, make sure it's something that can transform your life. If you absolutely need it in your life, you won't be able to give up.

3. Unsure about which goals you should pursue? Flip a coin. You'll know which goal is closer to your heart because you'll root for it. A second technique is to think about your most important values and think whether your goal is related to them. Lastly, if you exhibit unusual patience for a given goal, it's probably something that you absolutely need to achieve in your life.

4. It's good to be ambitious, but if you have absolutely no idea about how to accomplish a given goal, start small and adjust your goals when you acquire real-world knowledge. If you already have some resources at your disposal (such as some experience) that give you more credibility, feel free to set bigger goals.

5. There are three types of motivation: extrinsic (relying on external rewards/punishments); intrinsic (relying on internal rewards); and prosocial (relying on thinking beyond yourself). Intrinsic motivation is a *must*. Prosocial motivation can further boost your resolve. Extrinsic motivation is the weakest of the three types and isn't really necessary to accomplish your goal, although it's still good to have all three kinds of motivators working for you.

6. Think carefully about when to start. Sometimes the negative circumstances can pose too big of a challenge for a newbie and it's better to wait. For example, don't invest your money in the stock market if it's been too volatile recently. In addition to that, sleep on your idea of setting a given goal to see how you feel about it when you're not that excited. Lastly, make sure that you're aware of the dark side of working and reaching your goal and ask yourself if you're okay with it.

7. Before you get started with your goal, consider whether accomplishing another objective would be better to help you reach your ultimate goal. You can often benefit from setting a different, easier starting point. To start working on your goal, figure out the simplest, most essential action to take. Last but not least, get support that will help you to avoid procrastination and make excuses.

8. If you have a tendency to dream on paper, but you never take action to make your dreams a reality, embrace the tiny steps and tiny wins approach. Instead of obsessing about the final outcome and all of the steps that are needed to reach it, tune out everything around you but the tiniest action steps you can take now that will get you closer to the nearest tiny wins. Focus on *building* momentum to get yourself out of inaction.

9. If you're struggling to balance several goals at once, prioritize them, so you always know which goals you can sacrifice and which ones are non-negotiable. In addition to that, try to combine working on several goals simultaneously, if possible.

10. You'll handle a fear of failure if you stop avoiding failure. Deliberately put yourself in situations when you're likely to fail, so you can get used to the feeling and realize it's not a big deal.

11. If you have a fear of success, realize that change will happen gradually. You'll be able to notice changes and get used to them as they happen.

Chapter 3: Step 2 — Focus

Now that we have covered the first step, we can concentrate on the essence of the strategy itself: focus. It's the most critical component of the UFS and the reason why (after years of going in circles) I finally built a successful business.

The overarching idea of the second step is to choose and stay on one path until you reach your destination. No matter how shiny the things on either side of your path may be, you can't deviate from it. In the end, it's plain old "trudging on" that will take you to the top of the mountain, not venturing into the bushes to explore all of the possible shortcuts (that rarely exist, anyway).

A professional athlete won't achieve excellence if they keep changing their coach on a monthly basis. It might take them a few tries to find the right mentor, but once they find them, a relationship that produces world-class results lasts years or decades.

A person who wants to start a family won't achieve their goal if they keep frequenting casual dating sites instead of dedicating themselves to getting to know one person better. Of course, they need to meet new people to set up the dates, but at some point, they need to focus on just one person. Dating apps can only take you so far.

An entrepreneur won't build a successful business if they keep writing down business ideas, but never turn them into real-world companies. And while it does take some stumbling and several attempts to find a business that has potential, eventually they have to dedicate themselves to just one venture.

A person who wants to get fit won't lose weight or improve their physique if they keep changing their diets or workout plans every week. They might need a few weeks to find a diet or workout plan that fits their lifestyle and unique situation, but once they discover it, it's plain old persistence, all the way.

Let's go beyond general ideas and illustrate this step with several examples from my life.

In business, the key to success isn't launching one company after another. If you keep starting businesses, but never dedicate yourself to making one of them as big as possible, you'll just end up with a bunch of projects taking up all of your time in exchange for little to no financial reward.

You don't get a half of a financial reward for a half-finished project — you

get a big fat zero. Successful entrepreneurs become successful because they become experts about their products, services, niche or industry and dig as deep as necessary to find the gold they're looking for. And most importantly — they finish what they start.

I wasted six years of my life launching one project after another without ever fully committing myself to any of them. I could never launch anything successful because I never dedicated myself to any of those businesses in the long term. I felt they were full-blown businesses, but they were nothing but half-finished projects.

Everything changed when I decided to launch a new business with a different mindset. Instead of adding another little project to my portfolio, I decided to build an actual company. In the end, I wasn't the right person to run that business, so I sold it for a small amount of money, which made it my first successful business exit.

Equipped with a new mindset, I launched my next venture — a self-publishing company — and it became wildly successful. The difference? Encouraged by my previous small success, I vowed to not launch another company until I made this one work — and it has made all the difference in the world. Several bestsellers later, I'm still here, going strong and growing my business, as I should have done with every single business before it.

To illustrate the importance of focus with another story of mine, let's talk about achieving fitness goals. This happened before I consciously started applying the Ultimate Focus Strategy in my life. In retrospect, though, it's a perfect example of following it.

When I was 21, I was more than 30 pounds overweight. I had been slowly gaining weight over the years, due to a bad diet. It took me a long time to realize that if I had stayed on this path, I would have ended up morbidly obese. But when the fact finally dawned on me, I wasted no time.

I stumbled upon the Slow-Carb Diet (developed by bestselling author Tim Ferriss and described in his book *The 4-Hour Body*[11]) and went all in by following its guidelines to a T. Instead of switching my diet every month like so many dieters do, I stuck to one eating pattern and lost all excess weight within 3 months. Other lifestyle changes soon followed. I never went back to my old physique.

Let's talk about one last example from a completely different area of life —

self-confidence. I suffered from extreme shyness until I was about 20.

One day I realized that I couldn't go on like that. I had to double down on this problem and put myself through an extreme therapy. I gave myself a challenge — within the next three months I would strike up 50 conversations with beautiful women. And to make it even harder, I would approach them all on the street in the middle of the day. I was going all in.

To this day, I remember the paralyzing fear I had before my first approach. I knew logically that nothing bad would happen, but my body felt like it was ready to die, because of all the adrenaline that was circulating in my system. Despite this fear, I managed to act, and it forever changed my life (I even got a phone number, though nothing came out of it). The next conversation was easier to begin. Soon, my shyness evaporated and I was able to talk with every stranger — including beautiful women — with no anxiety.

In each of the stories I've just shared with you, the common denominator was staying faithful to one single effective strategy (and usually a simple one, at that). This is often boring, but absolutely paramount to achieve results quickly.

Now that you understand the importance of sticking to one path, but before you start following it, you need to know how to actually find it. Let's talk about that.

How to Find the Right Path to Follow

Following a proven path will eventually take you where you want to go. However, first you need to find it, and here's where the second step begins.

There's a simple process you can follow to test different courses of action. By following this process of testing, you'll quickly dedicate yourself to the right path instead of getting stuck in an endless loop of testing one wrong strategy after another. Here are the steps:

1. Do your homework

Start with doing your homework and researching various strategies that can help you achieve your goal. It can be reading about the ten most popular diets, exploring some of the most common workout plans, learning about the most fundamental business models, or reading summaries of the biggest bestsellers about the topic you want to master.

The key here is to look for what's proven to work. A breakout strategy is often nothing else but gimmicky marketing. Beware of any "revolutionary"

claims. Aim for “tried and true.”

As an example, if you want to build a successful business, stay away from any sites that describe shady “make money online” schemes and instead read books by renowned entrepreneurs or legitimate websites for entrepreneurs like Forbes.

If you want to educate yourself about investing, don’t delude yourself that there exists a robot that will generate 500% monthly ROI for you. Instead, grab some books by the most knowledgeable investors with a proven track record or visit Investopedia.

If you need to lower your blood pressure, don’t fall victim to exotic plants and “miracle” supplements that can supposedly bring your blood pressure back down to healthy levels within a few weeks. Listen to science, not outrageous claims invented by marketers.

If you want to learn a foreign language, don’t delude yourself by thinking that this new incredible language learning software will make you a fluent speaker in a week. Instead, stick to what’s been working for people for centuries — actually talking with native speakers and learning directly from using the language in real life as often as possible.

Some exceptions do exist. New strategies, business models, diets, workout plans, apps, theories, etc. appear regularly. However, it’s difficult to weed them out if you don’t know much about the goal you want to achieve. For now, it’s easier to follow a proven path and readjust later, if needed.

2. Eliminate

Next, eliminate every strategy that doesn’t sound sustainable, especially when considering your own unique situation. Think of your limitations, preferences, past experiences, etc.

For instance, if I had to lose weight again, I would discard every diet that recommends a low-fat approach because many of my staple, healthy, high-protein meals contain fat. Moreover, I know from experience that I don’t function well on a diet low in dietary fat.

If you were looking for a business to start but you don’t understand, don’t use, and don’t care about mobile apps, you would ignore every business idea related to that domain. On the other hand, if you were into technology, this could be one of the primary possible strategies for you.

Be ruthless here. If your gut is telling you that a certain strategy won't work for you because it doesn't play off of your strengths, discard it. However, don't make the mistake of eliminating every single strategy just because they require some uncomfortable changes in your life.

Rejecting every diet simply because they tell you that you need to eat less is not reasonable, because you'll end up with zero strategies to test. However, rejecting a diet because it requires you to buy expensive supplements or meals that you can't afford *is* a good move.

3. Research again

Now that you have written down a few strategies, research them again in more detail and primarily pay attention to their cons and criticism. If you're still interested in following them after hearing about their drawbacks, you're most likely going to find them sustainable for you. Imagine having to deal with all the bad things on a daily basis for months or years.

For instance, if you decide to consider a low-carb diet as one of the potential strategies you'll focus on in order to get fit, can you really imagine yourself going months without eating foods high in carbohydrates like bananas, apples, rice, or whole-grain bread?

If one of your possible business models is a software-as-a-service company and you're not a programmer, will you really be able to sell effectively without knowing exactly how your software works?

If you want to find a better job and one of your new possible career paths is business-to-business sales, are you aware of how long it can take to close a deal or how persistent you need to be with follow-ups to achieve anything? Can you imagine yourself chasing after CEOs day after day to try to sell them your product?

You shouldn't rush through this process. Investigate every strategy carefully and sort through them based on how suitable you think they'll be for you. It takes time, but in the end, it greatly simplifies things because you're getting rid of every strategy that has a high chance of failure for you.

4. Pick one strategy

The next step is to pick *one* strategy that sounds best to you and stick to it for long enough to get some results. Exclusively sticking to one strategy for a period of at least a few weeks (or sometimes months, depending on how long

you need to wait for the first results) is necessary, in order to judge whether it has the potential to be effective for you.

If you're lucky, the strategy will bear fruit and you'll be able to commit to it in the long term. If not, you'll have to go back to the drawing board and try another strategy. Don't worry if it's the latter; you won't always get it right the first time.

When do you know that you've found a strategy you should dedicate yourself to? Here are some pointers:

1. It starts producing results and those results can be maintained (for instance, losing a pound/half a kilogram per week) or grown further (for example, making $50 in the first month, $100 the next month, and so on) without altering the strategy.

2. You can generally stick to it on a daily basis and don't mind its drawbacks very much (doing the same things over and over can get boring with time, but don't confuse that with the permanent inability to sustain it).

3. You're starting to see it as a normal part of your life instead of a burden you want to throw off your shoulders as quickly as possible (in other words, even if it's hard, you still find it enjoyable or at least bearable).

The biggest mistake you can make here is to look for a perfect strategy that will be easy to maintain, super enjoyable, and produce quick results. You'll rarely, if ever, find such a strategy. We're looking for the most optimal choice, but not for perfection.

When do you know that you should change your strategy? Here are three indicators:

1. You don't get any results or the results you get aren't what you signed up for, despite following the strategy to a T, particularly if the results are nowhere near the average results a newbie can get with other approaches.

Please note that you can't judge the effectiveness of many strategies after only a few days. In most cases, it's best to give a strategy an honest try for at least a few weeks.

Example: you chose a diet that promised you would lose at least 5 pounds a month. In four weeks of following it you only lost 1 pound, even though your diet adherence was within 90-100%. This means that you should probably change your diet.

Example #2: you chose a diet that promised you would lose weight slowly — 2 pounds a month. Four weeks later, you had indeed lost 2 pounds. When you decided to follow this strategy, you accepted that it's a slow approach, so everything is fine here. Keep going.

2. You absolutely abhor following a given strategy on a daily basis. You wake up frustrated at the thought that you need to do the same things yet again.

Make sure to differentiate between your temporary discomfort when making uncomfortable changes and the strategy actually not being a good fit for your personality.

Example: your new business requires you to make dozens of phone calls a day. You squirm and sweat before making each call and you know that burnout is only a matter of time because you hate talking with people so much.

On the other hand, if you were an extrovert and the calls would simply make you nervous, but then you'd greatly enjoy the actual conversation, this wouldn't be a good indicator that the strategy is not for you.

3. You suffer from unexpected drawbacks of the strategy and you find them hard to sustain.

Example: you started a body-building workout plan to get in shape. At first, you enjoyed all of the exercises, but then — despite using good form — some of the exercises gave you immense back pain that goes away only if you stop performing them. A visit to the doctor's office reveals that your body is built in such a way that certain movements will always cause pain. It's clear to see that it's time to change your strategy, even if it's otherwise effective for you.

How to Overcome the Temptation to Deviate From Your Path

As boring as staying on the same path can get, you can't deviate from it if you want to reach your goal quickly.

When I was in the early stages of building my self-publishing business, I wasn't entertained all of the time. I didn't always enjoy writing thousands upon thousands of words every single week. Despite the fact that I enjoy putting my thoughts on paper, I wasn't always excited by the prospect of writing yet another page, yet another chapter, yet another book. But whether I was excited or not was irrelevant. What *was* important was my system of writing every single day and putting out books on a regular schedule.

When I train in *krav maga*, an Israeli self-defense system, sometimes my instructor tells me to spin in a circle while looking down at my feet. Then he proceeds to attack me and I need to defend myself, with the entire world spinning around me.

By doing so, we imitate how a real-world dangerous situation could pan out if I were hit in the face and needed to defend myself. This approach is the cornerstone of krav maga's learning process: you deliberately put yourself in less than favorable circumstances while training, so you're ready when such a situation unexpectedly occurs. This is not an enjoyable thing by any means, but it's an effective training strategy.

Your primary concern should be to build a sustainable process that you follow day in, day out. Imagine you're just a cog in your system that makes everything run smoothly. Your primary focus is making the process work, not looking to it for entertainment.

Whenever you feel tempted to change things before you achieve your goal, remind yourself about your priorities. If your current process works, don't change it just because you feel bored. Despite what many self-help authors and coaches like to say, life isn't always exciting, but if you "keep on trucking" even when you're bored, you *will* achieve your most exhilarating goals.

In addition, look for success stories about people like you who achieved success after following the same process. Reading "behind the scenes of success" stories regularly will help you imprint the *belief* that persistence and dedication do pay off, until your own success becomes fact.

If you need external motivation to stick to the process, give a trusted friend a substantial amount of money (that you wouldn't like to lose) and tell them that if you switch your strategy, they can spend it on whatever they like. Sometimes the perspective of losing something tangible and easily quantifiable is enough to tap into a powerful source of willpower.

How to Overcome Everyday Distractions

In today's era of ubiquitous distractions, the ability to focus on one task at a time is crucial. Unfortunately, most (if not all) of us struggle with maintaining concentration. If your mind wanders all the time and you constantly switch from one task to another, consider it one of the most urgent challenges for you to overcome.

There are several different ways that I've found effective to improve

concentration, discard the habit of multi-tasking, ensure that your days are productive, and get you closer to reaching your most important goals.

1. Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness, or concentrating your full awareness on the present moment, is one of the best exercises to improve your focus. Practicing it can be as simple as paying more attention when you do the dishes, drive, eat, drink, talk with people or play with a pet.

For example, when you're eating, try to focus entirely on the experience of eating instead of reading something on your phone or listening to music and mindlessly putting food in your mouth. Try to discern the different flavors, sense the texture, and smell your food. The goal is to become so consumed (pun intended) by the experience that — even if it's for only 30 seconds — you don't think about anything else but your meal.

I know, it sounds esoteric and a little bit weird. However, give it a go once or twice and see what you can learn from the experience. More importantly, think how you can later apply this approach when trying to focus on the more important tasks.

2. Take up a high-focus sport

Engaging in a high-focus sport is my favorite way to sharpen focus. I find it hands down the best way to improve your concentration in a fun, immersive way that later translates to other areas of life.

At the time of writing this book, my two primary high-focus sports are rock climbing and krav maga, the aforementioned Israeli self-defense system. Both of these activities help me tune out the world around me and focus on only one objective, such as reaching the next hold, clipping a rope, punching the shield, or performing a technique properly.

Virtually all kinds of sports can help you increase your concentration, but I find individual sports the best choice, simply because the outcome relies entirely on you and your ability to focus.

If *you* don't catch the ball, somebody else from your team can still save the situation. If you fail to clip your rope or defend yourself against a punch because you got distracted, you'll be the one falling down or getting hit in the face. To train yourself to maintain focus, few ways are better than experiencing immediate, painful consequences from letting your mind wander.

3. Read and write

Bestselling American writer Kurt Vonnegut once said, “I believe that reading and writing are the most nourishing forms of meditation anyone has so far found. By reading the writings of the most interesting minds in history, we meditate with our own minds and theirs as well. This to me is a miracle.”[12]

Indeed, reading and writing can be great forms of sharpening your focus. When you read — and I mean *really* read (not just glancing at the words while sitting in a noisy coffee shop) — you transport yourself to another world. Regularly reading in such a mindful way will help you calm down your “monkey mind” (in Buddhism, the constant chatter of the mind) and achieve more focus the next time you get distracted.

Writing is another side of the same coin, but instead of immersing yourself in the world created by another person, you immerse yourself in the world created by yourself — regardless of whether you’re writing a short story, a novel, a non-fiction book, or a blog post. As with reading, the key is to tune out the world around you, tune in to the world inside of your mind, and focus on putting the words on the page.

During some of my best writing sessions, I forget about the passage of time. Words, sentences and paragraphs become my sole focus — and that’s precisely what you need to practice awareness and improve your focus.

4. Be alive

Speaking of writing and writers, American novelist William Saroyan once gave this advice to aspiring writers: “The most solid advice for a writer is this, I think: Try to learn to breathe deeply, really to taste food when you eat, and when you sleep really to sleep. Try as much as possible to be wholly alive with all your might, and when you laugh, laugh like hell. And when you get angry, get good and angry. Try to be alive. You will be dead soon enough.”[13]

This is another dimension of being mindful — engaging in every activity and emotion as fully as you can. Obviously, it’s not possible to do it 24/7. However, even if you remember it just once a day and try to engage with your entire self in whatever you’re doing, it will still help you become more focused.

5. Surround yourself with beauty

Beauty — whether it’s beauty in human form, the arts, nature, or science — is captivating. If you’re hiking in the mountains and you see beautiful scenery,

you can’t help but become mesmerized by the view. If you see an attractive person, you can’t take your eyes off of them. If you’re standing in front of a great piece of art, it captures all of your attention.

Surrounding yourself with mesmerizing beauty is an excellent way to train yourself to single-focus. However, please resist the temptation to take hundreds of photos and never truly stop to take in the experience itself.

6. Travel

Traveling — especially to a foreign country that is completely different from your own — requires you to deepen your focus. Everything is new, strange, and stimulating. Is there a better way to practice focus than by putting yourself in a situation that forces you to be present in the moment, all of the time? In addition to sharpening your focus, travel is a perfect way to expand your comfort zone, and consequently, to enjoy dramatic personal growth.

When choosing a potential travel destination that would help you grow the most, think of unlikely vacation destinations. If you’re from the United States, London won’t likely be so different that you’ll be engaged all the time. However, if you go to, say, Oman, Papua New Guinea or Botswana, even the most mundane everyday things can be completely different than in your country of origin. The bigger the gap between what’s familiar to you and what a given place is like, the more it will capture your attention.

However, make sure that the place you plan to visit is only slightly outside your comfort zone. You need to feel challenged, but not overwhelmed so much that you want to immediately head back home. I don’t think you should travel to a little settlement in the middle of the Namib desert if you’ve never left your home country.

7. Be careful how you divide up your day

Generally speaking, you can divide your day into two periods: work and play.

Work includes your 9 to 5 job or your business, but it also includes working on your self-improvement goals, whether they’re related to your career, skills, relationships, fitness, health, etc., and other obligations, such as grocery shopping and cleaning.

Play includes everything else that doesn’t directly affect your growth or isn’t an obligation, but can be nonetheless important (or not): spending time with

friends, watching your favorite TV shows and movies, listening to music, playing video games, spending time on social media, etc.

These two areas of life can often mesh with each other during the day. You work a little, then you take a break to watch a quick video on YouTube, then you talk for a while with a friend on Facebook, then you check a new article on your favorite blog, then you check your email, and then… your day is done, because you've shifted from "work" mode into "play" mode and now it's so hard to return to your obligations that you'll stay distracted for the rest of the day.

For this reason, I strongly recommend a morning routine. It's the easiest way to enter the "work" mode and be done with it before the world starts to tempt you with distractions. However, such a routine isn't always possible, as not everyone can set their working hours, so I want to talk about the concept of laziness triggers.

Certain specific "play" activities make it almost impossible to return back to work. They trigger laziness, demotivate you, and decrease your willpower levels to such a low level that you can't find it in yourself to resume working. As a result, you spend the rest of the day in "play" mode or an ineffective state of work-play where you constantly get distracted.

For me, watching TV series in English is almost a sure-fire way to throw myself so far away from the "work" mode that I won't do anything productive for the rest of the day. Curiously, this doesn't apply to watching TV series in other languages because I watch them primarily for education, and only secondarily for enjoyment. Even though it belongs to the "play" realm, it hovers around the area of work and doesn't cut my productive days short like English-language TV series do.

Having discovered the negative effect of TV series in English on my productivity and motivation, I avoid them before I've accomplished my most important tasks for the day. And just to stay on the safe side, I'm very selective with what I watch and I follow very few series.

On the other hand, taking a break to check social media doesn't demotivate me as much as watching TV series. Consequently, I can spend, say, five minutes on social media and resume working with relative ease.

Last but not least, one of the biggest laziness triggers in my life were video games. I stopped playing them many years ago because it was extremely easy for me to *start* playing a game, but extremely hard to *stop* playing it, let alone get

back to work. To make the matters worse, the laziness-producing effect could linger for more than one day, robbing me of the motivation to work. Consequently, to this day I consider playing video games one of the worst activities one can engage in.

If you're aware of the effect of certain activities on your concentration and self-discipline, you can avoid ruining your day with what was supposed to be a short break but ended up wiping out your ability to focus for the rest of the day.

Don't delude yourself by thinking that you'll gather willpower to return to "work" mode after immersing yourself neck-deep in the world of play. Discover your own laziness triggers and make an effort not to engage in them until you're done with your most important tasks.

How to Focus on Your Goal When You're Dealing With Too Many Personal Challenges

When many things aren't going well simultaneously and you're busy putting out fires on a daily basis, it's challenging to find time and energy to work on your primary goal. Depending on the kind of the problems, there are two ways to deal with this challenge.

First, if the problems you're dealing with have long-term consequences and can greatly affect your life, they'll understandably suck energy out of you. Depending on their severity, sometimes it's better to forgo the Ultimate Focus Strategy for a period of time while you focus on handling the problems. Note that you can use a variation of the Ultimate Focus Strategy to deal with those problems by focusing all of your resources on eliminating them, one by one.

This is particularly important in the key areas of life like health and relationships. After a recent heart attack, a person shouldn't worry about building a business or climbing the corporate ladder so they can afford their dream home. A person who suffers from severe marital problems should push their long-term goals to the side while they work on resolving their relationship issues.

If the fires you're putting out don't have long-term consequences or aren't grave, identify the source of the most common problems and nip them in the bud. Make a list of your current problems, rate them from 1 to 10 (with 10 being the most worrying), and deal with the most difficult challenges first, but do so only after you take care of the most important task you need to perform to progress forward with your main goal.

More often than not, one fire leads to another (often bigger), and then another, and another, and it never ends until you deal with the root of the problem: a person who is responsible for them, a particular habit of yours, or a certain preventable combination of circumstances. Sit down with a piece of paper or open a blank document on your computer and brainstorm ways to deal with all those fires permanently, instead of mindlessly and endlessly running with a bucket from one place to another.

How to Focus and Take Action When You're Not Motivated

Many people find themselves lacking enough focus or motivation to get started. It doesn't automatically mean that you're destined to fail, but it's important to discern between a lack of long-term dedication and a short-term lack of motivation.

1. A lack of long-term dedication

A long-term lack of motivation most likely signals that you're working on the wrong goal. There's only one solution here: reconsider your goal and ask yourself if it's truly something you want to *achieve* or just enjoy dreaming about it.

Many people like to say "I'd love to be a millionaire" but never actually do anything to make it a reality. When asked why, their response is inevitably "It's too hard," "I won't get lucky," and other similar excuses that only reveal the fact they don't want it badly enough; they only enjoy dreaming about it.

If you were motivated enough to work on the goal for the first days, weeks, or months after you set the goal, but now you're struggling, ask yourself if you can imagine your life without accomplishing your goal.

If you can, it's most likely the wrong goal (I talk a lot about deciding when to give up and when to keep going in my book *Grit: How to Keep Going When You Want to Give Up*, so make sure to check it out if you're interested in reading more about this topic). If it were important to you, you wouldn't be able to imagine your life without reaching this objective.

If you can't imagine your life without making your dream come true, you're suffering from a temporary problem that has a simple solution — namely, befriending and enjoying the company of boredom and repetition.

Working on a goal that doesn't fire you up on a daily basis *may* signal that

you’re indeed chasing something you don’t care about. However, if you can’t imagine your life without accomplishing it, perhaps you just have the wrong attitude.

Motivational videos would like you to believe that elite performers jump out of their beds and work on their goals with a smile on their faces, never suffering from boredom or lack of motivation. They’re all such successful professionals because they’ve found the “secret recipe” that you don’t have, right?

Wrong.

After writing thousands upon thousands of words and releasing several bestsellers, I still struggle with writing. I don’t always wake up pumped up to write. In fact, at times it’s the last thing I’d like to do. I sometimes stare at a blank page, annoyed that I can’t come up with anything. But I still force myself to do it, and I keep on writing because that’s what’s important to me, even if it’s not always a walk in the park.

If you have a dream to build your own log cabin in the mountains, you won’t necessarily enjoy cutting every single board of wood. It won’t be always enjoyable to drive nails or carry heavy tools to the construction site and back to the toolshed. Callouses on your hands might be painful. Your back will hurt. But in the end, when everything is done, it will all be worth it.

No matter what you’re trying to accomplish, it *will* be repetitive, boring, and possibly painful at times. You can’t escape it, but you *can* embrace it. Once you fall in love with the everyday process — with the good days and the bad days, the easy and the difficult problems to solve, the exciting and the boring tasks — you’ll stop thinking of motivation in terms of an exhilarating feeling you have each day, and instead focus on what produces long-term results — a work ethic and a dedication that force you to work, regardless of how fired up you are (or aren’t).

2. A short-term lack of motivation

If you don’t struggle every single day, but sometimes encounter difficulties that appear insurmountable, the problem most likely lies in the inability to deal with procrastination and/or a habit of giving in to laziness when you have a bad day.

Much can be said about procrastination, but in essence procrastination is an expression of a lack of willpower. You choose short-term comfort (such as

watching a TV show) over a more substantial, long-term reward (such as getting closer to making your lifetime dream come true).

By far the best way I've discovered to deal with this problem (and yes, it happens to me, too) is developing the habit of doing the unpleasant or difficult task as soon as possible.

Stop thinking about putting it off and get to it. Try to tell yourself you'll only do it for one minute and then stop. It's an effective way of fooling your brain, because usually once you start doing it, you won't stop. The more often you overcome the temptation to procrastinate, the better you'll get at acting right away instead of procrastinating. It works just like training for something.

The entire reasoning behind this trick is that, once you gain momentum (which only taking action can produce), it will carry you forward with little to no additional willpower on your part. Overcoming the initial resistance is often 95% of success.

For me, as a writer, the most difficult words are the first words I write on a given day. Once I get in the groove, they start appearing on the page as if by magic.

Each time you feel like procrastinating, remind yourself that the only outcome of laziness is even more pain later on. Get started, gain momentum, and be done with it now.

If you don't necessarily suffer from procrastination, but simply take it easy each time you have a bad day, it's time to replace this habit with a more empowering one.

I like to tell myself that bad days are the most important days for self-discipline, because that's when it's most challenging to work — not when you're pumped up and full of positive energy.

In lead climbing, where taking a fall can sometimes have unpleasant consequences (such as crashing your body against the wall or hitting the ground), fear is your constant companion.

The fear compounds when you're tired, because that's when your technique starts suffering and the risk of an unexpected fall increases greatly. However, that's also when you learn the most about yourself. It's the unfavorable circumstances that strengthen you and help you get better at handling fear, and consequently, improve your performance and focus.

In her interview with Tim Ferriss (included in Ferriss' book *Tools of Titans*[14]), Amelia Boone (the world's most decorated obstacle racer) shared that she loves doing training runs in the rain and cold because she knows that her competition is probably opting out. What a powerful attitude to have!

People who can push their negative emotions to the side and still perform are the ones who succeed because, regardless of the circumstances, when other people give up they keep pushing.

Make a mental note to not let bad days influence your everyday routine. You might have less energy, negative emotions might try to take over, everything might look hopeless and meaningless. It doesn't matter. Do your job, anyway.

How to Prioritize What to Do

One of the most common challenges when you start to work on your goals is to prioritize which task to do first. This problem can be so difficult to solve that you can get stuck even before you actually start working on your objective.

There's only one guideline I follow to help me prioritize my tasks: I answer the following question, posed by bestselling author and real estate entrepreneur Gary Keller in his book *The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results*.[15]

"What's the ONE Thing you can do such that by doing it, everything else will be easier or unnecessary?"

Answering this one question will help you pinpoint the most important task that needs to be done before everything else. Think of the most fundamental basics of what you're trying to accomplish and seek the answer there.

If you want to start a business but you're paralyzed because you're unsure what to do first, ask yourself about the lifeblood of your objective. In business, it's sales. No company can sustain itself without sales. Your priority for now? Make sales.

If you want to get in shape, what would be the one thing that would make everything else easier or unnecessary? I'd say proper nutrition would make a world of a difference and help you get started, wouldn't you say? Your priority? Come up with healthy meals you'll eat on a daily basis.

If you want to eliminate credit card debt, exactly what is the root of your problem? It's either that you don't make enough money or that you are spending too much. Try to pinpoint the most optimal solution — perhaps taking up a side

job or eliminating some unnecessary expenses — so that you have one clear way to achieve your goal.

If you want to learn how to play tennis, it would be all about mastering the most useful strokes — forehand and backhand. You wouldn't worry about anything else at first, because if you don't know the basics, the advanced stuff doesn't matter.

Each time you're struggling with prioritizing your tasks, consider which task can make other tasks irrelevant or easier, and do that one first. Resist the temptation to procrastinate by first doing the easiest tasks on your to-do list. Instead, find a way to perform a task that will permanently take those less important tasks off your list.

How to Manage Your To-Do List

If you search for time management strategies, you'll find dozens (if not hundreds) of different methods you can use to manage your to-do list. I find books about productivity a perfect way to waste time: implementing the intricate time management systems they cover can often take days or weeks. And even when they are finally in place, they still don't solve the underlying problem. What's the point?

Instead, I suggest taking a different approach that comes down to two steps:

1. Think of what *not* to do first

Develop your "not-to-do" list. It boils down to making a list of tasks you should delegate or eliminate from your schedule. These unimportant tasks often steal the majority of your time, with little to no benefit.

Arianna Huffington (co-founder of The Huffington Post) once said, "You can complete a project by dropping it."[16]

A not-to-do list is the most important step you can take to free yourself from too many obligations. No matter which time management strategy you choose, if it doesn't focus on *reducing* the number of tasks, it will only help you perform them more efficiently instead of dealing with the root cause — that these tasks shouldn't have been on your list in the first place.

To provide you with some examples from my life, as a writer I don't preoccupy myself with tasks that don't directly affect the core of my business. I divide them into two groups and act accordingly.

In the first group are tasks that make little to no difference in my business. These are the tasks that shouldn't be done at all, either by me or by somebody else.

For instance, I spend almost zero time on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. I experimented with them, found them largely ineffective, and eliminated them from my to-do list. Everyone can talk about how crucial it is to maintain your social media presence. I don't care. While they're busy updating their profiles, I'm spending time doing what's essential: writing or producing other type of content that is more substantial and useful to my readers than a short tweet or Facebook post. And if I do decide to post something on Facebook, it has a clear objective, so that I don't waste time aimlessly updating my page.

In the second group are tasks that *do* affect my business (sometimes in a big way) but should never be done by me. This is because they either don't rely on my strengths (such as graphic design) or because, no matter how good I am at them, I need another pair of eyes to guarantee a good end result (such as editing).

Whenever you come up with a new task, first ask yourself if it should land on your *not-to-do* list, instead of your *to-do* list. Then ask yourself if the task has to be done by you. Often the only way to accomplish certain goals is via deliberate delegation.

2. Be as lazy as possible

The second step to manage your to-do list is to be as lazy as possible. I know, such advice coming from a personal development author sounds outrageous but bear with me…

Let's imagine I gave you a map that marked the location of two treasure chests. Both chests contain the same reward: $100,000 in crisp, new dollar bills. You can only choose one chest.

The route to the first treasure chest leads through a thick jungle (with crocodiles, snakes, and spiders) and takes five days to complete.

The route to the second chest takes 20 minutes and requires you to walk on a beautiful white sand beach, surrounded by calm, turquoise waters. There are no dangers on this route. It requires virtually no effort to reach the second treasure chest, which contains the exact same reward as the first chest does.

Which route do you choose? Any sane person would obviously choose the

easy 20-minute walk on the beach. Why on earth would you pick the more difficult path?

It's human's nature to be as lazy as possible. Every single invention was motivated by laziness: lightbulbs are more convenient than candles, it's easier to drive a car than ride a horse, it's faster to write on a computer than on a typewriter. We want things to be as easy and convenient as possible and there's nothing wrong with that.

Being as lazy as possible when applied to managing your to-do list means that you're as stingy with your time and energy as you can be. It boils down to prioritizing results over effort. If I asked you to dig a deep hole, would you rather do it with a shovel, toiling away for hours, or find an excavator and do it with almost zero effort in two minutes?

Most time management systems completely miss the mark because they tell you how to accomplish more by *doing more*. They teach you how to dig a hole with a shovel faster, instead of suggesting that maybe — just maybe — using an excavator would be more sensible. This comes back to the One Thing we've already talked about: pick tasks that can make other tasks easier or irrelevant instead of working just for the sake of working.

Hard work in itself is ridiculous because it glorifies *effort* over results, while it's *smart* work that produces results. You can't work intelligently if you think that the only way to *achieve* more is to *do* more. If it were the case, how would it be possible for two persons, each with the same 24 hours in a day, to achieve vastly different results? Does a millionaire work a hundred times harder than a person with ten thousand dollars, or is it perhaps because of the different way they use time?

Bruce Lee once said, "It's not the daily increase but daily decrease. Hack away at the unessential." Managing your to-do list gets easier the shorter it gets. Ponder on this the next time you're tempted to add fifteen tasks to your to-do list.

As a final example, let's go back to climbing yet again (I know, I know, but I can't help using these examples because they're perfect for the purpose).

A great climber doesn't need to have huge muscles. In fact, most climbers don't have the physique of a bodybuilder because big muscles can be a hindrance, due to their weight. What's more important is proper technique, and more specifically, your ability to take strategic *rests*. Or in other words, your

laziness.

A person who climbs a wall, huffing and puffing, trying to do it as quickly as possible, will probably fall. A person who climbs like a curious scientist, investigating the next most efficient moves, breathing calmly, and resting whenever there's an opportunity to do so, is the epitome of a good climber. Again — smart work, not hard work.

How to Stay Dedicated to the Process

You already know that it will take a lot of time to reach your goal and that it's all about the everyday process, instead of a single event. Consequently, the number one key to keep your mind focused is to ensure that your days are somewhat mechanical. It takes a lot of guesswork and distractions out of the way, because you always know exactly what you're going to do at a specific hour to get closer to your goals.

As a writer, currently my most important goal for the day is to write at least 1,000 words. It's a manageable word count, that I can maintain easily, given that I follow my everyday routine of writing first thing in the morning. The later in the day it is, the harder it is for me to start writing because I've conditioned myself to work in the early morning, which I've found to be my best time for doing creative work.

Discover your "magical hours" of maximum productivity and, as much as your everyday obligations allow you to do so, stick to them on a daily basis for the next several months until it becomes a habit for you.

I strongly recommend experimenting with early rising, even if you consider yourself a night owl. I used to think of myself as a night owl, but after numerous experiments, I found out that even though staying up late is pleasant and waking up early can often be a nightmare, I function better if I start my day early.

However, contrary to what many people are saying, waking up early is not necessary for success and I won't tell you that it's an absolute must to become an early riser. What's necessary is an established routine that makes you function at your best, and most importantly a routine that allows you to work with as few distractions as possible. It's typically early morning for most people, but it might be a completely different routine for you.

A bestselling book (*Daily Rituals: How Artists Work*, by Mason Currey) that examines the daily routines of 161 of the most inspiring individuals shows that what was most important was following a personalized routine that

maximized one's productivity and well-being.[17]

According to the book, while Benjamin Franklin woke up at 5 in the morning and worked between 8 and noon, Pablo Picasso didn't wake up until 11 and worked between 3 p.m. and 2 a.m., with a one-hour break at 10 p.m. French novelist Honoré de Balzac woke up at 1 a.m. and worked 14 hours a day until 4 p.m., with a one-hour nap at 8 a.m., while Victor Hugo woke up at 6 a.m. and spent most of his day on leisure, except for a 2-hour writing session between 6 and 8 p.m.

Please note that following an everyday routine doesn't only apply to career-related goals. If, for example, you want to get in shape, your everyday routine might be preparing healthy meals for the day ahead or going out for a 60-minute run. If you want to learn a new skill, it might be reading relevant books or watching tutorial videos for an hour every evening. If you want to eliminate personal debt, your routine might be to put five dollars a day in a savings jar and then use it to pay down a debt when it reaches a given amount (for example, when you have set aside $100).

Schedule the most important activity in your calendar and stick to it on a daily basis. You never forget to brush your teeth (or I hope so!) because you always do it at the same time, in the same situations. Think of working on your goals in the same way.

One Trap to Avoid

There's one trap you need to be aware of and avoid it at all costs. If you fall victim to this trap, you'll follow the wrong goal, which won't necessarily lead you to the success you were looking for.

It's best that I explain it with an example of my own first, and then provide a general rule to follow.

Back when I was 21, when I lost weight, I wanted to go further and develop a lean, strong and healthy body. I learned how to set up a workout plan, educated myself about a bodybuilding-friendly diet and started going to the gym with more dedication.

Some time passed and I found myself stuck. I had some results, but they weren't satisfying enough. I started hating the process.

What had happened?

I had chased artificial numbers one must supposedly reach in bodybuilding,

deluded that there's no other way to achieve my original goal than by performing a certain number of reps of certain exercises, with a certain weight.

Whenever I looked for an answer to the question whether bodybuilding is necessary to develop a muscular physique, I always got the same response: it was absolutely necessary. I wasn't aware of the fact that I had gotten so brainwashed by all this information that I fell victim to the confirmation bias (which I've already discussed in the second chapter).

I equated lifting weights with achieving my original goal, and kept fooling myself that it was the only way forward, even when I developed a strong dislike for working out at the gym.

Little did I know that I had invited chaos in my life because I had replaced my own standards with the bodybuilding standards.

I had wanted to have a lean, strong, and healthy body that I could use in a wide variety of activities. Instead, I was developing a body that was mostly good at moving a piece of iron up and down. In order to "bulk up," I gained weight I didn't need, to develop muscle mass that was mostly useful in the gym context, but not in real life.

When I finally saw the light and realized that I had strayed from the path that led to the original goal, I stopped going to the gym. Rock climbing (a sport that harmoniously develops your entire body in a way that's actually useful on a daily basis) and krav maga (a self-defense system that, in addition to teaching you how to defend yourself, helps you get in great functional shape) became my new tools; they delivered results more quickly and in a much more entertaining way, as well.

When setting your goal, consider the end result you *need* to achieve in your life. Try not to get fooled (like I was) by thinking that reaching one goal will mean reaching another, because that's not always the case. Have your *original* outcome at the forefront of your mind, not the goals you *think* you need (or somebody else told you that you need) to reach your final objective. This will help you avoid chasing the wrong goal and using the wrong strategy.

Let's finish this subchapter with three more brief examples.

If you want to become financially independent and retire by age 40, don't equate getting a well-paid job with having reached this goal. You're seeking financial independence by the time you're 40, not a senior management position. While climbing the corporate ladder *can* be your focus for the next ten years (if

that's what you think will help you reach your goal), getting to the top is *not* what you're after. Don't let the corporate environment and ideals cause you to lose sight of your final destination.

If you want to become a great public speaker, don't confuse it with completing a public speaking course or getting some kind of credentials that prove that you can present to an audience. The ultimate goal is measured by how you actually feel on the stage and how well the audience receives you, not a piece of paper you keep in your drawer.

If you want to become a healthy and fit person, don't let any popular-at-the-moment diet fool you that following it means being healthy and fit. While many of those diets can indeed help you achieve your goal, your ultimate objective isn't to achieve 100% compliance with a certain nutrition plan; what you're after is your well-being, health and how you feel about yourself.

How to Cross a Plateau

Even the most persistent and dedicated individuals can find themselves stuck in a plateau they can't cross, no matter how determined they are.

You're on a diet and after months of successfully losing weight, you're stuck. It seems that no matter what you do, your previous approach is no longer working because you're losing very little to no weight. Should you change your strategy or keep going? I usually ask myself two questions in such a situation:

1. Is it possible that there's still progress, but I'm unable to see it?

The better you get at something, the more difficult it is to see progress. The learning curve is steep at first, which (contrary to the common understanding of the expression "steep learning curve") means there's rapid progress. Once you gain the initial knowledge, the curve gets more shallow, the progress rate is slower, and it gets harder to notice any improvements.

Sometimes you're not really in a plateau, but you've just advanced on your learning curve and need to accept that now progress won't be as rapid as it was before.

In dieting, a very obese person can easily lose a few pounds a week. The leaner a person gets, the less weight they can lose rapidly without muscle breakdown. Sometimes it can only be a half a pound a week or less. This is normal and you shouldn't confuse that with being stuck on a plateau. The last

few pounds of fat always take ages to lose.

If you want to learn a difficult skill, say, become a great golf player, you'll progress quickly at first. You'll be surprised how much better your performance will get every week. And then, one day, you stop noticing such results. The progress will still be there, but instead of comparing yourself on a weekly basis, it's time to shift to a monthly (if not quarterly) comparison. Again, this is normal and there's no plateau here. Your strategy is still working.

2. Is the strategy scalable or does it have an end point?

Some strategies are scalable until a certain point. Then there's an end point, where their effectiveness greatly decreases or they stop being useful at all.

In dieting, if you're no longer losing any weight, it's possible it's time to switch from your diet with no calorie counting to a more precise one. An obese person who switched from their usual fast food diet to eating whole foods won't likely need to count calories for a long time. Elite bodybuilders can't guesstimate their portions; they need to weigh every meal and calculate calories and macros (protein, fat, carbohydrates), in order to burn fat while losing as little muscle mass as possible.

Generally speaking, the more elite you want to get, the more precise you'll need to be, whether it's losing weight or achieving anything else.

Simply lifting heavy weights won't cut it for a lean person who wants to enter a bodybuilding competition. They need to readjust their workout plan to include exercises that target specific parts of their bodies that they want to improve.

If you want to pass a challenging language exam to certify your skills, simply talking with native speakers might not be enough to get your formal credentials. You'll need to pinpoint any specific issues you have (such as constructing phrases in something other than the present tense or using the correct modifier) and work on them one by one to reach your objective.

If you find yourself in a plateau and you're sure there's no progress being made, it's possible you've exhausted your strategy and it's time to readjust your approach. Follow the same process as choosing a new strategy and sticking to it through using the Ultimate Focus Strategy.

STEP 2 — FOCUS: QUICK RECAP

1. The second step comes down to choosing one path and staying on it until you reach your destination. Resisting the temptation to chase after shiny distractions is paramount to success with the strategy.

2. There are four steps to find the right path to follow. Start by researching the tried and true strategies, instead of looking for a magic pill. When choosing the strategies to test, eliminate any approach that you can't imagine following over the long term. For example, if you absolutely hate running, don't start a workout plan that forces you to run every day. You can only go so far with sheer persistence. Next, research the remaining strategies more thoroughly, asking yourself if you can follow them for months or years. Lastly, pick one strategy and stick to it for at least a few weeks or months.

3. You should stick to your strategy if it's scalable, doesn't come with too many drawbacks, and can easily become a part of your everyday routine. You should consider changing the strategy if it doesn't bring the expected results, you abhor following it, or there are unexpected inconveniences that are part of the strategy and make it challenging to stick to it.

4. Whenever you feel the temptation to deviate from your path, remind yourself that success requires following a system. It might be boring or repetitive at times, but it's necessary for accomplishment.

5. To overcome everyday distractions, practice mindfulness, take up a high-focus sport, read and write, try to engage with your entire self in whatever you're doing, surround yourself with beauty, travel, and be careful of laziness triggers (activities that throw you out of your "work" mode and make it difficult or impossible to return back to work).

6. If you're dealing with too many personal challenges at once and they're so severe you can't maintain focus on your most important goal, apply the Ultimate Focus Strategy to your problems instead of focusing on your main objective. Resume working on your dreams when you're done putting out fires.

If the problems aren't so paralyzing and you can continue on toward your main goal, rate them from 1 to 10 (with 10 being the most worrying problem) and deal with these challenges one by one, starting with the most difficult — but only *after* performing your key action for the day that will get you closer to your primary objective.

7. You can lack motivation permanently or suffer from a bout of discouragement. If you were motivated enough to work on your goal in the beginning, but now you can't force yourself to keep going, ask yourself if you can imagine your life without accomplishing it.

If you can, it's probable your goal is no longer the right goal for you (or perhaps it never was). Reconsider it. If you can't imagine your life without reaching a specific goal, this means that the goal is right, but your attitude about the process to reach it is not. It's time to embrace boredom. Focus on the daily actions and remind yourself each day that they will take you where you want to be.

If you're suffering from a short-term lack of motivation because of procrastination, train yourself to do the difficult things the moment you feel the first pang of discouragement. The longer you hesitate and let the emotion build, the harder it will be to overcome it.

If you sometimes lack motivation because you just don't feel like working, remind yourself that unless you have genuine reasons not to keep going (for instance, you're sick and can't work out), bad days are there to test your resolve. Keep pushing to grow your mental toughness.

8. Prioritize your tasks by asking yourself one simple question: "What's the ONE Thing I can do such that (by doing it) everything else will be easier or unnecessary?" The goal is to find a task that's so important that even if you don't do anything else during the day, you'll still be moving forward.

9. Looking for a way to manage your to-do list? Instead of testing dozens of time management systems, focus on just two steps: developing a not-to-do list and being as lazy as possible.

When you make a list of what you shouldn't do at all, suddenly you'll free up a lot of time that you could never find to accomplish your most important tasks. Often, the problem with time management isn't that there's not enough time to do everything. The root problem is that you want to do everything, but you shouldn't.

As controversial as it sounds in a self-help sense, being as lazy as possible means that you should be as efficient as possible. Humans are lazy by nature, and it's not a bad characteristic if you leverage it the right way. Always be looking for ways to do something more easily (say, by looking for an excavator to dig a hole, instead of doing the mindless work of digging for hours and hours

with a shovel).

10. Stay dedicated to the process by developing an everyday routine to ensure that your days are mechanical. Discover the best period of a day to work on your goals and stick to it religiously.

11. When setting your goal, be wary of confusing it with another, related goal that won't necessarily help you achieve your original objective. It's easy to confuse the two and take the path that will divert you from where you want to go. For example, a person who wants to get healthy shouldn't confuse it with following a specific, rigid nutrition plan. The final measure is how this person feels about their health, not whether they follow a specific miraculous diet that supposedly ensures perfect health.

12. If you find yourself in a plateau, ask yourself two questions. First, investigate if it's really a plateau. Perhaps you're not noticing results because you're so far on your journey that progress is slower than in the beginning. If you're sure that's not the case, consider changing your strategy. Some strategies become ineffective at a certain point and you can't follow them indefinitely. Find a new (most likely, more precise) strategy to progress further.

Chapter 4: Step 3 — Get Fascinated

Setting the right goal and focusing on one strategy can go a long way toward helping you reach your objectives. However, if you want to supercharge your results, developing a (positive) obsession is a must. Since the word "obsession" can produce negative associations and might make you think you need to take an unsustainable, unbalanced approach, I'm going to use the word "fascination" throughout the book instead.

Fascination means developing an intense interest in reaching your goals. When your goals captivate you, just like watching a great movie or reading a well-written book, you find yourself unable to stop.

Fascination is an essential part of the strategy because, as much as I'd love you to have the ability to achieve your goals with sheer self-discipline and persistence, that's not the case for the great majority of people. Falling in love with your goals will help you keep going, even when you don't really feel like doing anything. It will also make the process of working on your goals more sustainable.

If you're wondering why you can't seem to achieve your goal despite having a powerful reason why and a solid strategy to follow, the reason might be that you're not fascinated by the process. While you don't necessarily have to love everything about working on your goals, it is vital to have a passion for the *process*, and that comes from making it a deeply-rooted part of your life.

I can't do a better job of explaining what I mean by that than using a straight-to-your-face quote from successful entrepreneur and bestselling author MJ DeMarco, who writes in his book *The Millionaire Fastlane: Crack the Code to Wealth and Live Rich for a Lifetime*, "to hit the top of your game, business or otherwise, you have to eat, live, and shit your thing. If you're dabbling in ten different things, your results will be dabbling and unimpressive. Focus on one thing and do it in the most excellent way."[18]

Eating, living and erm… *defecating* your thing is precisely what fascination is about. By including your goal in every part of your life, you create an environment that helps you progress. As a result, since your goal becomes so deeply embedded in your everyday life, it fuels the fire to keep going, even when the process isn't comfortable or easy.

However, please keep in mind that this kind of fascination eventually needs

to mature to be sustainable. Neglecting every other part of your life and throwing balance out the window is not a good way to stick to your goals.

Think of it as a new relationship.

During the first few weeks or months of the relationship, you're so infatuated that you can't spend a single minute *not* thinking about the other person. You want to be with them as often as you can, and if you can't, you think what you'll do when you finally get to share their companionship again.

You can't sustain this phase forever. It helps to develop the strong initial bonds, but in order for the relationship to be sustainable, you can't go around with your head in the clouds for the rest of your life. At one point, the relationship needs to mature into a "proper" love, where an explosive, fast-burning infatuation is replaced with a more balanced solid and consistent emotion that can be with you forever, without leading to an unhealthy fixation.

Consider a story of two language-learners: Bob and Mary.

Bob wanted to learn Dutch, while Mary wanted to master Spanish. They both started with a strong motivation, with Bob wanting to move to the Netherlands and Mary wanting to visit several Spanish-speaking countries.

Bob wanted a more structured approach with an English-speaking teacher, so he started taking language classes at a local language school. He spent three hours a week learning the language with an American teacher who spoke Dutch proficiently.

Mary, on the other hand, decided to immerse herself in a foreign language right away and hired an online teacher from Mexico for a fraction of the price of what Bob was paying. She decided to start with three one-hour classes a week, as well.

Both Bob and Mary set the right goal and religiously followed one strategy instead of jumping from one thing to another. They also both had the same, powerful reason why they wanted to achieve their goals.

A year later, when Bob moved to the Netherlands, he resorted to using English because he couldn't understand anyone as easily as he had hoped he would. Mary, on the other hand, spoke fluent Spanish with ease while she was exploring the countries of Central and South America.

What had made the difference?

Mary fell in love with learning. She didn't satisfy herself with three classes

per week, despite them being more challenging than Bob's because her teacher didn't use much English during classes. She went to great lengths to spend more time using Spanish than English. She was fascinated by Spanish and made it a part of her everyday life.

When she was going about her day, she forced herself to think in Spanish. She jotted down words she used frequently when speaking English with friends, looked them up in a dictionary and added to her spaced repetition flashcard program. She replaced American movies and series with Spanish titles. She listened to Mexican music and visited websites that were written in Spanish. When she was shopping, whenever she could, she read the labels in Spanish. She also made a few Spanish-speaking friends and spent time with them whenever she could.

Her old friends considered her crazy, but she was on a mission and it paid off handsomely.

On the other hand, while Bob stuck religiously to three classes a week with a professional language instructor, he didn't have such a strong emotional relationship with Dutch. He didn't consider it necessary. After all, he had a great teacher and a structured program. Besides, he was already putting in a lot of work. Unfortunately, as it turned out a year later, his lack of fascination proved to be a mistake that cost him job opportunities.

How to Get Fascinated With Your Goal

You can do endless things to develop a strong fascination with your goal. I once traveled abroad with a scale in my backpack so I could keep track of my weight. I was so driven to lose weight that I wouldn't forgive myself for skipping one day of weighing myself. And yes, the scale had to be the same, in order to make consistent measurements. And yes, I can understand why you probably think I'm crazy.

In retrospect, I'll admit it's not necessary to be so zealous. It can often do more harm than good, so let's focus on three key areas to pay attention to if you want to get fascinated by your goal.

1. Your thoughts

You carry your thoughts with you wherever you go. It's your choice whether you occupy your mind thinking about the latest episode of your favorite TV show or ways you can make your business succeed or improve your performance when playing tennis.

Make a conscious choice to spend as much time as possible thinking about your goal. Come up with new ways to accelerate your progress. Imagine yourself performing the actions needed to reach your objective.

Motor imagery (the act of visualizing your performance) has been proven to work to a varying degree in contexts like sports,[19] music,[20] and even dieting (an interesting piece of research suggests that repeatedly imagining eating a food can reduce its real-world consumption[21]).

It's important to note that visualization works best when you imagine the actions you take to improve your performance, not when you imagine the future reward. This can be dangerous, as studies suggest that *imagined* goal achievement reduces motivation for *actual* goal achievement[22].

For example, if you want to learn programming, imagine writing lines of code, educating yourself about your chosen programming language, and thinking about how to solve particular challenges when coding.

If you want to become a great golf player, imagine hours spent playing the game, practicing with each golf club, in a variety of situations and conditions.

If you want to find a significant other, visualize setting up dates with interesting people, getting to know one person on a deeper level, committing to them and trying to be the best partner in the world.

If you want to retire to Florida by the time you're 55, imagine the actions you'll need to take to make it a reality: saving enough money for the move, putting your current house on the market, finding a buyer, searching for and finding the house in Florida and finally, moving there.

Please keep in mind that you don't visualize in place of taking action; use visualization only when you can't work on your goals directly.

2. Your everyday routine

If you want to accomplish your goals, your everyday routine has to align with your goal. Centering as many waking hours as possible around your objective — thinking about it, educating yourself about it or working on it — is essential.

Aligning your everyday routine with your goal (in keeping with your capabilities and unique situation) is a key action step to ensure that you always spend adequate energy and time working on or at least thinking about your goal.

If you want to build a business but you have a day job, change your routine so that you wake up at 5 a.m. and work on building your business before you go to work. At work, whenever possible, think of your business. During a lunch break, instead of wasting it on useless chit-chat with colleagues, watch a video or two with sales advice or check your inbox and reply to a customer. When commuting, listen to business podcasts or ponder possible improvements to your venture.

When I discovered that staying up late makes me less creative than waking up early in the morning, I changed my routine to become a better writer. I'm not a fan of getting out of bed at five in the morning, but I love the effectiveness and quality of my writing, once I shake off sleepiness.

When I was working on my goal to overcome shyness, I also changed my everyday routine. I used to spend the majority of my time at home. In order to become a confident person, I had to go out, attend new events or go to places where I didn't feel entirely comfortable. Without changing my behavior, I wouldn't be able to achieve results quickly.

What do you need to do to make your everyday routine more success-friendly? Find it out and do it.

3. Your habits and hobbies

The third area to change are your habits, and by extension, any other behaviors you like to engage in because you enjoy them. Success requires sacrifices. Eliminating or replacing some of your habits and hobbies will further strengthen your focus and aid you in achieving your goal.

When I doubled down on learning Spanish, I switched most of the American TV shows and movies for Spanish-language media. The change was uncomfortable at first (it's not as enjoyable to watch a movie if you understand less than 50% of the dialogue), but in the end it produced a huge change in my comprehension and now I understand well over 90%.

When I went on a diet, I had to switch my favorite meals and the habit of eating sweets on a daily basis to healthy, but less tasty alternatives. I missed indulging, but I knew that it was necessary to eliminate that from my life in order to reach my goal.

When I decided to overcome my fear of heights, I stopped avoiding heights (like any person with that phobia usually does). I started seeking them, even if later I hated myself for putting myself into such scary surroundings. (My most

spectacular performance included crouching by the cliff, squealing in fear, and then retreating on my buttocks away from the drop because I was too afraid to stand up again.)

If you want to achieve success, you need to be able to adapt and make all the necessary changes — even if they're uncomfortable at first — to structure your life around the goal you want to accomplish.

Brainwash Yourself

Positive brainwashing will help you keep negative thoughts at bay and fuel your resolve to keep going. Here are three main techniques to consider:

1. Read your personal vision every day

Your personal vision is a document in which you describe your ideal lifestyle after accomplishing your most important goals. Write down an inspiring story of how your life will look as a result of sticking to the process. The more detailed it is, the more it will fire you up and remind you why it's so important to keep going.

Re-reading your personal vision every morning will set the right tone for the day. It will also keep your thoughts revolving around the process you need to follow to make your vision a reality.

I won't share my personal vision here because it's deeply personal. To give you an example, here's a short example of how you could write it:

I wake up in a spacious, sunny beachfront house with my beautiful wife at my side, smiling at me with that mesmerizing smile of hers.

Each morning I go for a quick jog at the beach followed by some bodyweight exercises. I'm in great shape, look good, and feel stronger than ever.

I prepare a healthy, light breakfast that I eat with my wife on our sun-soaked terrace.

Since my business is fully automated, it's only my decision whether I want to work on it myself or spend my day doing something different.

This example is only a short excerpt. Your vision should be longer so that it covers every single important area of your life, including:

- where you live (type of a dwelling, location),

- relationships (spouse, family, friends, associates, mentors, etc.),

- health and fitness (your diet, physical activity, etc.),

- work (business or career),

- hobbies (what you do for fun),

- self-actualization (the meaning of your life), and

- spirituality (religion, beliefs).

I'm aware that it might sound a bit hokey, but at least try writing down your vision and see how it makes you feel. If anything, at least it will help you clarify what you'd like to achieve and whether the actions you're taking today are getting you closer to this goal.

Your personal vision will likely change every few months or years, so whenever you feel your current vision no longer resonates with you, make the necessary changes. It should be a living document that guides you in the direction that you'd like your life to take.

2. Write down a list of your top 10 personal principles

Your personal philosophy — including the most important principles you follow — is another key document I suggest reading every single day to empower yourself. I've already shared the list of my most important principles in my book *How to Think Bigger: Aim Higher, Get More Motivated, and Accomplish Big Things* (you can download it for free), but here they are again for your reference:

1. I never give up on anything that's important to me.

2. I don't care what anyone thinks about me. The only approval I need is my own.

3. Time is my most important asset. I always focus on achieving more with less time spent.

4. I'm always honest. Lying is for cowards.

5. I always think carefully before making any promises, because I always keep my word.

6. Growth happens outside my comfort zone. Security leads to mediocrity.

7. I refuse to take an ordinary approach because I want to live an extraordinary life.

8. Nothing is impossible for a man who refuses to listen to reason.

9. Abundance is all around me. Scarcity is the mindset of the poor.

10. If it's not fun, I don't do it. If I have to, I find a way to delegate it.

The point of these rules is to give me guidelines to follow that apply to the most important issues in life. Thanks to reading them on a regular basis, they're now instilled in my mind and guide me whenever I need to make a decision.

Come up with your own list. Feel free to use mine or modify it as you wish. Just make sure that your rules are empowering and support your growth and happiness instead of limiting it ("Trust nobody" wouldn't be a good rule to follow if you wanted to live a happy life).

If you haven't been following any principles in particular, think what kind of rules you'll need to reach your ideal lifestyle.

For instance, one of the primary forces guiding me in life is personal growth. I know that in order to feel happy, I need to keep reinventing myself, learning new things, acquiring new skills and having new experiences. Consequently, it was of utmost importance to me that one of the rules talks about expanding my comfort zone (rule 6) and that there are no limits to what I can accomplish (rule 8).

This exercise isn't about merely writing and reading some rules. I want you to actually use them as your guiding stars.

I've found that when I have a clear list of principles, making correct decisions that keep me on the right path is easier.

For instance, my rule number 9 says that the world is an abundant place and that only the poor keep everything to themselves. Consequently, I share a lot of my materials for free with my readers. This rule has been instrumental in helping me reach readers all over the world and to sell thousands upon thousands of books.

3. Build a success bubble

This will probably sound politically incorrect, but I'd rather help you than avoid talking about hard truths simply for the sake of being "correct."

Successful people hang around successful people. They stay away from anything or anyone that brings negativity in their lives — and so should you. You're under no obligation to hang out with people who constantly complain,

make excuses, and waste their lives doing nothing to improve themselves.

That's not to say that a successful person will shun the companionship of a person who's early in their journey to reach their goals or that they're condescending to everyone but their group of snotty billionaires. And that's not to say that there aren't any successful jerks and that every wealthy, fit, healthy, or smart person is perfect or better than everyone else.

It's not about judging a person's worth by their accomplishments, but rather by their mental attitude to life and people around them.

To build a success bubble, create an environment that induces and reinforces positivity, support, personal growth, happiness, etc. This will help you program your mind to these positive emotions and behaviors, too, instead of distracting it with excuses, complaining, blaming, etc. — behaviors that, even when you consider yourself a strong-minded person, can infect you with negativity.

The answer as to what you consider positive and what you consider negative depends on your individual situation. Sometimes you can't escape negativity because it might be instrumental in helping you achieve certain goals. For example, if you want to become a successful psychiatrist, there's no escaping negativity. In such a case, have your end goal in mind and try to redirect it into something constructive and useful.

For example, I stay away from people who party every weekend. Call me judgmental if you want, but if a person's only hobby in life is to get drunk, they won't enter my social circle. This might not exactly be a good filter for you if you want to make it big in the world of entertainment and need to get to know all the movers and shakers.

If a person is constantly blaming everybody but themselves for their failures, envies others and calls them names because "How dare they be successful!" I'll pass on this person's companionship, too. This filter is probably more universal, as I can't come up with a situation in which you'd find it helpful to spend time with such people.

Again, this might sound judgmental, but you shouldn't care what others think about your choices. To live the kind of life you want, you need to surround yourself with people who empower you. Just like you shouldn't feel guilty that you make an effort to have a healthy diet and feel great while others call you vain because "How dare you stand out from the crowd and not be overweight!",

don’t apologize for isolating yourself from individuals who don’t help you grow.

I also highly recommend not watching and reading news. I gave up following news ages ago. Today, whenever I stumble upon a news site, I can’t believe the amount of negativity oozing off it. Terrorism. Murder. Theft. Poverty. Doom and gloom. You might as well commit suicide now than go outside of your house, as there’s surely a murderous psychopath waiting for you with a chainsaw, right around the corner.

Unless you’re a journalist, you probably don’t have to follow general news from around the world. Do yourself a favor and stop poisoning yourself with the negativity delivered by the media. You’ll thank me later.

STEP 3 — GET FASCINATED: QUICK RECAP

1. The third step addresses the fact that even if you're a master of self-discipline, it's necessary to be fascinated by what you're doing. Developing an intense interest in reaching your goals and making it a part of everything you do on a daily basis will make it easier to stick to your resolutions.

2. There are three areas of your life that you should change to become fascinated by your objective: your thoughts, your everyday routine, and your habits and hobbies.

Get your mind occupied with thoughts related to your objective, so that even when you can't do anything to progress forward, you can at least think about what you'll do when you can. Visualize the process needed to reach your goals.

Change your daily routine so it aligns with your goal and any actions, sacrifices, and changes you need to implement to succeed (for instance, waking up early to work on your business if you don't have time during the day).

Last but not least, if necessary, sacrifice some of your habits and hobbies to find more time, energy, and/or opportunities to work on your goal. If you want to live the life of travel within the next five years, forget about traveling for now and double down on the actions needed to make it come true by generating enough income to do so.

3. Practice the art of positive brainwashing by writing down your personal vision and your most important principles, and then reading them every day. Describing your personal vision will help you discover how you want your life to look, and that in turn will guide you each day to make sure you're getting closer to that particular vision. Your most important principles will serve as a guiding star by helping you make decisions that will keep you on the right path.

In addition to that, build your own "success bubble" by developing more awareness as to who you invite into your social circle and how they affect your performance. You're under no obligation to spend time with people who have a negative impact on your life. In addition to that, avoid negative news and other negative stimuli that have zero positive influence on you.

Chapter 5: Step 4 — Stick to It

The last step of the strategy is what separates the winners from the losers. The ones who win go all the way, while the ones who lose stop halfway through or sometimes even just before the finish line.

How do you develop long-term resilience and determination? Is there anything you can do to minimize the risk of giving up due to unexpected conditions, discouragement, adversity or running out of the initial momentum?

Of course there is! The strategy won't be complete without addressing these common, often overpowering challenges. Let's get into it by getting to know the five most fundamental tips to help you keep going so that you can successfully introduce the last step of the strategy and reach its very end — achieving your final objective.

5 Tips to Stick to Your Resolutions Despite Hurdles and Challenges

Your journey won't always be easy or enjoyable. You won't always be as motivated as you were in the beginning. Likewise, you won't always exhibit the same level of persistence. In fact, you might be fired up today, and ready to give up tomorrow. The following five tips will help you remain persistent, even in those challenging times.

1. Think in terms of general trends, not occasional fluctuations

I've learned from my own personal experience that one of the most common tips to help you track your weight loss can be also one of the easiest ways to lose motivation and give up. I'm talking about weighing yourself once a week. Such an approach, while useful in certain instances, can lead you to thinking in terms of occasional fluctuations instead of general trends.

Imagine you're on a diet. Your spouse cooked a delicious spaghetti meal. You've been successfully losing weight for the past few weeks, so you don't spend time deliberating whether you can eat it. You're sure it won't hurt your progress, and besides, it's within your daily calorie limit.

When you weigh yourself the next morning, instead of seeing another pound less, you see you weigh two pounds more. You instantly forget about all

of the previous successes. It seems that your diet is no longer working and it's time to give it up.

In reality, consuming foods higher in carbohydrates or salt, drinking more water, or eating a big meal right before going to sleep can all make you gain a few pounds temporarily. This weight gain has nothing to do with actually putting on body fat, but who wouldn't get discouraged if they see their weight go up like that?

This dangerous phenomenon is the result of a negativity bias, in which things of a negative nature have a greater emotional effect than positive ones do. It commonly occurs when one is dieting, and it also happens in other areas of life.

When you're learning a new language, sometimes you'll speak flawlessly, and sometimes you'll struggle to articulate yourself. You're still getting better at it, but since humans have a tendency to focus on negativity,[23] you notice the bad days more than the good ones and start worrying that you'll never reach your goal of fluency.

You want to build a financial emergency fund. You developed positive financial habits and, for the first time in your life, have some savings and no debt. Unfortunately, your car broke down and you had to shell out for an expensive part. Even though you're still well on your way to reach your goal (with your new habits, you can rebuild your emergency fund within a month), now you think you're doomed to fail.

If you want to achieve success, beware of the negativity bias. Count your successes instead of your failures. Concentrate on the good days instead of the bad ones. Look at the general trend instead of occasional fluctuations. As for weight loss, note your weekly or monthly averages. Weighing yourself on a daily basis can be more motivating than doing it once a week, because then you'll be able to take an average that will smooth out fluctuations.

2. Keep it fun and challenging

When the initial momentum dies down, things can take a turn for the worse. You'll no longer feel as motivated to work on your goals or you won't be that eager to sacrifice other things for it. That's why, whenever possible, try to inject fun or challenge in your everyday routine.

For instance, to challenge myself, I decided to write a book that would be at least twice as long as my previous titles. This book is the result of that idea. I

could have continued writing books of the same length, but trying something new energized me and increased my motivation.

If you're learning a foreign language, one of the best ways to keep the process fun and challenging is to go on a trip to a country where your target language is spoken or if not possible, find native speakers in your area and hang out with them.

If you want to wake up at sunrise for the next 365 days, inject some excitement in your early mornings by performing different exercises, starting your day with various types of coffee or tea, or adding little activities or habits you'd be looking forward to doing when falling asleep .

If you want to save more money, you can introduce periodical challenges such as not spending a single penny for two or three days, selling stuff you no longer use, or trying to make as much money as you can by performing some side gigs.

If you want to lose weight, make it fun by trying new healthy meals or going to restaurants that offer healthy, diet-friendly food. If you're feeling adventurous, try to abstain from food for a day (but don't do it if you know it will end with an unscheduled feast).

Staying faithful to the same strategy is key to success, but it doesn't have to be boring. You can almost always inject fun and challenge into it. Don't be afraid to mix things up from time to time to boost your resolve and battle monotony.

3. Stop measuring yourself

Sometimes it's better not to attach any goals to an activity. Focusing on the activity itself and not measuring yourself lets you enjoy the process more, and that can help you remain persistent when otherwise you would become frustrated by not meeting your goals.

Obviously, you should still track your progress so you can get closer to making your dreams a reality, but if you sometimes take the pressure to perform out of the equation, you'll probably find yourself reinvigorated.

For instance, if you want to build a successful business, you don't necessarily have to always judge your performance by the monthly revenue or profits. Instead, focus on the value your business provides to your customers and think of ways you can help them even more. It will make you more attuned to

the needs of your clients, and such a counterintuitive approach can often yield better results than only focusing on the measurable progress.

In sports, it's not always about whether you can do something or not, but about how you feel about your performance. A workout that you simply enjoy — even if there's no visible progress — can replenish your sources of willpower more than yet another high-pressure training where you force yourself to do something beyond your abilities.

Managing long-term stress that comes from constant challenge is an important activity to help you stay determined to pursue your goals.

4. Become accountable

People who hold themselves accountable are more likely to persevere when the going gets tough. External pressure will keep you engaged and serve as a negative motivator by providing real-world consequences of giving up.

Accountability is a well-researched tool to aid in goal achievement.

In dieting, maintaining a food journal helps reduce food intake and make healthier nutritional choices,[24] with no other conscious changes in your everyday life.

Merely being aware of what you eat is enough to benefit from this effect, because your journal will show you (in black and white) your nutritional mistakes. You can fool your brain by saying you didn't really eat that much today, but you can't fool your journal when it says you've eaten a bag of potato chips, two candy bars, a pizza, and a bowl of popcorn.

In fitness, research shows that working out with a partner improves performance on aerobic exercises.[25] According to another study, the motivating effect is even stronger when you're working out with a person who is slightly better at it than you are.[26] Staying home isn't that easy when you know there's a fitness buddy waiting for you at the gym. And then, at the gym, slacking off isn't that easy either, because you don't want to be the worst-performing person in the room.

A language learning site (Duolingo) provides accountability in the form of gamifying the entire experience. Users get experience points and level up as they complete lessons, progress through a skill tree, and maintain a streak.

According to a study commissioned by Duolingo and conducted by professors at City University of New York and the University of South Carolina,

34 hours spent on learning Spanish through Duolingo may yield the same reading and writing ability as that of a student who finished the first college semester taking 130 hours.[27]

As a personal example from a completely different area of life, in my journal I used to describe in great detail every single approach I made when I was fighting with my shyness.

It was fascinating to compare a new entry to an old one and notice little improvements in my thought process or levels of self-confidence. My journal was my most prized counselor and helped me keep going, even when I was paralyzed with fear and doubting that I could continue.

This simple everyday process further fueled my fascination and sharpened my focus because I could see the story unfolding in front of me. Whenever I felt discouraged, I could go back to my old entries and remind myself of how far I had come.

There are two routes to implement accountability in your life: self-reporting (in a journal or by using an app or system like Duolingo) or reporting to another person (it can be one person or a group of people). It sounds simple enough, but there are some important things to keep in mind with both approaches.

Journaling

If you've decided to journal your progress, document your progress by jotting down any thoughts you have and re-read your older entries whenever you need to strengthen your resolve or learn useful lessons from your previous version of yourself.

It doesn't matter if it's a regular (paper) journal, a document on your computer, or an app on your phone, as long as you date each entry for future reference.

To make self-reporting more effective, journal every day, or at least on a regular basis, as soon as possible after any important event. Describe your successes, failures, feelings, doubts, questions, and conclusions. They will be of tremendous help to progress further. Think of it as a conversation with your close friend, instead of being a lifeless report.

Reporting to other people

If you decide to report to another person, make sure to find somebody who understands that their primary job is to keep you in check, not tell you how to do

everything (especially if they aren’t experts in what you’re trying to accomplish). The only exception is hiring a coach, but we’ll talk about that in a while.

Your accountability partner has to be at least partly invested in your success and desire it for you. If there’s even a slim possibility your partner will envy your progress, reconsider your choice.

It’s not a good idea to report your successes in dieting to an obese friend. Likewise, if you want to break out of your shell, it doesn’t make sense to have a shy person as your accountability partner. No matter how much those people can wish for your success, they might unconsciously feel bad about you accomplishing something they couldn’t. Instead, partner up with at least a slightly fitter person who’s on the journey to get in perfect shape or a person who’s working on their self-confidence or is already confident.

Last but not least, don’t recruit a lax person as your accountability partner. You’re not looking for somebody who will tell you it’s fine to give up. You’re looking for someone who will push your limits and bring the best out of you.

If you can’t or don’t want to report to another person face-to-face, consider joining a message board or forum made up of people who are interested in the accomplishing the same goal as you are.

There are forums for virtually every topic — fitness, entrepreneurship, language learning, finances, parenting, relationships, etc. — where you can start your own progress thread. People reading your thread will hold you accountable.

Last but not least, if you decide to hire a coach to shorten your learning curve and keep you accountable, take your time before committing to the person who will guide you over the next months or years.

I once hired a fitness coach to help me set up a new workout routine and diet plan. I should have known that something wasn’t right when he sent me my workout plan on the evening before starting the new program, thus not giving me enough time to review it and ask clarifying questions.

At first, he replied to my inquiries relatively quickly. Then he started taking longer and longer to reply to my emails and no longer appeared to be interested in helping me.

I didn’t feel his support, and my accountability system was gone. I started abhorring following the plan of a coach who didn’t care about his student.

In the end, we parted ways. At least he was professional enough to acknowledge he had done a bad job and gave me a full refund. Still, I could have avoided the entire situation by vetting him more carefully.

Don't repeat my mistake. Find a person you actually like who has good communication skills and will put your needs in front of everything else. If possible, do a test run for two to four weeks before committing to a longer contract.

Possible red flags include the coach being hard to reach (taking a long time to reply to your emails, not returning missed calls), giving you a cookie-cutter plan instead of personalizing it, and putting the coach's habits or preferences over your own (like forcing you to perform a certain exercise you hate just because that's what he likes to include in every workout plan).

5. Develop more patience

You'll need an immense amount of patience to reach your goals. Therefore, you'll need to train it so you can learn to accept any delays, troubles, suffering, and slow results. Here are several ways you can become a more patient person:

1. Relax

One of the most common reasons for impatience are sustained high stress levels. If you're walking around stressed out about everything around you, an unexpected delay or problems can cause an emotional meltdown. In my book *How to Relax: Stop Being Busy, Take a Break and Get Better Results While Doing Less*, I cover numerous ways in which you can reduce stress and consequently become a more patient person. Some of the most powerful ways to relax include:

- spending time with friends and family

- listening to relaxing music

- breathing deeply

- meditation

- spending time in nature

2. Practice mindfulness

We've already talked about mindfulness and how it can help you develop focus. It's also a valuable tool to improve your patience. In today's fast world, people want everything delivered immediately. Practicing mindfulness or

engaging in a meditative practice will help you tune in to the present moment and realize that sometimes there's nothing you can do to rush things. Certain processes take time and your impatience won't speed them up.

3. Make yourself wait

If you want to get better at resisting procrastination, you can train yourself by immediately doing the task you want to put off. The more often you do it, the more likely your default response to procrastination will be to nip it in the bud and take action right away.

You can become more patient by using the same mechanism. From time to time, make yourself wait, to get accustomed to the feeling and accept it as a part of your life.

For example, if you want to buy something that you like or schedule an exciting experience, don't purchase it the moment you come up with the idea. Give yourself a few days to wait.

This exercise, in addition to helping you get more patient, will lead to more happiness from your purchase, particularly if it's an experiential purchase (money spent on doing something rather than acquiring a new possession).[28] Moreover, chances are that after a few days of waiting, you'll realize you don't need to buy that new widget and you'll save yourself an unnecessary expense.

Delaying gratification is a great exercise not only to improve your patience, but also to become a more self-disciplined person. Stop and think before reaching for that chocolate, buying another pair of shoes, watching that new TV series everyone is talking about, or blurting out the first thing that comes to your mind. Reinforce patience instead of impulsiveness.

4. Get comfortable with discomfort

Impatient people get angry or frustrated because waiting is uncomfortable for them. They can't stand the thought that not everything can be available instantly and that many things require sacrifices and discomfort.

Therefore, voluntarily putting yourself in uncomfortable situations is another way to become more patient.

Learning difficult skills and engaging in activities that require patience (such as chess) is one way to develop humility and patience.

Temporarily abstaining from everyday pleasures (such as tasty food, a

comfortable bed, or hot water) is a yet another way to develop more resilience.

Lastly, facing your fears is a powerful method to reduce your sensitivity to unfavorable circumstances. If you jump out of an airplane despite a paralyzing fear of heights, you'll discover what true discomfort feels like. This will help you reassess your overreactions to what usually annoys you, makes you uncomfortable, or makes you impatient.

5. Rethink what patience means

As a final way to become a more patient person, there's a helpful mindset shift that can enable you to fall in love with waiting. It sounds impossible that an impatient person could not only learn how to tolerate waiting, but also to enjoy it, but bear with me for a second and you'll see how it works…

Every goal requires you to stay dedicated to it, often for a long period of time. Sooner or later, even if they have superior resources to help them succeed, people who are impatient and constantly become frustrated by the amount of time needed to reach their objectives will drop out.

As an example, it takes long months or years to build a successful YouTube channel. You can have the best video equipment in the world or be the world's most renowned expert in a given topic, but if you're not patient enough to stick to the process, you won't build a huge audience. If they consistently produce new material and keep improving it, a person starting with simple videos shot with their smartphone will eventually reach success, due to patience and growing momentum.

The longer something takes and the more patience it requires, the more people it filters out along the way, making difficult goals easier to reach than you might think because you are one of the last ones who are still doing it. Embracing this characteristic instead of complaining about it gives you a powerful edge because, even if you don't have superior resources, you can still outcompete those who do but lack patience.

Every day, thousands upon thousands of people self-publish their books. Among them are numerous self-help titles, and some of them are surely written by people who are much better writers or experts than I am.

However, unless you already have a big following, it takes more than one book to achieve success as a self-published author. You need to consistently write and release new books for months or years.

It takes a lot of patience to keep doing it for such a long time, so most authors — including those with skills or knowledge better than mine — drop out. I love that it's not easy to make it big in self-publishing. It levels the playing field, as long as you're willing to embrace the process.

The next time you grumble about the long and difficult process needed to reach your goal, remind yourself that right now, there are people — including those with better skills than you — who are dropping out, simply because they're not stubborn as a donkey. All you need to do is to keep going and let the impatient ones filter themselves out.

How to Bounce Back After a Failure

I'm not here to give you feel-good stories or guarantees that the Ultimate Focus Strategy will always work. You *will* fail, just like everyone else does. What matters is not the failure in itself, but whether you resume working on your goal after experiencing it.

Bouncing back can be hard if you fall off the wagon and it feels like all of your previous accomplishments have been erased and all of the progress is lost.

That's why whenever I fail, I like to come back with a bang, so I can feel like I've made great progress in just one day. This creates a powerful initial momentum that makes it easier to forget about the failure and keep going. This strategy is highly individual, though, because sometimes you might find it easier to pick up where you left off, with no adjustments.

For instance, if you had an unexpected cheat day, you can resume your diet with a lower calorie limit than before or even restart the diet with a full day of fasting. This can work like a charm, given that you aren't prone to any diet disorders or making up for the lost calories the next day. If you aren't sure whether you can control yourself, just return to your previous routine and be extremely rigid about it.

The only key is to make sure to bounce back as quickly as you can. Not drowning yourself in negative emotions like self-guilt or self-criticism is imperative, in order to resume your routine successfully.

I was once climbing an indoor wall and unexpectedly fell and hit the ground. The handhold that I happened to hold while clipping my rope into the first quickdraw wasn't properly screwed to the wall. Instead of letting the fear marinate by giving up on that route, I quickly resumed climbing. If I hadn't done so, I would have surely developed a more paralyzing fear.

In the case of bouncing back after a failure, the more time that passes between a failure and bouncing back, the more difficult it is to start again, due to the negative self-talk accumulating with each day of inactivity. Accept the failure and move on and it won’t affect your progress much. Cry yourself to sleep (thinking how weak you are) or induce self-guilt, and you’ll likely never come back.

STEP 4 — STICK TO IT: QUICK RECAP

1. If you want to stay determined, count your successes instead of your failures. Focus on the general trends instead of fluctuations or occasional bad days. Success is an outcome of a long-term process.

2. Whenever possible, keep the process fun and challenging to ensure you stay motivated and avoid dangerous energy-sucking monotony.

3. From time to time, try to not measure your performance and focus on the action in itself, with no attachment to the final result. It’s a good way to let go of performance stress.

4. Accountability is a powerful tool to help you reach goals. You can hold yourself accountable by reporting to yourself or to other people.

If you choose self-reporting as your method of accountability, don’t forget that it will only work properly if you use your journal as a way to have a conversation with yourself, not as if you were forced to prepare a boring report. Jot down your deep thoughts, questions you have, feelings that arise, etc. Periodically re-read your old entries and compare them to the more recent ones to spot mindset shifts, improvements, and to strengthen your resolve.

If you choose reporting to another person, make sure that your accountability partner doesn’t have a hidden agenda. A person who hasn’t achieved your goal isn’t likely a good idea for a partner because they can (often unconsciously) sabotage your efforts or be more invested in your failure than your success.

Be particularly careful when hiring a coach. Make sure to vet this person as carefully as you can, and start with a short commitment to get a feel of how your chosen teacher will work with you. Don’t accept a person who puts their ideas and habits over what you need or who ignores how your unique situation requires changes from their usual approach. Coaching is not a cookie-cutter business. If it feels like the coach does not address your unique situation, look for another coach.

5. Patience is necessary to reach your goals. To develop more patience, relax so you can better deal with stress that causes impatience. In addition to that, practice mindfulness, deliberately make yourself wait to get used to the discomfort of waiting, put yourself in uncomfortable situations in general to expand your comfort zone, and rethink what patience means by approaching it as

a filter that can help you achieve your goals.

6. Bounce back successfully after a failure by not letting yourself brood too long over the failure. Negative self-talk and self-guilt will only make it harder to resume your journey. Depending on your preference, either bounce back with a big bang that will produce extraordinary results right away, or get back to your previous routine (with no adjustments) and simply continue where you left off.

Chapter 6: Three Golden Rules for Sustainable Progress

The Ultimate Focus Strategy can be extreme at times. You tune out everything that doesn't aid you in achieving your goal to develop a laser-like focus and a fascination that can sometimes border on fixation.

This can become unsustainable if you approach it in the wrong way, so I need to reveal three rules to ensure that the Ultimate Focus Strategy can become a part of your everyday life, and not just a crash and burn undertaking.

In my book *How to Think Bigger: Aim Higher, Get More Motivated, and Accomplish Big Things* (you can download it for free on various retailers), I mentioned a metaphor about balance from James Patterson's novel *Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas*:

"Imagine life is a game in which you are juggling five balls. The balls are called work, family, health, friends, and integrity. And you're keeping all of them in the air. But one day you finally come to understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four balls… are made of glass. If you drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, nicked, perhaps even shattered."[29]

Be careful not to obsess excessively over your goal, particularly if it's related to work. You can always make more money, but you can't always recuperate your health, friends, family or integrity. Note that even if your goal is about becoming a healthier person, a better parent or spouse — one of the glass balls — you can't make the mistake of neglecting other important areas of your life. All of these glass balls are equally important.

This balancing act can be hard, hence here's where rule #1 comes into play.

Rule #1: Discern Between Needs and Wants

You'll have to make some sacrifices to implement the Ultimate Focus Strategy in your life, but they should apply primarily to the "less than critical" aspects of your life — your wants rather than your needs.

This is the key piece of advice: you absolutely *must* sacrifice something in your life to make the strategy work, but you *must not* sacrifice things that will be

hard or impossible to recover later. There's no glamour in losing your health, friends, and family while becoming a billionaire.

Here are a few examples of how to properly discern between needs and wants and only sacrifice things that *can* be sacrificed:

1. Cutting down on the amount of time spent with friends that aren't close to you, so you can work on building your business. It's not necessary to spend time with people you don't particularly care about, so it's a want. On the other hand, hanging out with close friends is an important part of your life. It's a need you shouldn't sacrifice.

2. Spending at least 15 minutes a day talking with your kids instead of deluding yourself that those 15 minutes are crucial to advance your career. Your family is your glass ball — a need, not a want. Falling in love with your goal *is* important, but not as important as your children. Sacrifice watching a TV series or two if you don't have time, but don't sacrifice family time.

3. Eating in a fast food restaurant because it's cheap and fast instead of eating healthy meals is another example of a bad sacrifice. Again, if you need more time, find another area of your life where you can cut out some unnecessary tasks, but don't sacrifice one thing that you absolutely *cannot* lose — your health.

4. We all need some time for ourselves, to unwind and recharge our batteries. This, in itself, *is* a need. However, spending all of that time watching TV or playing video games is a want, something you can sacrifice. If possible, try to combine taking care of your health with relaxation. A 30-minute nap will help you relax more than playing a game on your phone. A 60-minute walk with your spouse, friend, or kid will be more productive (while you also recharge and bond) than sitting in front of your TV with a bag of chips.

5. As we have already discussed in the first chapter, you'll have to sacrifice some of your smaller goals in order to achieve your big goal. You might have several important goals, but usually some of them will resemble wants, and some will be closer to needs. One of those that feels like a necessity to you will become your ultimate goal, while the other goals can and (if necessary) should be sacrificed.

The only exceptions here are your health and pressing relationship-related goals. If there's a danger of losing your health or spouse, you need to sacrifice other goals in your life to avoid dropping these vital glass balls.

As an easy rule of thumb, you can sacrifice any part of your life that won't produce negative, long-lasting results. Obviously, there are different shades here that you need to consider on a case-to-case basis: skipping one or two parties with your friends won't cause as much damage as forgetting about your kid's first match or presentation at school or neglecting a troubling health symptom of your own. Likewise, going to the movies with your spouse once a month won't kill your momentum with your most important goal.

Speaking of momentum, let's talk about rule #2 which is another key principle you must burn into your mind to make the strategy work in the long term.

Rule #2: When in Doubt, Choose Sustainability

I've learned this lesson the hard way and described it in my book *Daily Self-Discipline: Everyday Habits and Exercises to Build Self-Discipline and Achieve Your Goals* (in short, I overtaxed my body so much that I almost lost consciousness in an ice-cold pool).

The version of me from just a few years ago wouldn't agree with this rule, and chances are that if you're like I was during that period, you won't agree with it, either. But let me explain why it's so important to choose sustainability, even if it means slower progress.

I get it, you're a go-getter. You're fine with making all kinds of sacrifices, working on your goal every single day as much as you can. You *know* you can do it for as long as needed because you have a burning desire to achieve something worthwhile.

I applaud it, I really do. It's an excellent attitude to have, the mark of a pro.

However, it carries the risk of burnout that can destroy your momentum and send you back to square one.

A great example of such a situation is a dieter who begins an extreme diet and plans to maintain it for months to shed off excess pounds. A few weeks pass, and the diet becomes so unbearable that they revert to their old habits, or worse — gorge on food for several days in a row to recover from their extreme diet. In the end, they don't even end up in the same place as when they started out; they're taking a few steps backwards.

Consequently, make sure that whenever you're developing a routine, start slowly and pick up the pace from there.

Imagine somebody puts you in the fastest car in the world. You've never driven one, and you have absolutely no idea how it's going to behave once you accelerate to speeds that are two to three times higher than how you usually drive on a highway.

Would you immediately put the pedal to the metal or accelerate more slowly to get a feel of the car? Crazy teenagers excluded, you'd probably give yourself a few minutes to get used to the incredibly high acceleration before testing the car at higher speeds.

It's the same with your goals and everyday routine. If it's your first time working on a specific big goal, you don't know what to expect. Get a feel of how an easy routine feels first, and only then modify it until you hit resistance.

No matter how determined you think you are, always take into account whether you can perform the same routine — day in, day out — several weeks, months, or even years from now.

Sometimes your goal could use an extreme approach to get the ball rolling as quickly as possible. This includes situations like going on an extreme diet to rapidly lose a few pounds in order to encourage yourself to keep going or taking a complete immersion language course to quickly prepare for your move abroad.

These approaches can help, as long as they're short-term and transition into a sustainable, long-term-oriented process afterward. Again, the long game of the Ultimate Focus Strategy is a marathon, not a sprint. A sprint can help you get momentum, but it can't become your primary strategy because nobody can sprint for more than a brief period.

When talking about aligning your life around your most important objectives, it's also important to avoid creating a lifestyle of chronic stress. While you should fall in love with your goals, they shouldn't become such a focal point of your life that they start feeling more like a hindrance than a positive challenge.

There are two types of stress: eustress and distress. Eustress, also called positive stress, is beneficial (in moderation), while its opposite (distress) is *not* helpful and is linked with increased mortality.[30]

The difference between eustress and distress lies in your perception of them. If you think of a stressor as a positive challenge, you'll feel eustress and respond to it with a sense of meaning, hope, and vigor.[31] On the other hand, if you consider it a threat, it will become a source of destructive distress that

demotivates, frustrates, and can lead to withdrawal.

What can you do to perceive the actions you take to make your goals a reality as a *positive* challenge?

The answer is simple: make sure to push your limits slightly, at a sustainable pace, instead of taking on more than you can chew or setting your aims so far out of your reach that they become a source of frustration.

You need to feel hope and engagement when working on your goals. Whenever you get too frustrated or anxious, chances are your process is not sustainable because it requires more than you can handle. Slow down a little and transform distress into eustress by bringing the next tiny win within reach.

Let's explore this concept with a couple of examples, so you can understand the difference between your goals being a source of eustress or distress.

If you want to learn how to ski, effective learning and achievement happens on routes that are slightly above your abilities, not when you stand on top of a huge mountain and feel so paralyzed by fear that you tense all muscles and forget about the proper technique. In the first case, you can meet the challenge head on with excitement and focus-boosting eustress. In the latter, you won't be able to adapt to the stressor and either your performance will suffer or you'll withdraw, discouraged from trying again.

If you want to travel the world, but you've never been to a foreign country, going to a remote, exotic country (such as, say, Suriname) isn't the best idea, because it can produce more anxiety than you can handle. As a result, you might permanently lose your passion for travel because of that first, overpowering experience of distress. Stretching yourself gently at first (by traveling to countries that are only slightly different than yours) will help you associate travel with eustress, and help you work on your goal of becoming a world traveler in a sustainable way.

If you want to become a photographer, you'll grow the most if you focus on the nearest small goals that are within your reach – say, take photos of landscapes instead of trying to learn how to take pictures of flying birds, weddings or professional portraits. Build on top of your existing skills and ensure that each new photo you take excites you, instead of making you feel you're worthless at photography.

Rule #3: Fit It Into Your Life

The Ultimate Focus Strategy isn't meant to be a tool of self-torture. If it doesn't fit into your life, it won't work in the long term. The key concept here is *fitting it into your life*. I talk about fascination, but I mean it in a positive way, as a means of communicating how important it is to have a single focus instead of dabbling with multiple projects.

In the long term, there are two aspects of fitting the strategy in your life: rest days and readjustment periods. Let's talk about them in more detail…

Rest days

When you first read about falling in love with your goal, you were probably tempted to believe that this means that you can't take any breaks or that I expect from you to be a super hero who absolutely never falters.

That's not the case. neither I, nor you, nor anybody else in the world can work 24/7 for years on end. Ergo, we need to account for that fact and add another piece to the puzzle: rest days.

Having rest days simply means taking a day or two off on a regular basis to recharge your batteries and ensure you'll keep operating on a high level of performance. There are two important reasons why it's so crucial to take rest days:

1. Avoiding burnout and renewing your energy

This one is obvious. When you take regular breaks, you'll renew your energy before it drops to dangerous levels, and thus you'll be able to keep going for a long time instead of driving yourself to the ground every few weeks or months.

2. Gaining a new perspective

The second important reason why you need rest days is to gain a new perspective. Often, if you're on the verge of exhaustion, all of your creativity is used up. You're too deep in the woods to see the forest for the trees. The *least* intelligent thing you can do is keep going, fooling yourself that your used-up you, with little to no energy, can solve the problem with sheer persistence.

In bouldering, a form of climbing where you climb on short rock faces without a rope or a harness, there are no "climbing routes." There are "problems" — a set of moves with a starting and a final position. Climbers talk about "solving problems" because bouldering problems usually require more than just pure strength. You need to have proper technique, balance, and the

creativity to figure out the right moves.

At the beginning of a workout you're energized, with a full tank of energy and the creativity to solve problems. The more exhausted you get, and particularly the more time you spend on the same problem without progressing further, the more difficult it is to figure out the problem.

Your mind, initially open and ready to come up with creative solutions, is now stuck, unable to solve the problem. Add to that ripped skin, weakened grip, and general exhaustion, and the probability of getting to the top is nil. However, pack your stuff, go home, take a day or two of rest and come back, and you'll probably quickly figure out that one little change needed to solve the problem, or at least to progress further.

Solving a bouldering problem is a good metaphor for personal development. If you absolutely can't figure something out, remember that maybe it's not because it's out of your reach, but because you're too tired to see the obvious solution. Rest days — ideally taken at least once a week — will help you become more effective and, at the same time, make the process a little less frustrating.

Readjustment periods

To be sustainable, the Ultimate Focus Strategy can't assume that you operate in an ideal world, where you have boundless time and energy to do whatever you want. Therefore, the second aspect of fitting the Ultimate Focus Strategy in your life is what I call *readjustment periods*.

No matter how strong your resolve is, on some days you'll be more eager to work, and on some days you'll find it extremely hard just to get out of bed, or the circumstances will be less than favorable due to an external factor.

It's important to get yourself to take action on both of those days, but in the long term you'll find yourself on two types of waves: those perfect swells that make you feel like gliding in the clouds and those horrible waves, breaking all the time with no rhyme and reason.

In the perfect circumstances, things will be easier and take less time, so it makes sense to make the best out of them by introducing new habits, implementing new changes, and trying things far outside your comfort zone.

When the waves feel like they are plotting to kill you, slow it down a bit, limit your focus to the most important action steps, and try to stay on that wave

for as long as you can, ready to pounce again when the circumstances change.

To translate this metaphor to goal setting, imagine you want to lose weight and you live in a place with cold, dark winters and long, sunny summers.

Here, you'll encounter the best waves to shed that excess body fat during the spring and summer, when the days are warm, long, and sunny, and you actually feel like exercising, eating healthy, and getting into the best shape of your life. This is the best period to try new sports, kick-start a diet with a temporarily more extreme approach, and generally experiment with various approaches with vigor and deep reservoirs of willpower.

When it's late fall or winter and the days are cold, grim, and short, those perfect swells are nowhere to be seen. All you want to do is stay at home under a blanket while watching TV and gorging on delicious treats. It's human nature to "hibernate" a little during the coldest months of the year, so losing weight becomes a more challenging proposition.

That's not to say you have a green light to get fat during the winter just because it's harder to avoid temptations than in the summer.

This means that during winter, your primary job is to focus on the critical daily choices like filling your plate with fibrous vegetables so you can't even imagine fitting more food in your stomach.

Short, cold, and dark days don't inspire one to work out, so it's time to focus only on the exercises you like the most, preferably indoor activities so you won't make an excuse not to engage in them because it's too cold or rainy.

Sometimes your boss will ask you to complete a difficult, time-consuming project by tomorrow, your kid will get sick, you'll need to take the car to the shop, and you'll forget that you promised your friend to help him move his stuff to a new apartment.

It's only natural that in such a case you'll have less time and energy to work on your most important goal. However, what's key to try to accomplish during such a rough period (if it's possible at all) is to take at least one little action to ensure you won't lose your momentum. When the sky clears up, get back into your old routine and continue. Accept that things won't always be easy, but you can always progress forward — even if it's only a millimeter-long step.

THREE GOLDEN RULES FOR SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS: QUICK RECAP

1. The goal of the Ultimate Focus Strategy is to help you achieve your most important goals, but not at the expense of destroying your personal life, health, relationships, etc. Consequently, you need to know three principles on how to play the long game: discerning between needs and wants, choosing sustainability over fast growth, and fitting it in your life.

2. The strategy requires sacrifices, but according to the first principle, you should sacrifice your wants, not your needs. In other words, you can't afford to sacrifice time spent with your children in order to build your business, but you can sacrifice time spent with people who aren't your closest friends.

3. Choose sustainability over fast growth that can't be maintained in the long term. When developing an everyday routine, start small and start slowly. Increase the pace until you meet with resistance and stay there for the sweet spot of sustainability and progress.

Sometimes extreme approaches can work, but when you decide to use them, make sure they're only a temporary solution to kick-start a long-term strategy.

Also make sure that you experience eustress more often than distress. Eustress — the positive kind of stress — helps you perform at your best, while *distress* leads to frustration and discouragement. To perceive your goals as a source of eustress, stretch yourself slightly, instead of setting goals that are far beyond your present ability.

4. The Ultimate Focus Strategy that doesn't fit into your life won't work in the long term. If you can't see it as a part of your everyday life for the next months, years, or even decades, you won't sustain it. That's why you need to understand two key concepts: rest days and readjustment periods.

Rest days are purposely scheduled days where you take a break to recharge both your physical as well as mental energy. Taking such breaks reduces the risk of burnout and helps you see things from a new perspective.

Readjustment periods is a concept I use to describe the fact that we don't live in an ideal world. You'll have both good and bad days. Whenever you find yourself in less than favorable circumstances, try to do at least one most essential action to progress further with your goals. On the other hand, when things are

easy and you’re on a roll, don’t be afraid to experiment, try new things, and push yourself.

Chapter 7: The Missing Fifth Component — Maintain Your Success

The last chapter of this book will be short, but that doesn't mean it's less important than what we've covered until now. Quite the contrary. The missing fifth component of the strategy ties everything together by serving the ultimate lesson — that it's not only about reaching your goal, but also *maintaining* your success, which is often more difficult than achieving it. It all comes down to one rule…

Always Think Bigger

The moment you rest on your laurels is the moment the clock starts ticking to reverse your growth. Don't mistake it with not being happy with what you already have and become one of those people who, no matter what they get, are always unhappy because they want more. Appreciation is one thing, and the quest for growth is another. By always thinking bigger, you'll cultivate habits that will help you stay successful and attract even more of the good things in your life.

If you're a successful entrepreneur, don't merely satisfy yourself with what you have now and become complacent. Keep growing your business, try to improve your customer service, create new products, expand to international markets, or even consider launching a new business or a non-profit organization that is tied to your industry.

If you already speak a foreign language fluently, try to expand your colloquialisms to use expressions that only the native speakers use. Read difficult books that are written in that language, to be able to articulate yourself even when talking about complex issues. Talk with native speakers who have various accents so you can understand even the most difficult ones.

If you've successfully lost weight, set a new fitness-related goal to optimize your health and fitness even more. Try to get a flat stomach or six-pack abs, increase your strength so you can do one-arm pull-ups, train sprints, or try a new sport that will develop a different aspect of your fitness performance.

If you've dealt with personal debt, it's time to focus on the next step — saving the surplus income, building an emergency fund, and ultimately

reinvesting your savings so they can generate income without your direct, everyday involvement.

While working on your new, bigger goals, don't forget to maintain the old habits that have helped you become who you are today. I still expand my comfort zone on a regular basis, and even though it still feels as uncomfortable as always, I still do it because I know it's the only way I can grow as a person and maintain success.

Stay faithful to the behaviors that you exhibited during your entire journey, and they'll reward you with even more success in the future.

How to Accept (or Not) That Boring Is Good

A reader emailed me in response to my short article, "Boring is good." She's successful at what she's doing, but she's bored by it. She asked me how to keep doing what she's great at despite being stuck and ready for a change in her life. Before I answer her question, here's the article for your reference (you can get more such articles when you sign up for my newsletter):

Boring Is Good

In ecology, long-lived forests are an example of a sustainable biological system that can be productive indefinitely.

If you could observe an ancient forest from its inception to its current state, you won't see much change in how it operates. Trees don't say to each other, "Hey oak, this is boring. Let's not leaf out and do something else this year." Mosses don't say, "Screw it, that's boring. Let's pack our stuff and go grow in the desert."

A forest follows a simple, effective routine that has been working for thousands of years. We aren't trees, but we can learn a thing or two from their impressive endurance.

Big companies, media, celebrities, movies — they all like to sell excitement and glamour. However, in personal achievement, things are rarely that interesting. More often than not, the process is boring. But as the example of the forests shows us, boring is good if it leads to sustainability.

If you're about to set some long-term goals or you're already working on them, befriend boredom. Doing the same things over and over again is what leads to mastery and success.

Tennis players don’t invent new ways of hitting the ball. They practice the same moves hundreds of thousands of times. It’s boring, but it’s effective.

Successful martial artists don’t defeat their opponents with Hollywood-worthy kicks and punches. As Bruce Lee once said, “I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.”

Successful businessmen (with very few exceptions) don’t start one business after another. They commit themselves to the same business for years and become experts in their chosen industry. They might sometimes get bored with it, but the trade-off is worth it.

Embrace boredom. When in doubt, head to an ancient forest.

Boring Is Good — My Commentary

Few people can embrace boredom, but then again, few people in general achieve their goals — and those are usually the ones who are able to do the same things over and over again, day in, day out, until their dreams become a reality.

However, this doesn’t necessarily mean that if you want to follow the Ultimate Focus Strategy, you have to make things boring on purpose. We’ve already talked about fascination and making things fun whenever possible. It also doesn’t mean that if you finally become good at something, you need to stick to it forever.

Your process helped you become a great writer or musician, but you no longer feel creative. In fact, it takes you longer and longer just to write a single paragraph or record a new song, and you feel so stuck that you’re unsure if you can continue.

You have built a great business that made you wealthy, but secretly you’ve been despising it for years and find it harder and harder to do the same boring things every single day.

You’ve become great at a certain sport or skill that now defines you, but you no longer want it to be the focal point of your life.

When you become successful in a given career, it’s possible that one day you’ll feel the need to change things and try something else. We thrive on challenges and need them in order to feel alive. It’s human nature to embrace them. This can sometimes lead to sabotaging yourself and losing what you’ve worked so hard to get.

There are two routes I suggest to consider to handle this problem:

1. Create a new high-uncertainty area in your life

Sometimes the problem doesn't necessarily lie in being bored with, say, your business, career, a sport, etc. Often the root cause lies in the fact that you no longer feel uncertainty on a regular basis. Consequently, you don't feel challenged, and this lack of stimulation makes you think you need to change your entire life.

Try to introduce a new high-uncertainty area of your life. This means doing things that come with potential risks, fear, and subsequent exhilaration — strong emotions that will make you feel alive. Breathing fresh air into your everyday routine might be just what you need to look at your primary career from a renewed perspective.

Some examples of what you can do to introduce more uncertainty in your life include:

- Travel. Ideally, to a foreign country, and the more exotic, the better. It has to be an adventure, not just spending every single day in a hotel swimming pool.

- Extreme sports. If your health allows you, consider engaging in high-adrenaline sports like skydiving, surfing, rock climbing, paragliding, mountain biking, etc. This also includes other activities and sports that produce a burst of adrenaline, such as martial arts, bungee jumping, exploring the wilderness, etc.

- Do something difficult. As frustrating as it can be, failure is also a powerful motor for self-improvement. If you're excellent at what you do on a daily basis, chances are you don't fail as often as you should to feel challenged.

If introducing more uncertainty in your life fails and you still find yourself hating what you do on a daily basis, proceed to the second point.

2. Redefine yourself

Let's imagine you're a burnt-out writer. You no longer want to write, but writing has given you numerous opportunities and created the kind of lifestyle you've always wanted to live.

If you stop writing, you'll lose all of the benefits it offers you on a daily basis, such as a steady source of income and the freedom to work from home.

However, you just can't do it anymore. You've been feeling stuck and uncreative for many months. It's not just a case of gritting your teeth and to keep

on trucking.

Obviously, this is not just a case of a lack of excitement and uncertainty in your everyday life. You've become truly exhausted by your main job and desperately need a change. What could you do in such a situation to get unstuck?

I believe that if you find yourself at such a point, the only solution is to get out and start doing something else.

The only caveat here is that as much as you'd love to do it right now, it's better to do it in a calculated way so you can ensure a safe transition.

For a professional writer, it would be irresponsible to stop writing overnight without a plan B, hoping that things will turn out okay. Engage in other things as side projects until you find something that you can also be great at — possibly something slightly related to writing, but more exciting. Slowly reduce your writing obligations and increase the time and energy you spend on your new path. That way, you get the best of both worlds.

This advice may sound a little simplistic, but if it's been years since you've felt excited and you find it hard to wake up in the morning just to — yet again — do something that you hate, no amount of written advice can help you. You need to reach the breaking point, and it's better to do it in a controlled way while you still can.

Stay Focused

As a final rule, I need to emphasize that the Ultimate Focus Strategy is not a gimmick or a once-off thing. It's a way of life and a repeatable process you can use for each goal you want to reach in your life.

Focus *must* stay a part of your everyday life. As a successful person, it might be tempting to dabble with many things at once, but as you should already know, dabbling rarely (if ever) leads to any substantial results.

At one point, I forgot about this rule when I practiced five different sports at once — bodybuilding, rock climbing, krav maga, tennis, and swimming. Needless to say, I couldn't really focus on any of those activities and progress quickly.

I had to eliminate certain sports to make more mental space for the activities I enjoyed the most. This meant getting rid of bodybuilding, tennis, and swimming — sports I felt I didn't need in my life — so I could improve more quickly in rock climbing and krav maga — sports that I *do* need to perform

because they’re immensely entertaining and challenging.

Now I pay even more attention to how I distribute my mental energy. It’s a continuous balancing process, but the fruits of focusing exclusively on the most important things are well worth it.

THE MISSING FIFTH COMPONENT — MAINTAIN YOUR SUCCESS: QUICK RECAP

1. The missing fifth component — maintaining your success — comes down to always thinking bigger. Successful people who become complacent tend to lose the fruits of their success. Challenge yourself and constantly raise your game to ensure permanent growth and success in life.

2. If you're already successful in a particular field and now you can't overcome boredom, try to introduce more uncertainty in your life by taking up an extreme sport, traveling to exotic locales, learning difficult skills, or stepping outside your comfort zone in any other way.

If you still can't find energy and motivation to continue with your career, you most likely need to redefine yourself. Don't make a rash decision, though. Slowly explore your options and shift from one area to another as your skills grow and give you new opportunities.

3. The principle of limiting your focus to the most important things still applies, even if you're successful. Dabbling doesn't work, no matter how great you are. As a successful person, it might be tempting to spread yourself thin. You might think you can handle it. In reality, it will lead to the same virtually non-existent results as always. Pay attention to how you spend your mental energy and limit it to what you absolutely need in your life.

Epilogue

We've reached the end of this book, but your journey is only beginning. I wrote this book with one sole intention: to make you realize you have all of the power you need to achieve your goals, but you need to direct it toward one endeavor (or as few endeavors as possible) and manage it in the right way. This process of developing focus and setting the right aim is the Ultimate Focus Strategy.

For a final quick recap, the four steps of the Ultimate Focus Strategy are Start, Focus, Get Fascinated and Stick to It. After the right Start, a person Focused on the right strategy will develop a long-lasting Fascination that will enable them to Stick to It.

Each step is vital to the entire strategy, but I'll never claim that you have to follow my strategy (or anyone's strategy, for that matter) to succeed and that if you fail to do so, you'll be a failure.

Take what you think applies best in your situation or try following the strategy as closely as possible. It's entirely up to you. In the end, your gut knows better than I do what would work best for you.

If you could remember only one thing from this book, please let it be the concept of dedication. You'll never make enough progress to reach your destination if you spread yourself too thin or constantly chase after another shiny thing. Focus on one strategy and stick to it in the long term.

Imagine that you're at a bus station and you want to go to Perfectville, an imagined town where everything you want from life is waiting for you. Just get there, and your life will become fantastic.

You ask a friendly guy at the station to tell you which bus will take you there. He says, "Take any bus from the last bus stand with a big 'Successful Buses' sign nearby and you'll eventually get there."

Smiling, you hop into the first bus, make yourself comfortable and commence the journey. Two hours later you start getting anxious. Perfectville is nowhere in sight, and when you ask the driver, he shrugs and says, "We'll eventually get there, we always do." You tell yourself, "Fine, I just need to wait."

An hour later you start doubting the bus will ever get there. The views

outside of the window are bleak and dreary. It's impossible Perfectville would be located in such a hideous area, isn't it?

Moreover, your back starts aching, and you no longer find the bus as comfortable as it was in the beginning. You start to wonder, "Maybe I took the wrong bus?" You go and ask the driver again: "Is this bus going to Perfectville?" "Yes, it is. Why don't you sit patiently and enjoy the journey? We'll get there sooner, if you stop doubting me."

You obediently go back to your seat. You fidget and get so nervous, you can't just sit there any longer. You get up and approach the bus driver again.

"Stop the bus," you say. Shaking his head, the driver stops at the intersection and lets you out. The bus fades away in the distance while you stand in the middle of an empty intersection, waiting for the next bus to finally take you to Perfectville.

A new bus arrives 15 minutes later. Upon assuring yourself that the bus is going to Perfectville, you hop in with a huge smile on your face. The bus chooses another exit from the intersection than the previous one. "The last driver must have been drunk or something," you tell yourself. "Now I'm surely going to reach Perfectville."

Within minutes, you find yourself watching the same kind of unappealing views as in the previous bus. You're in a different bus, heading in a different direction, but something tells you it's probably not the right bus, either.

You decide to wait one hour and see if anything changes, but thirty minutes later you're done with waiting. Yet again, the journey has become uncomfortable, boring, and frustrating. Surely a bus to Perfectville wouldn't be so horrible. "Stop the bus," you tell the driver. Without a word, he pulls to the curb and lets you out.

Before you realize that you're at the same intersection as before, the bus passes from sight, heading in the same direction as the previous bus. Perplexed, you start walking back to the bus station. "Surely I must have confused the busses."

Meanwhile, a passenger who had sat unnoticed in the back of the first bus is now getting off in Perfectville. He was surprised at the crazy person getting off the bus at the last intersection on the way to the town, but shrugs it off and heads out to enjoy a perfect sunny day in the dreamland.

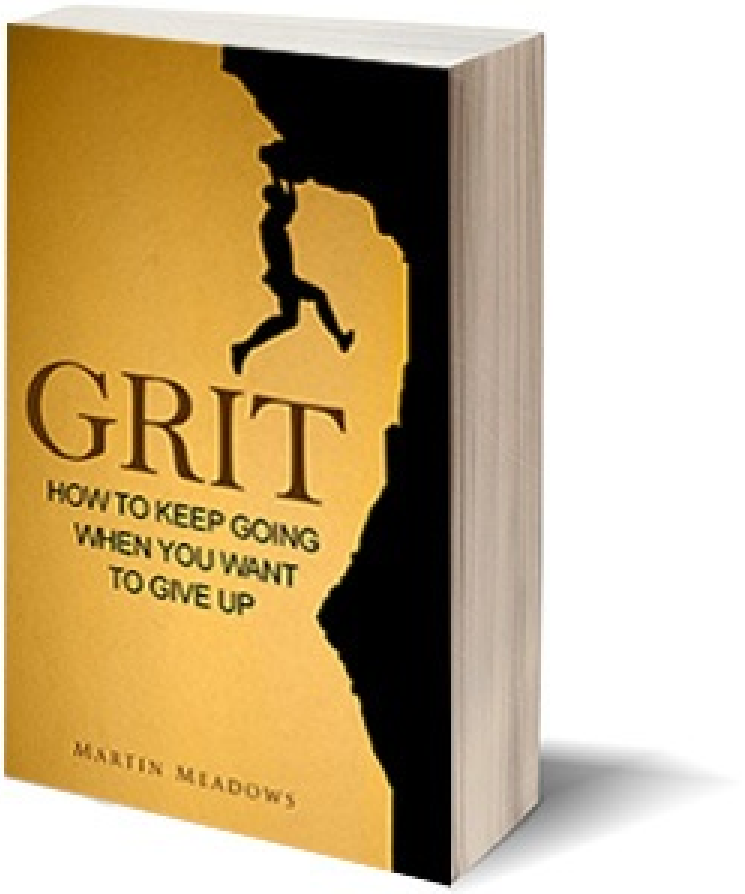
Obviously, if success were as easy as jumping on the right bus and patiently waiting for it to reach the destination, many more people would be successful.

Yet the essence of the metaphor serves perfectly: reaching a destination isn’t about changing your mode of transport whenever you get bored or the journey gets rough.

Heed the advice of the first driver: sit patiently, enjoy the journey, and trust the process. Add to that what you’ve just learned about the Ultimate Focus Strategy — and actually implement the advice and take action in the real world — and you’ll eventually get wherever you’re heading.

Download Another Book for Free

I want to thank you for buying my book and offer you another book (just as valuable as this one): *Grit: How to Keep Going When You Want to Give Up*, completely free.



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About Martin Meadows

Martin Meadows is the pen name of an author who has dedicated his life to personal growth. He constantly reinvents himself by making drastic changes in his life.

Over the years, he has regularly fasted for over 40 hours, taught himself two foreign languages, lost over 30 pounds in 12 weeks, ran several businesses in various industries, took ice-cold showers and baths, lived on a small tropical island in a foreign country for several months, and wrote a 400-page novel's worth of short stories in one month.

Yet, self-torture is not his passion. Martin likes to test his boundaries to discover how far his comfort zone goes.

His findings (based both on his personal experience and scientific studies) help him improve his life. If you're interested in pushing your limits and learning how to become the best version of yourself, you'll love Martin's works.

You can read his books here: http://www.amazon.com/author/martinmeadows.

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