



Catalyst

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For you, reader, in the hopes that something within will spark something in you—even a small idea, and this will

have been worth it.

The Necessary Quality: Being A Problem-Solver

April 24, 2014—10:42am

If there's one thing I learned over the past year, it's that problem-solving is really, really important. So damn important.

Without the quality of being a problem-solver, you will never apply the knowledge that you learn. Everyone is a solver to some degree, but the more developed and nurtured this quality is in yourself, the better off you will be.

I wanted to put a compilation of some of my fiction writing out there in a format compatible with e-readers. Never would have happened, if I hadn't solved the problems of writing out the actual stories, of which software to use

and how to put them into electronic format from mere text files. Sure, there were guides. But all of them either skimmed over the high level stuff (use this program, add chapters here and here, then click export) or were huge guides to the low-level stuff I didn't need yet (here's how to use the X tool that you need in one case of a thousand).

I had to combine those and then apply what I'd learned (which had lots of holes in it, for sure) as best I could.

That goes for everything in life. If you want something, you're going to have to go get it. If you are trying to get something, you'll eventually run into problems. And you'll eventually run into problems that only *you* can solve. Sure, you can have emotional support, even financial support. Sometimes you won't have any. The better you can problem-solve, the less that affects you.

When you feel good about your ability to do so, you're confident in

yourself; you become your own support.

Problem-solving, funnily enough, solves your problems. (Well, upgrades them).

You can tackle the things that are standing in your way, and chip at them until they crumble into dust before you climb over the rubble and take your spoils.

***Irresponsibility And Self-
Judgment Are Two Sides Of
One Coin***

January 27, 2014—11:10am

This concept took quite a long time to form, but it crystallized very quickly.

I've struggled with irresponsibility for a long time, and still do, even to this very moment. (I should be working on a problem set, but instead I'm procrastinating by writing this post.)

It was common for me to shrug off problems that required maturity and a response that was thought through. Worksheets in early years were easy. They were one and done. But homework assignments that required forethought and planning, like longer essays, were

put off 'til the very last minute.

This stretched to cover nearly everything. Personal and interpersonal problems and challenges would be swept under the rug of the back of my mind. I'd "deal with it later". Arguments with my parents, with friends, girlfriends, I'd push them away instead of dealing with it and learning.

Inevitably, every single time, it would bite me in the ass.

The irresponsibility multiplied

the scope of the challenges I was facing.

As a coping method, I developed a habit of harsh self-castigation. For all my shortcomings and mistakes, especially the ones resulting from irresponsibility, I would berate myself mentally and criticize without thinking rationally.

Things never really got better. I'd put off homework, brush off emotionally honest communication from the people around me and close to me, and close off,

escaping through the use of books. As I entered elementary school, that turned slowly into video games, which became a big addiction to the Internet and wasting time online in high school.

I just escaped. The irresponsibility continued, as did the self-judgment. I'd criticize myself for not being better about getting things done on time, or not being kind, open and honest with others. I'd feel horrible, make myself feel awful, the little voice

telling me I was a terrible person.

Then it would repeat all over again. The next week, a girlfriend and I would fight, and I would close off or shrug off responsibility for the promises I'd broken. After one of us had stormed off or things had been left unresolved for the day, I'd turn on myself. A mental tirade of insults, irrational criticisms, and harsh judgment would come forward, and once the storm was over, things went back to exactly the same way as they were before.

I'd go home, **escape** through the Internet by reading blogs about self-development (and never taking action), or reading fanfiction, or playing online games.

If I was mature enough (which I usually wasn't) to apologize or realize the extent of my actions, the **escapism** muted it. One day I'd apologize and the next, I'd expect things to be perfectly fine again. One day I'd realize I needed to get my shit together and get work done, then the next day I would

procrastinate on homework again and just play video games for hours.

I remember honestly feeling more mature because I was so judgmental of all my shortcomings. This is something I still fight against.

The maturity was an illusion, because as I said, the harsh, self-critical mentality was a coping method, not an honest solution.

I was being immature by being irresponsible. I remained immature by punishing myself mentally.

It's a pattern that we ingrain from childhood. We do something wrong, we get punished, everything is okay again and your parents hug you and everybody is happy again.

Rather than growing up, I was subconsciously acting out that pattern again. When I made a mistake, I'd punish myself with negative self-talk and other things like that and come out expecting everything to be fixed, and fixed for good.

This self-judgment is insidious.

As you grow up, the criticizing makes you feel like you've done something, but you really haven't.

It's the same as the efforts vs results mentality.

When you're young, you get rewarded and praised just for putting in the effort. As you grow up, your results become what matters.

Third grade: You worked so hard on this math sheet, kiddo, your parents are taking you out for ice cream.

Junior year of high school: you miscounted the money in the register, so now it's coming out of your pocket or paycheck. You missed the crucial game-changing point, but you tried to make it? Your team still lost.

When you mature, spilled milk stops becoming small puddles and becomes the blows to your relationships and your goals.

Judging yourself harshly feels like a punishment and feels like you've done something to correct your

mistakes, but you're missing two crucial things.

You've made yourself feel better, but have you cleaned up your milk? How about the people you've hurt, or the damage you've done (to others' feelings, to workplace property, and more)? You yelling at yourself doesn't heal somebody else's heart, nor does it fix the hundreds of dollars in damage incurred to company equipment.

And, have you learned from it?
I never did.

Those two things are essential. *You're taking on the responsibility to fix what you've done, and the responsibility to ensure that it doesn't happen again.*

Without those, the immaturity is still present. If you're being irresponsible, you're flipping a coin and landing heads. If you're judging yourself too harshly and not doing those two things above, you're landing tails.

When the coin lands on its side, is maturity.

Part of being a mature person (which you can be at nearly any age) is dealing with things appropriately.

Making a mistake and **escaping** the consequences, as well as not learning from it, is not dealing with things appropriately.

This lesson was a much more subtle thing that only recently clarified itself and slapped me in the face.

Remember that mistakes involve more than your personal actions and

especially more than your personal suffering. Other people and things are involved too.

Remember that complaining, whining, judging yourself (or others!) is unproductive and immature.

The difficult and mature thing to do is objectively look at the situation and come up with a solution. But you can do it. And you can work hard to implement that solution without any unnecessary things, like harsh self-judgment, pity

parties, or meaningless apologies and promises.

What I'm trying to do is train myself into the habit of immediately looking at those two things when I make a mistake.

Basically, the habit I'm trying to imprint on my unconscious is this: action -> examine consequences, positive or negative -> implement preventive measures for the future (or repeating measures, if the action was successful).

Subtle lesson, meaningful impact,

but only if you're mature about it.

Go Outside Daily

February 24, 2014—11:38pm

You know that feeling you get when you stay inside all day?

It might be best described as "murky". You get a murky feeling, along with lethargy and

sluggishness, perhaps. Something just feels off. The feeling has been growing as you've sat in front of a screen all day, or even if it wasn't a screen.

I've had that feeling creep up on me when I spent the whole day reading a book. It has this depressant effect on me. I get a little antisocial, and lazy, and I feel a constant tiredness pushing at my eyelids. My thinking slows down and loses clarity, and I also lose some mental control over my

emotions. It's easier to get down on myself, and easier to get into a negative, angry mood.

It doesn't automatically make those negative things happen, but I think of it as a decrease in my luck and my capability while it's there. I don't always get moody when it happens, but the chance is higher. Make sense?

That murkiness doesn't seem to be quite that detrimental, but I think it's negative enough that an effort to minimize it should be made. The

cost isn't much: go outside for a little bit every day.

Even if it's absolutely burning, or completely frigid outside, go out, just for a bit. Have even a short conversation with somebody, a cashier, waiter, anyone.

Focus your eyes on something farther away than ten feet. Feel the discomfort of sweltering heat, or biting wind.

Some days, this effort doesn't make the feeling go away. But I keep it from growing, and

sometimes that's the best that you can get.

Actually, the day of writing this has been one of those murky days. By forcing myself to trudge out to the dining hall and eat lunch in public, I helped to keep the murkiness from getting worse.

One helpful strategy here is to sign up to something that makes you go out every day. Students have this easy; If you have a class every day, make sure you go to it. Even if you get nothing done, it's better than

sitting alone and letting your mood take a downswing.

Also, remember to take care of your fundamentals. Eat well, get more sleep that night, and push on.

*Is How You're Feeling Worth
The Cost?*

March 2, 2014—4:08pm

The situation that sparked this question took place on a weekend recently.

I was snowboarding (I'm a

skier) with a couple friends, one of whom had joined me the previous night in going out to one of my favorite spots in town. The other friend got much more sleep.

Throughout the day, I wasn't feeling very up to the challenge of snowboarding, of pushing my skills. Feeling moody added to that. It was generally a bad vibe. Then it hit me that how I was feeling was pretty much a direct consequence of the choices I made to go out the previous night and forgo sleep.

So I asked myself, "Is how I'm feeling worth the cost?"

I had a lot of fun the previous night, going out to dance and let loose, things I haven't done in a while. Was it enough fun that it was worth the tiredness on the slopes?

As soon as I answered myself "Yes.", the bad vibe just slipped away!

For such a short story and seemingly trivial event, you can take away a few useful things from this.

First, when things aren't right, you can look back at what led to your current situation and examine it. What choices did you make? What could you have done? Was it worth what you have now? Can you do anything in the present?

Second and more abstractly, but more importantly, you make your own choices. Take responsibility for your choices and make each decision for your own self. You learn to make better choices, accept responsibility, and make the best of

what you got. Responsibility for yourself shows a kind of person that is a solid guy or gal to be around.

The day didn't end up going quite as well as would have been desired, but... I could tell how much worse it could have been, had I given in to being moody and withdrawn and started complaining to myself in my head.

Take responsibility. Like my friend and blogger [Cam Chardukian](#) says, "When you numb yourself to avoid feeling pain, you also lose the

ability to feel the good things."

You Can Dislike, But Can You Be Disliked?

February 27, 2014—8:32pm

Updated March 3, 2014

If you're into self-development, there's a cause. I might be stating the obvious here, but let's lay the

foundation for this post.

You may want to become better for any number of reasons. Maybe you want to become more attractive to those cute girls and gorgeous guys. Or you might want to lead a better lifestyle. Perhaps you're sick and tired of being negative and doing what you do. You want something new.

You want change.

And inevitably, you will. If you keep going on your chosen path, things will change. You will

become a more attractive person, a healthier human being, happier and better.

When you change, you become something. Take the example of Average Joe (or his womanly counterpart, Jackie). Joe gets ragged on a lot by self-development people, as will be shown in the parentheses.

He works nine to five (get a lifestyle business and stop trapping yourself in the corporate).

She watches TV an hour or two a

day (do something productive, learn something).

He doesn't exercise much, if at all (go outside, eat Paleo and do some Crossfit).

She does the same thing day in and day out, much like her friends (be your own person, blah blah blah).

Nothing wrong with that. If that's the life you want, you probably won't be reading this. Don't let anybody rag on it. So long as you chose it, it's yours.

But if you're Average Joe or Jackie, and you start upgrading yourself like this.... You start to become a different person. You become a more polarizing person.

Want to eat healthy? It'll be harder to relate to people who don't. Want to learn more about everything? Hard to relate to people who are content to have things just be.

This is where change really sets in.

As the classic Average Joe, it's

kind of hard to be disliked by everyone (except those self-improvement gurus; don't they have better things to do, like improve themselves?). It's kind of a bland existence.

Once you start becoming a polarizing person, you'll naturally drive away some people and draw in others. The connections you form with others will become stronger in nature. The people who like you will have a lot to like. That's easy to deal with; it's enjoyable.

The hard part is being disliked.

It's jarring. It's emotionally tough to handle. But like working out, you can build up to dealing with it, no problem.

One of the biggest things to remember is that it's okay to dislike people and *be disliked*. Many people don't give it a moment's thought when they say they don't like this person or that. But turn around and tell them that somebody dislikes them, and you'll bring out a huge range of reactions, from

overbearing bluster, arrogance, fear, shyness, anger, entitlement....

Don't do that. You can dislike something or someone. But they can and will dislike you right back. It's not the end of the fucking world.

All it really is, is that you just don't want anything from each, about each other, or a part of each other's lives.

You're not going to die. Your friends and family won't magically disappear. You're not an evil person.

You just don't mesh well with that particular person or people.

So you do your thing. And keep doing it. They'll dislike you whether you try to pander to them (you'll be seen as below them and weak) or you do your own (they'll be mad that they can't change you), so do what you do.

Remember, disliking isn't personal. If it is, brush it off, and go find people who like you. Otherwise, accept it as the way the world is; Some things just don't go

well together. Move on, and find something that works well with you.

*Future You Has The Same
Capabilities You Do*

March 4, 2014—5:25pm

Updated March 5, 2014

You know the concept, the saying.
"Don't put off for future you what
you can do now."

It's because future you has the same capabilities of present you. If you lounge around and do nothing, he will be good at doing the exact same. If you push it, he will too.

Your future actions have a lot of basis in your current habits and decisions. The more you make of one decision, the more habitual it becomes. Deciding to be lazy turns into a habit, and that habit will carry into future you, and he will be even *less* likely to do what you you're foisting off on him or her.

So you're not only putting off what you dream of or plan on doing, you're making it less likely that those things will ever happen at all. If you decide now to put them off, it gets easier to make that decision every time, and future you will brush it off. Future you is like you but a more extreme version.

Seriously. This is important. Don't read this and kind of, maybe get what I'm saying. Read the words and make sure you're understanding them:

The future you is an extension of the trajectory you're on right fucking now.

If you're on a downward trajectory, you'll keep going down unless you make an effort to change that (which gets harder and harder the longer you put it off). If you're on an upward trajectory, you'll keep that way. It's harder to keep upward momentum (kind of like fighting gravity, but you're fighting laziness), but you'll plateau instead of plummeting.

Either way, remember that where you're going now, is where you'll be.

Note: I later heard the quote that captures this perfectly, but I don't remember where... "If you're not careful, you'll end up where you're going."

Upgrading Your Performance Baseline

March 3, 2014—8:20pm

Updated March 5, 2014

Lately, I haven't been doing quite so well in all areas. But when I look back, I have been doing better

than recently. What changed? My environment.

My performance baseline now is higher than it was before. Even on slump days, things go a little better than slump days before now.

It's not because I magically had the willpower or drive to do it. It's not because I woke up one day and said "No more." There was no montage of me working hard and upgrading myself.

It's because my environment changed. As I made changes little

by little, my environment upgraded with me. As I pushed myself to work a little harder, eat a little better, exercise more, and be more social, the world around me reflected that.

Now I perform at a minimum level that's higher than before. I don't somehow dredge up steel strength from deep inside. I just need to.

This is what happens when you start working to be a little better in what you choose. It's a helpful

mechanism that keeps you from regressing too far. However, it's a double-edged sword as well.

Because you are doing more and better, if you fall off the wagon, so to speak, the consequences are higher. When you're lounging around, doing just kind of what you need to get by, you know, man, it won't be that bad if something happens here and there, you know, dude?

But when you're going, the stakes get a little higher. In my case, if I

fall off the wagon during the week, I don't get my schoolwork done.

When that happens, I stress over the weekend, and even if I try not to let it, it gets in the way of my being able to enjoy socializing. Domino effect. My whole life gets affected when I fall off.

This is something to be aware of when you're working on getting even better. A byproduct of getting better, an upgraded environment is helpful until you let it hinder you.

Triggers For Bad Moods

March 5, 2015—4:05pm

Updated March 6, 2014

One of the most insidious things about moods is that they're self-fulfilling.

Being in a bad mood will make

everything else a trigger for your bad mood. For instance, I grab the guitar that stands next to my desk when I'm feeling stressed 80% of the time, and the other 20% of the time when I just want to play. The more this happens, the more I'll unconsciously come to see playing the guitar as dealing with stress. As that happens, I'll associate playing the guitar with feeling stressed, thus stressing myself out when I play, whether I actually am or not.

It's tough to turn around bad

moods, especially in the beginning, when you realize that you're really bad about being in a bad mood. Not only are you feeling bad, and then feeling bad about not being able to turn it around, all the input from the outside world comes in through the filter of a bad mood.

The same goes for the good moods, however. The hard part is getting to that point where the momentum of the self-fulfilling moods takes over. You have to turn around bad moods and consciously

create the good out of them, and do it over and over until you get more practice and it becomes second nature.

Once the good moods start weighing out the bad moods more often than not, the momentum will slowly start to kick in and help you out with it. You're basically building a habit of thinking and feeling better.

Mindfulness meditation helps with this. You don't need to be religious to do mindfulness

activities.

Sit down, set a timer for five minutes, and chill. Focusing on the breath is a common theme, and that's what I do. It's hard in the beginning, because you have no idea what to focus on or even what it feels like to focus on the breath.

The key is to keep going. You don't have a reference frame from the start, so you're diving in and your brain has no idea what to make of this. Do it a few times, and you start to get a feel for what's going

on, and begin differentiating the disparate parts of what you're experiencing.

What the breath feels like for me: I can feel the air going in through my nose, and out again, and feel my abdomen expanding as I breathe. My awareness of the external world around me also increases and I can nearly visualize a detailed mental spatial map of the room I sit in.

Then my train of thought comes back and starts off "I should have wings for dinner... then after dinner

I have to do this computer science problem... oh I gotta talk to my friend in programming tomorrow... should I go skiing this weekend...." until I notice it, and come back to being aware of my breath.

Do it daily, just five minutes.

It's really helped me become aware of how I'm feeling at any given moment, as well as being able to have better control over my emotions and thought patterns.

Self-Improvement Isn't Just About You

February 26, 2014—10:40am

Updated March 6, 2014

There's something that people in self-improvement often forget about: others.

I got into it partly because I was feeling lonely and low self-esteem. I thought that if I were to upgrade myself and be better in pretty much anything, I'd feel better about myself and be less lonely.

Turns out I was missing a piece.

Something that may offend a few people is a concept that may nevertheless be a good idea to live by: People don't care about you, they care about what you offer to them.

Beyond the rare exception like

family, this has mostly been truth, in my experience.

To illustrate, take an exaggerated example here. Imagine that you have the body of Greek god. You look damn good. You have a couple hobbies that you're amazing at, perhaps playing guitar and painting. Now put yourself in a situation with a friend or person you're romantically interested in. Imagine that you're focused on yourself, and you're being quiet. When you do talk, you talk about what you've

been doing to better yourself, and what you plan on doing.

Sounds exciting, right? Until you look at it from the other person's point of view.

It's boring. It's self-absorbed and absolutely mind-numbing.

Your friends want to hang out and do things with you. They want to talk and connect, to listen to good music, to go camping and see new places in the city and make new memories. That guy or girl wants to connect with you. They want to

have an adventure and go home and think about how much you both had. They want to *feel*.

That's the piece. It's not about you, it's about how you make other people feel. If you're boring and bland, you've not really got much going for you, in others' eyes. But if your life is an exciting time, and you're making memories, people want to be a part of that.

We learn things better if we have an emotional connection to them. That's why certain things are

imprinted in our brains in great detail. The emotions associated with those memories are strong and had an impact on how important our brains thought they were.

So remember that improving yourself isn't just about improving for its own sake, but includes *sharing* it.

Isolated Schemes Fail

April 2, 2014—10:40am

Updated April 15, 2014

Something I've run into as I started reading personal development material and getting into it, but hadn't noticed for a long

time: I think about a lot of goals that never even begin. The ones that do, I usually fail to reach. There's at least one common factor between the two that doesn't exist in the plans for achieved goals.

This factor is that they're isolated schemes. Isolated means you start thinking, "Oh, I'm gonna go get in great shape." or "Oh, I'm going to go start a business.", but you don't take into account your life and personalize the plans.

"How can I start a business?"

should be "How can I start a business? How will it fit into my life? How will I handle that alongside all my other obligations?" etc.

Stopping this is simple, really: whenever you start getting pumped up about a goal (especially if you've been reading self-development or reading about others' achievements of their own personal goals), write it down and take a second to think about it. Realize that it's going to be harder than it seems. Realize that

you don't have the luxury of putting all your effort towards it (unless you do, you lucky thing you); you have to work, have to feed yourself and your family, have to study, etc.

Make sure that what you want to do isn't just a passing fancy, because you're going to sink time and effort into it. If it's not what you want to do, stop daydreaming. Turn your attention back towards what you're doing.

You'll get a better return on investment if you take the attention

from daydreaming and put it
towards whatever you're doing.

Impermanent Relationships

February 2, 2014—12:45pm

Updated April 15, 2014

Society loves and conditions us with the idea of permanence. I'm going to get a job and work there FOREVER, I'm going to get a house

and live there FOREVER, I'm going to put a ring on this girl's finger and be with her FOREVER.

All three, from a long ago post by [Cam Chardukian](#), are fairly plausible, but rarely true. The company may go under, a natural disaster may strike your house.

The last one is also something that a lot of people don't realize. You don't "get" the girl or guy, and then it's roses and ice cream from then on. The concept that a relationship takes work has been

hashed over and over, but one less touched on is the concept of change in them

The belief that once you get the guy or girl, you're solid, is a belief that can be incredibly harmful. It blinds you to what's actually going on in one of your closest and most intimate relationships. People change, their goals change, desires, etc.

Of course, you won't know this because of you've let yourself believe that you got him/her, so you

can just settle down and coast now. If you don't deprogram that belief, you will let it blind you.

I've been guilty of this very thing, and am working on it. Something that's helped me a lot is to take a little bit of time and reflect on how my partner is, in a very general sense, lately. What kind of things do they talk about what's important to them?, what are they focusing effort on in their lives right now? Does that tell me anything about their priorities? *Do their priorities*

match up with mine?

It takes conscious effort. Maybe this will become a habit later, but even if not, it's worth the effort to continue doing, because you'll avoid trapping yourself in the belief that you're done, and you can just let yourself go now.

The Next Step

February 17, 2014—10:30pm

Updated April 15, 2014

When something goes wrong, what do you do? Analyze why it went wrong. When things consistently go wrong in a specific

way, or a certain area, what might be the cause? Something in you, or something in your process for doing it. You could call it a 'flaw', maybe, but that's just assigning a name.

There's a next step after assigning a name. You've acknowledged it. Now, the next step is to decide to work on it, or decide not to. Either way, you will benefit from a conscious decision like that.

You either derive some pride and confidence from knowing you're working on it, or in knowing that

you've made the decision that other things are more important.

Punishing yourself is actually an easy way out, in this context. It takes some mental strength to accept decision you've made and their consequences. Punishment is also less practical. vanmartin here on SETT has a [great post](#) about this.

If I don't finish my homework, and then punish myself for it, what's the result? Homework is still undone, I feel worse than I did, and nothing is better.

But what if I decide that's something I either need to work on or let go? I'll either gain a better sense of pride in my work, or I'll be forced to re-evaluate my life and also explain to my parents why I'm failing or dropping out. Either way, I have to grow up, make decisions, and face the consequences.

Spending Your Future On Your Future

February 18, 2014—6:46pm

Updated April 15, 2014

Everybody daydreams. You daydream. I daydream. The only differences are if it's physically

possible, and if so, what we're doing to make those dreams reality.

I used to daydream about having a little doorway to another dimension or something, where time would stop in the real world. In the dimension, I could do whatever I wanted, call up any scenario, etc.

Doesn't take much to imagine what many of those scenarios were, when dreamt up by a younger teenaged boy.

But, many other less hedonistic daydreams were on my mind as

well. I'd dream of relentlessly using the dimension to master skills, to learn new things, and build up a massive base of knowledge and skills to draw on.

In medieval times, I probably was that kid scared the living daylights out of my parents with treacherous ambition by loudly proclaiming that I would be the next king and all-powerful. Probably got a visit from whatever the knightly equivalent of the CIA was.

That sort of daydreaming,

however, is actually pretty detrimental. You're literally spending your future, which comes to you in the form of the present—one second at a time—, on your future. You can dream and dream, and nothing ever comes of it except wasted time.

Dream for ten seconds of every minute, and work the other fifty to realize that dream.

The Big World Feeling

March 5, 2014—10:30am

Updated April 15, 2014

You know it. That overwhelming I-have-so-much-to-learn-holy-crap-the-masters-are-lightyears-ahead-of-me-they're-practically-magicians

feeling. It's rather hopeless, to put it plainly.

But, there's a different perspective to take on it. Realize this: the big world feeling means that you've improved and are improving. That's actually useful!

Rather than getting discouraged by realizing just how big the world is (and you will realize it repeatedly and more despairingly each time), realize that you can turn it to your advantage. Here's how.

Each time, take a second to re-

evaluate how far you want to go with what you're doing, using your new perspective. It's much easier to aim for the big leagues as a novice. It's harder as an intermediate, and even harder as an advanced. Pick one thing or aspect that's blocking your progress right now, or that will speed your progress, and work on it. Repeat that until you get the big world feeling, and repeat the whole process.

It's pretty simple when you think about. Each time you get the feeling

is the result of experience. That experience will allow you more improved perspective on whatever it is that's giving you the feeling. Then, you can decide whether you want to invest more time and effort, or switch your attentions to something else.

Yes or No, But Never OK

April 15, 2014—10:10am

I came across a striking passage while reading Mark Manson's [Models](#):

“Remember, it's ‘Fuck Yes!’ or no. And if I'm not getting a ‘Fuck

Yes!’ then I’d much rather have a no than a ‘Meh, OK.’”

It made me realize: that’s exactly what I want, and I dare to say, what a lot of people want. Think about it. You want somebody who wants *you*, not someone whose manner says, “OK, just until something better comes along, or just because.” You want them to *want* it.

I actually think most people want this. If somebody is with you because they truly want *you*, barring

things like mental illness and other circumstances, that's terrific!

This is in the context of romantic relationships, but really, you can see this everywhere. Have you ever hung out with a friend who didn't really want to be there? It showed.

It always shows.

If you feel "meh" about someone else like that, it'll show through. Don't be surprised if the feeling is reciprocated, or if you get dropped like so much nothing.

Mark Manson also has a [post](#)

[detailing this philosophy of his](#), and in it, he mentions that the entrepreneur Derek Sivers applied that logic towards business. I'm sure that it can be applied to just as many other things.

The difference between "Fuck Yes!" and "Meh" is so marked, you'll know it. And in whatever you do, refusing to accept "Meh" and going after "Fuck Yes!" will end up with great lessons (if painful ones), or great experiences.

Don't Suffer

February 2, 2014—2:58pm

Updated April 15, 2014

Another topic touched on over and over in many different areas. What I want to do with it is lay it out in simple terms. None of that

Zen "suffering is not real" stuff, no self-development Law of Attraction fanciness, but plain and simple what the whole idea behind the separation of pain and suffering is.

Self-development gurus talk about the difference between pain and suffering. Some Eastern philosophical or religious beliefs deal with this. Hell, I've even read some comments on Reddit where people talk about this very thing, in dispensing advice to each other.

For clarity's sake, let's define

pain as what's caused by negative stimuli. Suffering is a pain caused by mentally agonizing over the first pain.

It's very easy to illustrate with an example.

Let's say you were out for a jog or went to the gym to lift weights, and because you didn't stretch or warm up, you hurt your knee. That's pain. That throbbing ache, the flare of pain when you put weight on that leg. That's it.

But then let's say you go home.

You complain to your family or your roommates. "God, my knee hurts so much. I can't do anything it." You lay around with a bag of ice on it, and everyone knows where you are because they can hear your whinging coming from the couch.

You feel like your day just took a turn for the worse. Now you're thinking about how much you wanted to go to the concert tomorrow, or for a long family hike. Not to mention, you're bringing everyone's mood down.

That's suffering.

What does the situation look like without suffering? Easy.

You go for a jog or prepare to squat an extra ten pounds more than normal. You forget or decide not to stretch or warm up (don't do this.), and hurt your knee. That's pain. That throbbing ache that flares up and makes you wince when you try to walk. That's it.

You accept that this situation came about because of your mistake, intentional or not. So you

allow yourself small sigh, then make your painful way home. When you get there, your roommate or a family member notices that you're limping slightly and asks what happened.

You explain with a rueful smile, then stretch out on the couch with a bag of ice on your knee. Instead of remaining focused on it, you explain to the people around you that you will rest up, and then decide if the concert or hike is doable. That done, you move on and pull out a

book you've been meaning to read but haven't gotten around to.

Same situation, different outcomes. Pain is unavoidable, suffering can be avoided. Of course, that gets harder when that pain is much more severe. I'm not about to say that you have to be perfectly happy after something happens either. Very few people are that strong in either emotional control or positive outlook on life.

But things can be so much better if you put in effort to stop suffering,

stop agonizing over things that have happened, and to start making what you can can of it.

Living Without Crutches

February 2, 2014—8:37pm

Updated April 15, 2014

There are things that you can take too far, things that will help you if you don't take it to the next level.

One of those things is, for me, the

idea of independence, of living without crutches. That is, one should not rely on crutches to do what is desired.

But taking that too far can hurt your success, and I realized my mistake. I'll give the example that made me realize it, and wrap up with a new, improved perspective on the use of crutches for success.

I wanted to go to the gym earlier in the semester. I wanted to go regularly. I never did. Why? I was intimidated. I wanted to get a friend

to come, to help relieve that. But, I thought that was a crutch, and I refused to ask my friend. Instead, I spent a lot of time trying to nerve up and go, and I never ended up going.

I realized: Being so stuck on that principle of not using a crutch, I never went to the gym. What if I *had* somehow found a way to help myself get there? Well, I would have been lifting and getting stronger, faster. Wouldn't you agree that getting something done with help is much more successful than

never getting it done?

That's what led to this epiphany, and a new, changed perspective on crutches (and success). Don't be afraid to ask for help, don't hold back in using what you can to help yourself. If you think it'll help, get out there and implement whatever you've got, as long as you're moving towards your personally defined success there.

Yet Another Reason for Mindfulness

February 26, 2014—3:14pm

Updated April 15, 2014

The sequel to a previous post on no-BS mindfulness.

The reason is simple. Being

mindful means you're not "checking out". You're present in the moment, and I don't mean "being on top of the mountain" or any woo-woo kind of Zen mindfulness. In plain terms, I mean that you're aware of what you're doing.

When you're not present, you're letting time pass by, time you'll never get back.

Be present, because more good can come from it. Either what you're doing will be enhanced because your effort is focused on what

you're doing, or you will want to change what you're doing. You're not just letting things kind of... slip... right through your fingers.

For example, when I'm in class, I fight to keep my mind from wandering. I check in, do better in class. Or I realize that I don't want to be there at that moment. That's a whole nother conversation though.

Point is, there are a lot of benefits in it for you to be mindful, no matter how crazy the concept seems.

Speech

March 19, 2014—10:44am

Updated May 29, 2014

Speak purposefully.

Simply and clearly. The point isn't to grandstand, but to communicate. The more you speak,

the more you muddle your message. When you support your points, make sure it's logical and easy to follow. The purpose is to convey and connect, not widen the gap.

Included in the purpose is context. If the people around you like to speak with a slightly advanced vocabulary that may include technical jargon, use that. It'll help all of you to communicate and understand better. Or, perhaps you realize it's an appropriate time to simplify your speech, make it

clear and concise.

Spoken language was invented to *communicate*. Do that well.

*Questions and Answers That
Shape Our World*

May 29, 2014—5:18pm

Everything does, to some extent. There are some though, that have such an effect, that I realize it consciously and it makes me stop

and actually question myself.

One of these is my curiosity about how the rich and politically powerful live. Having neither of those qualities, I consequently have zero idea about that, except for what I've read or imagine.

In fiction that I read, it's all about the schmoozing, using money to further agendas, and everything those people do is almost explicitly pointed out as having some kind of ulterior motive. They're written as constantly weighing benefits and

costs for everything, from which friends to make to which parties to go to and what revolutions to support (depending on the scope of the tale).

So I wonder, is that how those people live in real life? Or do they live like the more naive characters written in books? Does everyone in reality live like that (on a conscious level; we all do it subconsciously, I think)?

Depending on what the answers are, my whole way of living might

change. My mindset may become one of constant cost analysis, or maybe the analysis is thrown to the side completely and everything is evaluated emotionally.

Another question like this, off the top of my head, is: How do people think about others?

If your answer is that people are constantly judging each other and measuring qualities and quantities, that shapes your world. You do the same things, assume others do the same, and how you interact with our

world is structured around that.

Maybe another's answer is that people think the best of each other, and that's how they live.

Questions like those can have answers that have profound, reaching impacts on our lives, and also on others' as well.

Maybe it's a whimsical endeavor to try to become more aware of these questions and our own answers to them, when there are bills to pay and there is work to be done, but I think it's really

interesting to imagine what things would be like when we experimented with changing our answers to these questions.

High Level Observations Before Low Level Tactics?

May 30, 2014—4:37pm

I realized recently that most, if not all, of my posts here are of the high-level thinking type. There's a lot of philosophical-esque thinking

—lots of writing about how things *should* be, or mindsets, ways of thinking.

There's a lack of low-level type tactics, like: Here's what things *should* be like, and **here's the tactics that I'm testing out to make it so.**

At first, I'm inclined to think that just maybe, the ideas I write about don't really have low-level tactics. In reality, that's just me trying to convince myself that I'm doing good work, that I'm not missing anything,

when I actually am.

For instance, in [We Are Not Our Heroes](#), I don't touch much upon *how* I separate my personal situation from those of others, in my head.

Why am I not doing this? If I have an idea of how the world should be, how I should behave or think, why don't I find some way of making it true?

I think it was because I was being lazy. Sure, it's well and good to say—write—: "Oh, here's an idea for

you. As you grow up, your intrinsic value decreases to a

baseline." Looking back, I think, *That's nice. So, Huan, how would I go about fixing this?*

Or, "Stop running from opportunities!" *Okay, so I should stop. How do I do that? What kind of things should I be doing in the short- or long-term, now that I'm aware of this?*

I didn't want to put in more effort than I needed, or be a hypocrite; if I wrote down those things, I'd have to

have already been implementing them.

This gives rise to the dilemma of how to tackle all of that. Changing your thinking takes time and effort. Very few of us would have the brainpower needed to practice empathy, change how we look at our innate qualities, practice finding responsibility and handling it ourselves, and more, all on top of what we have to do in our daily life, like school, work, social things, exercise, etc.

Even fewer of us would have the brain- and willpower necessary to sustain that monstrous effort over the medium- to long-term that's needed to carve new pathways into our neurons, to change how we think.

All of these posts I've linked to are partly there to show how much we'd have to hold in our minds every day to change, and there's quite a bit more.

So what's the answer? Do I stop writing and focus on solving these

problems myself before I write about them? Or do I just write and forgo the low-level tactics and risk being a hypocrite, armchair psychologist, or keyboard jockey?

Some of things, I don't assign enough importance to them to make me shift effort and time over from other things in order to fix.

As I write this, *an* answer presents itself to me: continue to write about these ideas that pop into my head, and as I tackle them, detail that. Better to have put something

out there than nothing at all, and maybe the posts will help somebody realize something that they assign more importance to than I do.

I'll keep writing those things down, and then present hypothetical examples that provide a starting point for anybody who wants to delve further. For example, if I were to write a post about happiness, at the end I might point out that gratitude journals and mindfulness meditation have been

tools mentioned in conjunction with the subject, and the reader might like to start there and find out more.

As for situations where I employ tactics and techniques at the nitty-gritty level, I'll write those and my own experiences with them.

Hopefully you, the reader, will get more useful information from my posts from now on.

It's Enough

February 24, 2014—11:53am

Updated May 31, 2014

One of the most change-causing realizations. I've repeated this to myself over and over many times these past few months, when I start

feeling inadequate, or anything of the sort.

It's never enough. You can never make enough money, be outstanding enough, do enough in life. There will always be more (you never solve problems; you just upgrade them).

So if it's never enough... realize that it's enough. Strive for more. But realize that it's already enough, just because it never is.

It sounds contradictory, but don't think of it logically. Just try to feel

it. Never enough, so what you already have and already are, is enough.

(Note: not an excuse to slack off. Just a reason not to punish yourself overmuch for not meeting high standards.)

Letting Progress Be A Danger To Overall Success

May 31, 2014—11:48am

Updated February 20, 2016

Only if you let it though.

I often use the excuse that I'm making progress in some area in

order to slack off in that same area. This actually leads to a lessening in my motivation for success in that same area. As is often said, motivation (and courage) come after the action.

This is a little worrying actually, when I realize that all the times I've "[gone off the rails](#)" have amounted to enough that I would have reached my original goal in whichever area much earlier.

I'll make some progress, pat myself on the back and slack off,

then repeat.

As a quick example: I'll make some good progress on whatever classwork I have, then slack off for a day or two. But homework doesn't stop piling up while I take my "break", and when I come back, I've inevitably slacked far too much.

I think the solution here is to replace the reward. Instead of rewarding myself with slacking off, a different reward would help keep motivation up (because no reward would only have the effect of being

discouraging), without impeding progress.

It's strange to think that the one and only thing that you will reach your goals with can also be a danger to itself and your goals; really, the important thing is how you look at it.

Progress is great. Being happy about it is great. Using it as an excuse to make less progress happens in your head, and it's not so great. Keep making the progress, because reaching the goals is much,

much better than slacking off here
and there.

Misguided Nobility Hurts Your Results

May 31, 2014—3:25pm

Updated February 20, 2016

I used to dislike the concept of hacks.

Oh, just like any other kid, I used

Gameshark for my Playstation to give my save files massive powerups. I used cheat codes when I played Grand Theft Auto to give me more money and weapons and armor.

Still, I always used to stubbornly take the most difficult choice of any I was presented in school or life. I thought somehow piling up the most adversity and overcoming it was the best thing to do. The most noble thing that would display my work ethic and smarts and what else have

you.

The most misguided thing.

But really, what's the result in reality? Less work done in the same amount of time, and a reputation for taking on the hardest tasks (that puts pressure on you to do more of it).

Worse, the result might even be total failure. Overhauling your habit of lazing on the couch and turning it into a daily two mile run sounds great, and doing it all at once sounds even better, but as anybody who has tried to change ingrained

habits will tell you, it's extremely hard.

Use your "hacks"! Lay out your running clothes, as is often said, in the morning. Turn your computer upside down with a note on top to not open it until you have concrete plan for what you want to get done (tip from Sebastian Marshall).

Maybe I was the only one who cared more about looking noble or hardworking or some bullshit, but what you get done is more important.

Fighting Confirmation Bias On The Spot

June 1, 2014—12:41pm

Confirmation bias is a tendency to selectively search for only evidence that supports your opinions, or believe that ambiguous

evidence actually supports only your side.

Something I've been trying to do lately is to find evidence that's contrary to things I come up with in my mind, and do it on the spot.

For example, if I'm reading a book and I make some sort of mental conclusion, I try to think of what the book might have said that could dispute that conclusion, or any personal experience that disputes it as well.

This isn't for the purpose of

making my life harder.

It's to fight confirmation bias, to make things potentially easier in the long run. If I'm wrong now, it's a lot easier to correct than when I'm wrong later and have been acting on my incorrect assumptions for months.

Right now, I'm reading [Give And Take](#) by Adam Grant. The basic premise so far is that people who are generous givers (rather than tit-for-tat matchers, or greedy takers) of value have much more success in

the long run.

As I read, I notice that I'm inclined to agree with what Adam Grant is saying, and that I'm unconsciously searching for evidence and memories that support what I'm thinking. So I stop, and try to consciously think about conclusions I've drawn and memories I've made that dispute what the book is saying. Then I try to dispute *those* things.

This doesn't go round in circles, because the purpose is to bring forth

both sides and give me the chance to evaluate both sides and see which position I'd like to take.

As a bonus, this has the added effect of strengthening my confidence in those opinions and positions, because I know I've given them more thought. That doesn't mean those positions can't be disputed in the future, but I'm able to articulate my particular opinion much more clearly and strongly.

Starting Out Behind

February 21, 2014—3:19pm

Updated June 1, 2014

This is one of those things that we think is bad, but don't realize *how* bad until later.

Last year, I got used to having a

different schedule than I did in high school. This led to waking up late, and then starting the day out behind.

This means I messed up my sleep schedule, didn't do schoolwork that needed to be done, etc etc. It invariably took a day or two to even get back to baseline, and by the time I got back to baseline, that line would be shifted because even more work had been assigned over that time, or it was getting close to deadlines.

Even worse, I had to triage

things, and work only on the most crucial assignments. Social life? Forget it. Personal projects? No idea what those are. Frustration? We knew each other quite well.

I didn't realize this or manage to pinpoint what to do until late, but it was a relief when I did.

To avoid starting out behind, don't mess up your schedule (duh, Huan!). If you stay up late one night and get up early the next morning, go to bed early so you can get up early without sacrificing even more

sleep and brainpower. That's the biggest thing.

I'm all for having spontaneous nights of fun with friends, or some nights where you just throw up your hands, stick a spoon in a pint of ice cream, and kick back with Netflix, but the impact that those nights have on your schedule needs to be minimized. Otherwise, that impact carries over to your life, making it more hectic, frustrating, and just a little stressful.

It's even better if you can start out

ahead, by getting work done the previous day, or ending the previous day on a high note, going to bed excited, getting plenty of sleep, and waking up excited.

Mental Ideals Impeding Progress

June 4, 2014—9:32pm

Every time I read or absorb information about being better, doing more, I get some ideal of what I "should" be.

After reading Mark Manson's Models, I got into my head this ideal of the "perfect vulnerable man" (an oxymoron anyway), of eventually becoming a man who somehow did vulnerability the perfect and right way.

After reading Brene Brown, and her work on vulnerability as well, I dreamed of being the perfect 'Whole-hearted' person, somebody who easily weathered heartbreak and was effortless and confident in putting myself out there.

Even now, while reading Give And Take, I'm starting to get in my head this ideal of becoming the ultimate renowned giver (but givers don't do it for fame; that's totally missing the point).

Really though, it's combining all those things, and more. There's no endpoint to reach, no point or destination where I can sit back and say, "Welp, I'm perfect at opening up to others, a master of valuing my own opinion, and have also given enough to others. Time to relax."

No, it's a continuous thing. As we keep on living, we learn to be more vulnerable. We go through tough situations and build our self-trust. We gain more to share.

By having all these ideals in my head, I put a ton of pressure on myself to be something, when all of those ideals are not really about being a definable something, but just being as is. That pressure just gets in the way, adding mental stress, creating a form of performance anxiety as well.

I don't quite know how to fight off these ideals yet, but I think a good start would be something like mindfulness meditation. Maybe self-acceptance work. Take a look at [Zen Habits](#), lots of good stuff there for this.

Most likely, the sooner we can push away these ideals getting in our way, the better and more we can do.

The Gap Between

June 4, 2014—8:51am

Updated June 15, 2014

When I hear or read interviews of or articles by people who seem to have "made it", generally, the opinion that you shouldn't do what

society says you should do, but do what you want to do, is a popular one.

By "made it", I'm talking about people who have their own businesses, are well-known for their expertise or interesting qualities, and also occasionally appear on things like the Unmistakeable Creative podcast (great stuff, give it a listen).

Those entrepreneurs, artists, and other people all say to get off the beaten path, to shrug off the people

who tell you "you should go get educated, get a degree, get a job, etc" and do your own thing. But when I hear them espouse that, I have to wonder: have they forgotten how it feels to be where everyone tells you you should do go to college and get a white-collar job, how it feels to feel like you have no choice *but* that, for all kinds of reasons?

Or, are they right? *Should* we try to forge our own paths and all follow our hearts? If they're right,

how do we get to that point? How do we forget what we're told we "should" do, and do what we want to do?

I see a gap between those entrepreneurs and artists, and the people who aren't "there" yet. How do we bridge that gap?

***You Are Who You Are, Not
Who You Think***

*June 3, 2014—6:25pm
Updated June 16, 2014*

It's an easy, very under-the-radar kind of mistake to make.

The solution is simple;

implementing the solution isn't.

This mistake is, in essence, having a skewed self-perception, one that you create through looking at your thoughts and only your thoughts.

An oft-repeating example, in my case, is where I'll get a few things done one day, and then lean back and think there we go, I'm a hard worker. In reality: if you were to actually look at my day-to-day work habits and how much I actually get done, over a period of a week or

two, I would definitely not look like a hard worker.

It's easy to get caught up in seeing yourself how you think of yourself, but it's hard to separate your perspective and try to see yourself how somebody not inside your head sees you speak and behave.

This mistake is dangerous, for a couple reasons. One concrete reason is that you'll tend to overestimate yourself, and then reach for goals that are more likely to be out of your ability range

currently. The other reason, though more new-agey sounding, I really believe: thinking you're something you're not causes a feeling of dishonesty or fake-ness to come through that other people will pick up.

So how do we overcome this?

What's been working for me, so far, is mindfulness meditation. It helps me to separate my thoughts from my actions, and evaluate my actions in a manner that's less favorably self-biased. I also have a

thought exercise where I run through something I've just done or said, but try to view it from an outside perspective: I imagine watching me through another set of eyes, and then see how I feel about how I've behaved.

The last thing I've done is a little more abstract and takes more concentration. I dredge up all the passing thoughts, and ram them against the reality of what's actually taken place. If, for example, I remember that I keep telling myself

I'm a hard worker, I take that belief and look at the past few days to see if I've actually behaved in a manner that makes that belief accurate. If not, I have to re-evaluate.

I think it's pretty important to put in at least a little work into fixing your self-perspective like this, because one that's too skewed will prevent you from making good progress on things you try to do. If we don't exercise as much as we'd like to, but think we're healthy when we're not, we're not really likely to

exercise, and so on. Fixing this solves that.

*There Will Always Be
Imperfections*

June 14, 2014—1:40pm

Updated June 20, 2014

A little momentous something that
I realized recently.

Very, very few people (saying

"nobody" feels like trying to just make myself feel better) walk around perfectly groomed, fit, and think clearly one hundred percent of the time. Some are closer than others. But 0.000001% of people have their act together at all times.

Nothing will get done perfectly.

We won't complete every goal we set, nor will we do things exactly like we wish to do them.

Nothing will get set up perfectly.

Our systems for handling our lives, our systems for governance

and commerce, they will all have flaws.

Nobody is going to handle every situation perfectly.

Kind of a bummer to think about, honestly, that we won't get to some magic point where everything will be sugar and beaches and skiing and honeyed mead.

But nice to know that we don't need to put pressure on ourselves to get to that point.

Fending Off Attacks of the Blues

January 29, 2014—4:53pm

Updated June 23, 2014

When you're feeling down or extremely dejected, it's hard to imagine continuing on feeling the

way you are. It's easy to do the imagining, rather, but hard to face. The prospect of more days of feeling blue is a depressing one to face.

There's that feeling, that urge to just curl up and shut your eyes until it goes away, whatever "it" means to you personally. While you're in that frame of mind, it's hard to imagine going on, or going out, or getting things done. Hope is hard to muster, let alone things like willpower and positivity in the face

of challenges. But, it's easier to see it when someone else does it.

What's really helped me when I start feeling like this some days, is to realize and spend a bit of time thinking about: other people feel the same way at times, and many of them manage as is, and also go on to recover from their spell of the blues.

Something else (that's not quite as easy) is to remember, and really, viscerally feel the fact that you've faced down and overcome these

bouts of dejection before, and so you can face this one, and possibly even get something out of it, whether that's getting something done or learning about yourself.

A Day Without Anxiety

June 3, 2014—4:43pm

Updated June 30, 2014

This has been on my mind for a while. I tend to act and think anxiously about things, and of course that just makes things a little

worse than they would be.

So I've always wanted to know what a day without anxiety felt like. A day where everything went right.

It's actually not all that it's cracked up to be. I thought that once I had a day like that, everything would be great. I'd know exactly how to make it happen again, I'd know how to deal with being anxious, and be on cloud nine.

I don't know whether I'm just making an excuse for it, but I think that being anxious has taught me a

lot. Maybe I would've gotten more done, did it better, along with all the things I dreamed about in the past, but dealing with anxiety has taught me things that I'm using to do things and do more and better. Managing all the negativity that wants to come creeping in has helped teach me about emotional and mental control. Managing the swings that come with having sudden onrushes of worse-than-usual anxiety has taught me the same, as well as managing my energy better.

The thing is, being anxious means you can worry about pretty much anything.

In this case, I worried about the day where I didn't worry! Crazy, right? It was a great day, I had fun with friends, was social and confident, got things done, and had a wonderful day overall. Then I started worrying about the things I might've missed, what opportunities I might've ignored in my confidence, and so on.

But really, confronting that taught

me about confronting anxiety and worry. What was, is, and we can do what we can do. Ironically enough, the day where I didn't have what I thought I disliked, helped me to realize how much it's been a valuable if painful part of life.

Short and Bittersweet

January 29, 2014—4:54pm

Updated June 30, 2014

Hoarding and holding onto sentimental things is living in the past.

Dwelling in the past, thinking for

the future, and trying to live in the present will tear you apart.

Sounds a little new-agey. How about this:

Dwelling on the past, and especially using sentimental things to evoke even more powerful emotions, will never compare to living in the present and striving for your future.

Been there. If you're sitting there holding onto a jacket your ex-boyfriend gave you, or a painting that an ex-girlfriend gifted you or

something, you're stuck in the past. There's good memories. There always will be. But all of them will be tinged with the pain of what wasn't, what will never be.

In contrast, seeing someone in the present doesn't have that. It's just you, them, and a good time. There's no shadow hanging over your head.

Live in the present. Everything is a lot better.

Numbing To What-If

February 17, 2014—10:32pm

Updated July 2, 2014

Before this summer, I felt like I was numbing myself to what-ifs. I saw things I wanted to do, but refused to do them, whether because

I was scared or anxious or whatever. The more that happened, the more I asked myself, "What if?"

It was a mildly emotional pain that motivated me to go out and do whatever it was the next opportunity I had. But then the feeling started decreasing. The pain of 'what-if' started to go away and that actually scared me.

Because if I didn't use the feeling of 'what-if' to spur myself on, to face what I was running from, pretty soon I would sink into an incredibly

strong, negative habit of letting things pass me by, and not even feeling the loss. I would lose a powerful motivational tool, would lose a feeling that pushes me to keep doing things I don't always want to do.

I don't know if there's any kind of trick or something that you can use to avoid this. I certainly didn't have one. It was just biting the bullet, and starting to grab whatever opportunities I could.

Really, you have to take the

feeling, and then take the next opportunity that you've been avoiding. Breaking the habit of avoidance and starting a new one of taking opportunities seems to be the most obvious, straightforward, and yet difficult answer to problem of numbing the what-if.

Chasing the High

January 29, 2014—4:54pm

Updated July 2, 2014

This is just a crazy vague concept right now...

What I'm thinking is, I want to go from relying on external stimuli to

provide emotional highs, to appreciating them for what they are. This goes for everything, actually.

One example here is music. If you've ever listened to contemporary electronic music (EDM and its sub-genres, especially ones like trap and dubstep), you'll know about 'drops', where the music builds anticipation and then shatters it. The music is the stimuli, the drops provide the emotional highs.

I'm not saying to quit this completely. I'd be a hypocrite,

because I like my music, and my music includes some trap, and other especially blatant stimuli. And, I used to chase the high. Still do.

You know the whole four stages of competence thing: unconsciously incompetent, consciously incompetent, consciously competent, and unconsciously competent. I'm working to get there with this chasing the high thing. Rather than chasing the emotional high, I'm working on appreciating the work, the effort and skill with

which the thing does so. Kinda like giving back, rather than only taking.

The whole reason behind this is that I believe chasing the high represents me letting my desires and impulses rule me. I'm not a kid, a slave to my emotions. Practicing not chasing the high is like practicing the skill of controlling myself and not just giving into all the hedonistic desires. Like practicing delayed gratification.

I don't know if this is as real as I'm thinking it is, but it popped into

my head one day and won't leave.
Guess we'll see where that goes.

Imaginary Classmates

January 29, 2014—4:54pm

Updated July 2, 2014

A little mistake I was making.
Seems like it occurs mostly to
people who spend a lot of time in
their heads.

During the academic year, I found myself doing something that really wasn't fair, nor did it make a lot of sense.

I'd sit in class (usually towards the beginning of the semesters), and start building up personalities, in my head, of the people around me in class without *any* firsthand knowledge of them.

It's natural to do this, but I don't it was to the extent I was doing it. It seemed like I was coming to think I knew these people nearly as well as

my friends, when in fact we spent *maybe* five hours a week, stuck in a silent classroom together.

What really stopped this was when I realized I was doing this, and started trying to consciously see how they reacted to things, how they acted in class, and also hanging out with some of those classmates more.

Weird little mental thing. If that's you, quit it. Quit making assumptions. It'll make your time around those people better; it

certainly did mine.

Kaizen

February 18, 2014—6:49pm

Updated July 2, 2014

Becoming able to be more, do more, and do all of it better, is a gradual thing.

This has been rehashed over and

over and over. "Self-improvement is a process." Yep. Got it. I'm getting tired of it being repeated. You're getting tired of it.

We still need to hear it again sometimes, to bolster the flagging belief that yes, we can change this.

I get this vibe on occasion, where I'm feeling confident, full of goodwill, and generally am in a wonderful mood. It doesn't come all that often, and never stays as long as I want, but that's slowly changing. I'm getting it more and more often

the more I practice mindfulness and gratitude, and it's staying a little longer each time.

Same with all the other things. The great, fantastic times don't always come often, but they're starting to become more common, and the bad days are slowly becoming just a little bit better, every time.

Use The Tools You've Got

January 30, 2014—12:13pm

Updated July 3, 2014

A realization brought on by my desire for a scanner during the second semester of freshman year.

I was going to buy one, but then I

realized the app on my phone did what I needed just fine. A scanner would have been more convenient, but cost more than I needed to justify the purchase. (In the interest of full disclosure, I now own a scanner, the Scansnap S1100, a gift from my parents.)

During that semester, I was only scanning a few papers here and there, and there was no point in introducing unnecessary clutter and tools into my workflow and desk space. My phone (Galaxy S4)

scanned and uploaded to Evernote just fine for the weekly occasions I scanned papers.

I got what I needed done, and wasn't distracted by retail therapy, searching for a [magic tool](#), and trying to reorganize my processes for working and studying to include anything new.

The Pull of Consumerism

January 30, 2014—12:14pm

Updated July 3, 2014

Earlier this year, the overwhelming desire for stuff just overtook me. I could feel the false belief that getting something new

would resolve the challenges I was facing of school and general stress. I kept wanting to buy things, kept searching online for them.

I wanted to buy a scanner, so I kept making comparisons between the Scansnap, the Doxie... Wanted to upgrade my notetaking and go completely paperless, so I was looking at the Galaxy Note 10.1 and the Surface Pro.

But the one piece of knowledge that kept me from wasting all that money and from feeling massive

buyer's remorse was the question: If I buy those things, will everything really get easier?

I'd have to adjust to a new workflow, taking precious time. I'd be spending hundreds of dollars that would be much better used elsewhere or saved, hundreds of dollars in an account that doesn't have a regular income of any kind.

It's something that, if you live in the United States (or any westernized country, but I have less firsthand knowledge of others), you

probably will have to constantly fight. The marketing, the belief that new shit will fix all your current shit. The myth that getting a better X will make you more attractive, make you happier, solve every problem.

The thing that's helped me fight this off the most is focusing on what I already have and do. Cliche, I know. But when I think about getting a scanner, is that going to help me have, say, a better social life? Or should I do what I've been doing

and keep on texting my buddies to go throw the frisbee around?

It also helps to have some kind of goal(s), and set progress markers that you reach for them. Keeps you motivated and shows you that you don't actually need to buy shit to get shit done.

Fight the pull. It gets easier the longer you do, and the longer you do, the better off you are.

Isolating Yourself Makes You Socially Disconnected

January 30, 2014—11:28pm

Updated July 3, 2014

Obvious, no?

A deeper look than, "Of course, that makes total sense," is

warranted, though.

By 'isolate', I mean stop seeing friends, start spending lots of time indoors. Avoiding social contact, whether intentionally or somewhat unconsciously, out of fear or laziness or apathy. When you do this to yourself, you begin thinking and acting in ways that only have a bearing on your life. Your thoughts and actions start becoming a little more self-centered.

This is *not* bad. Some selfishness is necessary.

What happens though, is that it starts becoming harder to relate to others. You're so focused on your own reality that you start forgetting that other people have their own.

I let this happen over the course of my first year at CU, and only realized it near the end.

When you spend so much time alone, you start creating your own little world, bit by bit, and every time you "plug in" to your surroundings, you have to either peek around or break down those

barriers that come up.

It's a little harder to feel the concern that someone else has for, say, a sick friend, when the only worries you've been thinking of are school, or work, or whatever. Empathy is harder to feel when you haven't called on it in a while.

So isolation is good for buckling down on your goals, but there's a certain point that we shouldn't go past. That's the point where the losses from your social life, emotional health, and mental

normalcy start outweighing the extra time and focus you can bring to your endeavors.

Planning Further Ahead

January 31, 2014—2:08am

Updated July 3, 2014

One recent weekend, I had had a rough week, by my own choice. I made poor ones, like choosing to stay up late a few nights, not eating

well, and other fast-snowballing things like those.

One Thursday night, I realized that I had to plan better to recuperate without letting the negative effects snowball into something like last semester, where I ended up staying up late many nights in a row, sleeping through some classes, not doing homework, getting too tired to properly manage my emotions, and more.

I started planning for the next day, what time to go to bed, things like

that. Then I realized, I had to extend that effort to Saturday. Then, because of premade plans on Saturday, that I needed to think further ahead to Sunday.

This kind of ability was lacking in my past, and most likely led to a lot of the challenges I faced and could have avoided.

I used to take things day by day, planning for tomorrow at best. I'd do homework that was due the next day and plan for events no further than a day ahead. But, this was a

counterproductive strategy. It led to mismanaging my time, causing cascading effects back on my health, social life, and schoolwork.

Nowadays, I'm better at planning a few days ahead, and at least keeping in mind (or on calendar) a week ahead or more. This may seem like an obvious skill, and I know that younger me would have thought it was obvious as well. But look where that landed younger me.

If it seems obvious to you, it might be a good idea to take a hard

look at how you're actually living. Do you constantly make overlapping plans, or find that you're cramming things a lot?

One of the biggest symptoms of this I had was that I wouldn't sleep enough during the week, and still plan fun activities on the weekends and weekend nights. Then I would realize I hadn't slept nearly enough to have the energy needed to have fun and be social then be ready for the next week.

Once I started diverting some

effort to fix this planning problem, almost everything in my life started running a lot more smoothly. Less fires to put out, I can manage my week and days in accordance to what needs to be done, my energy levels, and can fit in more as well.

Find Your Own Personal Motivation

February 3, 2014—10:46pm

Updated July 3, 2014

I used to try and do all of the things recommended by self-development bloggers and authors.

Used to.

It never lasted very long.

What I've realized since then, and what has been helping me consistently work out and meditate, is the concept of finding my own motivation.

When I read a lot of self-development shit, I tried to stick with all the things the writers said were good: eat healthy, meditate, work out, etc etc. I never stuck for long and would always give up. Every time I gave up, I had the

thought that *of course X will be beneficial to me, so... I'll do it tomorrow* and 'tomorrow' became never.

I knew objectively that it would be good for me, but I was never really personally invested in any of the things I tried.

The difference between then and now, is that investment. I meditate, because I've felt how good it is for me, and want to continue, and consciously, emotionally want my brain to develop. I work out,

because I know I'm getting stronger and building a better body, and I *want* to continue. I eat better than before because I feel better, and I *want* to keep feeling better and building muscle.

I think one of the most crucial things here is that I used to be a very obedient type of guy, did what I was told, what parents and teachers wanted. Sure, I 'wanted' this and that, but it was all surface level kind of stuff. I wanted to play video games, but it was just kind of

a passing desire.

The "want" that I'm talking about now is a very visceral feeling.

Funny story: I used to be pitifully prejudiced against "meatheads" and "jocks". Thought that they were everything my enemy in life represented. No brains, only cared about working out and protein, etc. Now, I have thoughts like "*Wow. My next lifting session is in two days, and I want to go lift now,*" while I'm sitting in class.

That's the kind of "want" that's

the personal motivation. It's not a push, like somebody telling you what to do. It's a strong pull towards whatever you want. This pull helps me overcome a dislike of some vegetables, so that I can eat better. It helps me overcome procrastination so I can make progress towards my school goals. It helps get me into the gym when I'm not feeling like it (tip: even if you're not feeling it, 80% of the time you force yourself to, you'll feel it when you pick up the first

weight).

Find yours. Let it pull you into something new, something better.

You Are What You Do

June 29, 2014—10:41am

Updated July 3, 2014

I know this is partially rehashing something that many people have heard before, but this is how the

idea really came together in my mind, and I'm hoping it helps you.

"You are what you do", right?

Well, I think it's because you don't just magically become something. It's not like we wake up "great", or "fit", or whatever.

Like, the people who are known as "great", didn't just do something great. They didn't wake up at 4am, take the week off work, conquer half the world or build a billion-dollar company, then head back into the office on Monday with the daily

donut and large coffee in hand. The teen guitar prodigy didn't take the weekend to stop by the music store, grab a guitar, do a quick performance at Carnegie, then go back to school and planning parties on Friday nights.

They did something, and did it everyday. They made decisions that eventually stacked up and hit critical mass, becoming something that gave them the reputation of "great".

So what you are, is something

you do. When you make decisions that are in-line with, say, "kind", then you become kind.

This is actually amazing to me, because in the past, I've been kind of fatalistic and a bit pessimistic about what I could achieve or become in life. Kinda thought that what you were is what you become.

This outlook though, changes everything. What you do is something you can decide and have conscious, intelligent and rational

control (usually) over, and if what you do is what you are, then you can decide and have conscious, usually rational control over what you become.

You can choose something you want to be, and actually be it. There's pain, struggle, celebration, but you can definitely do it. Maybe this is somewhat repetitive to 99% of everyone who reads this, but hopefully this 1% has the concept 'click' like it did for me.

It's Just A Tool

February 3, 2014—8:04am

Updated July 3, 2014

I'm sure this is one of those things that starts to irritate some people after a while.

Tools are just that. They're not

identities. Paleo-style eating is an example of this. I'm all for getting healthy. But I'm not all for making it a cornerstone of your identity. A part of it, yes; thinking of yourself as a healthy eater helps you maintain that.

I'm talking about more than a type of eating, though. Tools in general. It's just a tool. Not your identity. Maybe this is idealistic, but I think identity should be based on values and principles.

In my case, rather than veering

towards being, say, "that guy that uses those fountain pens", I always remind myself I'd much rather be known as "that guy who's always super warm". I say that I have to remind myself, because of the pull of consumerism. Basing my identity off of shit I own feels (and is, admittedly) much easier than basing it off of living by values.

In the end, this is another one of those things that the path of least resistance is definitely one of the least gains. It's just a tool, a vehicle;

it's not *you*.

***What You Expect Of Yourself Is
What You Teach Others To
Expect Of You***

*February 11, 2014—9:58am
Updated July 3, 2014*

What you expect of yourself gets communicated to others, whether

that's explicitly through speech, or implicitly in how you treat yourself and behave.

This is one of those things to definitely be aware of.

I used to feel kind of cheated and bitter when people on, for example, a team for a review game in class used to praise somebody else for getting just one thing right, even when I'd gotten the majority of points or something.

But really, I expected it out of myself. And because of that, I did

well in class, did well in the games, and it became a normal thing. So people expected it of me.

That's just one example. This is still kind of a nebulous concept to me, because I'm only aware of it. Changing it is beyond me right now, I think, because as of yet, I have little clue how to separate self-expectations and stop others from picking up on those, or even if that's possible at all.

And by definition, I'm not going to change my self-expectations to

change others'.

Kind of vague, kind of nebulous, maybe a little confusing. Something to keep in mind though.

Life Is Exponential

February 18, 2014—1:34pm

Updated July 3, 2014

It really is. It's not linear. You don't take one step forward and make progress by a certain, fixed amount each step.

Things build up, because life is exponential and it is cumulative.

The more you refine a skill, for example, the more knowledgeable you become about it, and the more those crazy flashes of pure insight and instinct come to you.

The more you learn and live, the more things come together and your knowledge starts building upon itself, pulling in different things from different areas, until you start doing things like crossing psychology with school (using

cognitive tricks to improve your mental focus, perhaps), etc. These are all gains that build up over time, rather like compound interest.

Life is a set amount of time (we just don't know the exact amount), and as time passes, things build upon each other and start shooting upwards, rather than stair-stepping upwards.

Don't Look Sideways

February 25, 2014—3:06pm

Updated July 4, 2014

"Don't look back."

I'm sure you've heard it. Take a step forward. [Keep moving forward.](#)

What's said just as often but seems to be kept separate, is "Don't compare yourself to others."

In essence, look only forward.

There are two perspectives I'll present here: the introspective, more philosophical side, and the logical, more practical side.

First, the more esoteric train of thought. Everyone has their own life. Likes, dislikes, joys, skills, wants, etc. There's no point in comparing yourself to things that you don't want. As for what you *do*

want, it's very easy to make yourself feel worse when doing too much self-comparison. Either you feel inferior or superior.

Inferior is no good. It saps your confidence and drive. Feeling discouraged is such an easy way to fall off the wagon and stop trying to reach your goals. Plus, it's an vicious cycle. Feel discouraged -> go off the rails -> stop making progress -> feel more discouraged.

Feeling superior isn't any better. It too saps your drive. You feel like

you're accomplished, like you've done extremely well, and you're just about to reap the rewards you think you deserve. It also mentally poisons you with contempt.

Contemptuousness is no use to you, and even worse, it wrecks how you relate to other people. Nobody wants to be around somebody who looks down their nose at them.

The practical side to this is: the longer you spend looking sideways (or backward), the longer it's going to take to get to where you want to

be. To continue the metaphor: You can't see where you're going, so how can you navigate effectively? You're looking at things you have already encountered or will not encounter, so how can you anticipate obstacles ahead of you?

It's really tough to do this, because comparing yourself is a natural desire, and dwelling on the past is a lot easier than gritting your teeth and pulling yourself forward and up in the present. But if we can do it, I think we'll have a lot better

path to look back on, and a beautiful view of the metaphorical landscape when we take a moment to look around.

Bringing Honesty and Candor

March 3, 2014—11:35am

Updated July 5, 2014

I want to create an environment of honesty and candidness around me. To allow others to say things to my face.

This is all because of what I observed between a few friends some time ago. One of them had a noticeable foot odor, and though we all kind of gave each other looks, nobody really mentioned anything.

This got me thinking. Why? Were we afraid of offending him? Did it just feel too awkward to bring up? I have no idea. But I started wondering what my equivalent might be. What are some things that people feel like they may need to point out to me, but haven't? Why

haven't they?

I don't really know how to do this. My first vague idea here is to be more honest and candid myself, and also to make sure that anyone who wants to express an opinion (note: express, but not *force*) to me feels safe to do so. I'll do that by becoming a more attentive, yet quiet, listener, and also learn to reassure whoever the person might be, if they need it.

It's a little confusing why many of us don't do this. We would

definitely benefit from having friends and peers give us feedback, so we would all benefit from making sure that doing so is possible and desirable. But it's also somewhat understandable; it's awkward, it's tough, and takes a certain amount of subtlety and courage that we can't always muster.

But when we can, I think that we could definitely learn a lot more and help each other a lot more, as well as build more solid

relationships.

***A Theory On Affirmations And
How You Can Make Them
Work For You***

*February 26, 2014—9:13pm
Updated July 5, 2014*

Some people swear by them.
Others spit on them. Why? What's

the difference, and how do they help?

To answer, we turn to psychology: the concept of cognitive dissonance.

In essence, this is when you hold two different, clashing beliefs at once, and your mind tries to fix this imbalance by tipping the favor in one of the two. If you have two conflicting beliefs, like the sky is blue or it's green, then your mind will try to get you to stick to one or the other. Obviously that example is

easy to resolve, but in the case of affirmations, not so much. Why?

When you're using affirmations, you're affirming that you already *are* what you want to be. You're literally telling yourself that you're already there, at your chosen goal.

That causes cognitive dissonance. We think we're unhappy, or not good-looking (otherwise why would you be affirming those things to yourself?), or whatever we want to be, yet. This is where the conflict comes in.

Our minds try to resolve the cognitive dissonance by forcing it. Usually, this involves forcing whichever change feels easier. Since the path of least resistance is easier, and is also your old beliefs you're trying to get rid of, you'll have to fight even harder to keep affirming things.

If we give in to the pressure (give up the affirmation), we "prove" to ourselves that the affirmations are wrong, and our mind is right, and nothing changes. You might even

feel worse about it than when you started.

Failing at things brings about frustration, and a common response to that is to lash out, and this might explain why people turn around and scream to the heavens about why affirmations are false and horrible and completely useless. They're trying to relieve frustration, and place blame.

But, if you manage to tip yourself to the other side of the fence, you get rid of the cognitive dissonance

as well, because now you actually see yourself as what you wanted to be. As a bonus, because your mind wants to be right all the time and hates dissonance, it'll now work to maintain this new belief, rather than fight against it!

So the question now is, how to land on the right side of the fence?

Keep at it. Keep on going, day after tiring day.

Keep a journal. Science provides evidence that keeping a gratitude journal helps make people happier

in their lives, through helping them learn how to look on the bright side and find things to be grateful for and happy about.

Use that concept. Find every single reason you can, every day, that supports you in affirming you are what you want to be. A caveat: only use reason you can support logically. Using false reasons undermines your beliefs. Our beliefs in ourselves should be grounded in rock-solid trust and confidence.

As for reasons that support the old, negative beliefs? Don't write them. Doesn't matter if you can logically support them. You're focusing on the good stuff.

As for reasons that support the opposite? Don't write them. Doesn't matter if you can logically support them. You're focusing on the good stuff.

For example, let's say you're trying to keep from eating unhealthy snacks. One day, at eleven in the morning, just before lunch, you're

starving and give in to eating some chips before lunch. Then, a few hours later, you're hungry again, but manage to resist the candy until you eat a healthy dinner.

That night, when you find reasons to support yourself, you look at what you did before lunch. What can you change to stop it from happening? Pack a healthy snack? Eat a later breakfast or earlier lunch? Decide that, and immediately move on. Then, write down and feel good about resisting that candy

before dinner. Be proud of it.

(This is also good mental exercise. Learn from mistakes, move on, celebrate the good, in essence, applied to affirmations.)

They say you are what you do, and if you keep doing, you'll become. Eventually, you'll prove those beliefs to yourself.

***We Shouldn't Artificially
Amplify Our Moods***

March 5, 2014—4:21pm

Updated July 6, 2014

This is logically intuitive, but took me a while to realize.

I think a lot of people do this,

especially an overwhelming amount of teenagers. When we're sad, we listen to sad music. When we're mad, we blast it. It's a little useless practically, because then we're just keeping ourselves in a spiral of bad emotions.

A little better is listening to uplifting or energetic music when you're angry or sad. It speaks to an ability to be self-aware. Even then, there are some problems with this.

The thing about listening to music that matches your mood is that

you're amplifying your emotions. And as we've probably all experienced, being really emotional gets in the way of making good decisions and thinking clearly.

Changing your mood with the music is a little different, but has the same kind of problem: we'll chase away the feelings, but we won't be able to examine what caused them in the first place, because we'll be happier and looking at things through the new, happy perspective. We should be able to feel our

feelings, accept we're feeling them, and go from there. Even if it hurts.

In fact, that's good. Because if we don't run away from the pain, but face it, we can ask ourselves why we feel it, what brought it on, and then figure out ways to change our situation. Pain isn't so much a faceless entity to be feared, but rather merely an indicator of what's wrong. Take that perspective.

Pain is the cost we pay to find out what's wrong. Rather like paying somebody to diagnose your

body, computer, plumbing, electrical wiring, or whatnot. It's just a more visceral cost. You've paid it already, so make use of what you got.

By artificially amplifying or minimizing our moods (pain), we're throwing away our own emotions and chances to find out *why*. So rather than do that, we can choose to face them, to stand up and make things better for ourselves.

How To Know Yourself

March 5, 2014—4:21pm

Updated July 6, 2014

When we want to learn about ourselves, there's one big thing that we can look at: what makes us the same person over time. **When you**

**change the time, change the age,
change the location, change the
environment, what remains
constant about you?**

We can also look at our values, beliefs, and principles. But to know about these things, we need to know ourselves. How do we do that?

**Look at the things we've done,
actions we've taken, and what
we've left behind.** Relationships, business, grades, accomplishments, failures, all of that.

This is also something that we

can't lie about. For example, say somebody proclaims that they value friendships and relationships. But when you look at their life, and they have few friends and a long string of failed relationships, with no attempt to change either situation, it's clear that he/she values other things more. Maybe that person has a reputation for being a miser, and most of his/her arguments with ex-significant-others revolve around money. One possible conclusion there is that they value money more

than "friendships and relationships".

One way to look at how you remain the same over time is to think back and reflect on how you react to things. Say you have a tendency to get angry when your friends don't do what you want to do that day or something. Maybe that means you have a need to be in control, or maybe you feel like they don't listen to you, and that's something that you need.

Maybe you like to take everyone

out to celebrate when you get a raise or sudden windfall, and that shows you like to share your successes and good fortunes with the people you care about.

The more we do this, the easier it gets. The hard part is facing all the emotions that come up. We want to deny that we have a tendency to be greedy, maybe, or hate the fact that certain people get under our skins, and don't want to face the facts. But as with nearly everything, it gets easier and you get better at it.

The better we get at it, the better we can take control of our lives, our selves, and create something better for ourselves.

Don't Make Inaction Your Default

March 5, 2014—4:22pm

Updated July 6, 2014

I learned recently that inaction is my default choice of action.

When I realized that I was

spending more time deliberating and choosing not to act in any capacity, I asked why. Why was I giving up potential rewards? Why was I not pushing myself? Why was I passing up [opportunities](#)?

It was because I feared being wrong, feared missing out. Feared making the wrong choice, losing some imaginary game or reward.

Really, inaction is much worse. It's the most wrong, most costly choice there is, usually. You usually end up with nothing in your hands

and only a deep, biting regret in your heart.

It hurts. And it hurts all the more when you look back and realize that it all came about because, when presented with the situation, you defaulted into hovering uncertainly.

So I've been trying to learn to make nearly snap decisions. If a friend asks, "Where do you want to eat?", I'll think of something and immediately suggest it. When we get there, and the host asks, "Booth or table?", I'll immediately pick and

suggest which I want. That kind of thing.

I think that the more we get used to making decisions quickly, the better we learn how to do it, and the more we trust ourselves. That in turn leads to even better decisions, and eventually, our default to decision-making leads us down much better paths.

*Choose Any Greatness,
Overcome This Biggest
Challenge*

March 8, 2014—8:42pm

Updated July 6, 2014

It's fear. Ever notice how every single person that's ever done

anything even slightly off the beaten path has answered a question about their obstacles with "fear"?

This is something, however, that I can't claim to have overcome, because we'll always be fighting this fear. We just get better at recognizing it and moving on.

When you do something different, there's no set path for you. There isn't one in life anyway, but the more you strike out, the more vague the map gets, and pretty soon, you have to draw your own map of the

territory, and you *might* have one or two others to compare with.

Fear wants to send us scurrying back to civilization, back to well-eroded highways, and away from nature's trails, or even hacking our way through the undergrowth.

And, it's not limited to blazing new trails either. Just doing things that may be old-hat, but new to you, can bring out the fear. Change of any kind. The more different it is, the more fear is possible and that you'll have to fight.

Since it's so pervasive, always present, we'll have to learn how to deal to be able to do anything more than the bare minimum.

Something that's helped me is having a personal belief relating to death: **I want to die having *done* something.** When I go, whenever that is, everything I am and what I have will disappear. I don't know what happens after, but even if I vanish, I want to do so with the knowledge that I did it, whatever 'it' may be.

So when I start feeling that fear, I remind myself of wanting to *do* something.

Overcoming the shaky legs, the slightly sick feeling in your gut, the nervous lip-licking, all of it, is just as sweet as whatever it is I wanted to do.

The knowledge that you faced the fear, took a deep breath, clenched your jaw, and walked into and out of it, leaves you with something intangible but solid as stone. It tells you that you've done it, and you can

do it again, and build a bedrock of courage out of it. It's a challenge, but it leaves you with something amazing.

***If You Don't Have Your Own
Goals to Serve, You Will Serve
Someone Else's***

March 14, 2014—6:18pm
Updated July 8, 2014

Sound a little callous, I know.
The logic makes sense though,

even if we choose to look past the perspective of "serving goals".

Another, more PC, way to put it is "acting with intention."

If you go through your day (and your life) without intention, inevitably, you will only be a piece of another's story.

When you spend time with your friends, but you don't have any intention yourself (or maybe it's a deeply held, unconscious one, like insecurity), you end up just going along with the flow, doing things

you may or may not like, never speaking up, always fading in the back a little bit.

If you spend time with somebody and they're looking for a just physical or just platonic or deeply committed relationship, and you just kind of go with the flow and do whatever, you'll end up doing what they want, but never communicating your needs or getting them fulfilled.

It's an easy concept to grasp, a little hard to swallow, and a lot harder to put into practice, in my

experience. Easy to understand, but I didn't want to believe that the world wouldn't give me what I wanted automatically, that I needed to grit my teeth and work for it, and it's hard to keep it in mind sometimes.

Still, it's extremely good to know. It keeps me asking myself, *if I go do this or spend time with this person, is it because I want to, or because I'm just kind of floating along doing whatever?* and that helps keep me happier, and on track to my

goals.

Upping Stakes To Raise Performance

June 2, 2014—3:58pm

Updated July 12, 2014

Risky strategy, but I think it's one of more the common and easily done. The basic premise is, well,

basic: we're forced to do better because the stakes are higher.

An example is skiing. I could just flow down the run, no big deal, and cruise easily. Or, I could throw in some freestyle tricks in there. Now, the stakes are a little higher. If I mess up while cruising, it's not really horrible. I take a quick tumble and recover. But if I mess up while tricking, there's a higher chance for a more severe injury.

There a few drawbacks to this. One is that raising stakes does

usually tend to increase performance anxiety as well. Nervousness, as performers like musicians will tell you, is good up to a certain point, then it tends to degrade your skills and interfere with your best efforts. Another, more obvious drawback is that with more on the line, you lose more if things don't go your way. That's inevitable, but that's the the basis of the strategy; we don't want to lose because we've risked more, so we'll play harder.

There isn't always a choice in this. In my skiing example, there's no way that I can make the risk of freestyle the same risk as is present in just easing my way down the slope.

We *do* have the choice, however, to raise stakes in lower risk things. [Make bets](#) with other people to raise your motivation. Set rewards for if you're successful, or tasks that you have to complete if not. [Beeminder](#) is great for this, I've heard. It's a site where you bet

money to stay on track with a habit or something, and you can choose where that money goes, like charity, I think.)

This is something you can't always avoid (playing in bigger arenas will carry higher risk), but you can use it to up your stakes and motivate yourself in areas that would otherwise have little or no consequences should you fail.

Passive Good Qualities
(Humility)

June 2, 2014—3:59pm

Updated July 13, 2014

Something an acquaintance of mine helped me think of.

This guy is a pretty cool dude,

treats his friends well, does his work as needed, and isn't evil by any stretch of the imagination. He does, though, have a bit of an inferiority complex and a somewhat bitter view of the world.

One day, he was talking about being good-looking and working out, and the vibe I got out of it was, *If I have certain qualities, like a six-pack, I deserve for you to think I'm attractive and cool.*

Again, not a bad guy by any means, just a bit bitter. And, though

that vibe seemed a little entitled and bratty, I understand where that's coming from and can empathize. Through empathizing though, from an outside perspective I can also see that just having that mindset completely destroys any kind of attractiveness one could hold (I just imagine a girl saying the same type of things), and is twice as *unattractive*.

What it made me realize, is that qualities must be appreciated on their *own*. I think this is why the

right amount of humility is much more attractive, generally, than cockiness. They become almost passive advantages to you.

To put this in perspective, let's try a thought experiment.

While you're working on some kind of project, imagine that one of your coworkers comes up to you. He is, to put it bluntly, *average*. You know he goes home to his wife after work, goes to the bar on Fridays with a couple of guys down the hall, and likes to play golf, as well as

read some Stephen King in his off time. Most of the time his office attire consists of a t-shirt under a button-up, and those would be wrinkled if his wife didn't keep some semblance of order in his domestic life.

He offers to help you with your project. You're grateful, and happy to have a little help, but there's nothing exciting about it. Just another work project.

Some days, he stumbles in a little later, having maybe overslept or

just not been organized in his mornings. Usually, he gets his work done, but you notice that on those days, he's just a little slow and sometimes misses a few details here and there that you have to patch up.

But then imagine that the project goes slightly awry, and another man or student offers to help. He's different though; you've seen the man around the office a couple times, and have gathered that he consults for your boss from time to

time. When your boss requests him to assist you, the first time you truly meet you notice that he's a man whose suit fits perfectly, his frame filling out the clothing and making him look muscular and athletic. He strides in confidently, and shakes your hand with a firm grip and solid eye contact.

While he's working with you, you rarely see him in the office. However, he is thorough in his work, as well as in his email responses when you need to

coordinate things. When he *does* come in, all his work is done and completed to a degree that you can't help but notice is top-notch.

At the end of the project, you wonder if you'll ever work with him again. Things can go two ways from here:

1) He brags to your boss about how he salvaged the project, and how amazing his work was. Instantly, your respect for him is lowered and it's irritating to see him boast. He might be good and know

it, but there's no reason to blatantly shove that in your and everyone's faces.

2) Your boss compliments him on the work, and he firmly insists that you all did your part, and makes sure to highlight your contribution. It's not high praise by any means, but he's acknowledged your efforts, and at the end of the meeting, leaves you with a warm smile and an offer to call him again if you need help.

The difference between these two men is visceral. It's not a complete

or thorough thought experiment, but you can *feel* the difference in how one would feel towards each of them. Then, at the end, it's just as visceral to imagine what it would feel like if the second man bragged, or if he humbly brought up everyone with him.

To bring it around to my acquaintance, I imagine he would feel a lot better about his looks if he stopped expecting something out of them. It's a little counterintuitive, but the fact that humility is a much

more desired trait seems to agree.

In the form of a lesson: let your good qualities speak for themselves. Highlight them if it's requested, don't shove them in others' faces and brag, but instead use them to create even more good. That's powerful.

Being a "Good Person"

March 5, 2014—3:05pm

Updated July 16, 2014

"Be a good person", as a stand-alone value, is a slippery slope; you'll let others convince you with: *a good person would do this*

and you'll spend a lot of time self-sacrificing.

Giving your time and attention and effort is a good thing. You have to remember, though, that your time is *valuable*. It's your time, and you only get so much.

So self-sacrifice is truly a gift. It's also valued by society; there's messages everywhere bombarding you with the theme that self-sacrifice is noble and respectable and the mark of a truly good person. But, is it actually valued?

Think about your friend who always does this, is he/she actually that valued? There's always that friend that expends a lot more effort (relative to the other people around) *on* the other people around them. If you have a friend that always gets drinks, or is the one to get napkins for everyone at the restaurant, and is always fixing the group problems, that's them. Are they valued?

By asking if they're valued, I'm asking: are they treated with the

respect and praise that society and culture tells us self-sacrificers deserve? Does everyone give their opinion a little more respect, do the other friends treat them very well and also thank them for their efforts?

Or, does it become expected of that person to be self-sacrificing? Worse, does that person get walked all over and taken advantage of?

The worst part is, it's partially that person's own fault. "Be a good person" is a belief that forces you to

do things that override your personal needs.

Rather, you should make it an accompanying belief. An example: *I want to do X, and help people with it where I can.*

Very, very few other people will put your interests ahead of theirs, and even fewer without some kind of self-motivation (debt to you, wanting to get something from you, etc), and so by making the "good person" belief a smaller one, you will be able to live your life and

still be able to follow that belief,
but without letting it interfere with
living your life.

*My Biggest Productivity Killer
(and how I fight it)*

June 3, 2014—4:15pm

Updated July 16, 2014

It's nearly an automatic addiction now: surfing the internet.

Surfing the internet pretty much

stops all progress on getting anything done, and stops it for the rest of the day, usually. That's bad. Combine that having it be a habit, and that means I have to fight from the moment I get up to not do it. And if I give in during the morning, the rest of the day is usually shot. I'm unfocused, buzzing around looking busy, lazing off, and generally behaving in an ADD-like manner.

I fight it by having a daily check of "Only essential online before 5pm". It really helps me to re-

evaluate whether or not I need to get online, and stops me from getting sucked into a black hole of reddit, for example.

It also helps to meditate first thing in the morning. Sounds kinda woo-woo, but it really does put me in a more present state of mind, and I'm more conscious of what I'm about to do.

A third thing that helps is to have things to do straight off the bat. My danger times are the morning and late afternoon. In the morning, I'm

still groggy and slightly sleepy, and have a tendency to want to just fulfill my whims without thinking, and that leads to unthinkingly ending up on the computer doing nothing and really hindering that day's productivity.

But, if I have to roll out of bed, do my morning routine, then immediately go and do something, even if that's just cook breakfast, I get time to wake up and there's less risk of me ending up on the computer before I realize what I've

done.

As time goes on, I get a little less tethered to the computer, and these three things have been great help in fighting a habit cemented over the past decade or so.

How to Stop Analysis Paralysis (and opportunity cost)

June 3, 2014—4:20pm

Updated July 16, 2014

Yeah, there's an infinite number of things you could be doing.

At any given moment, you could

be doing something else, something you'd much rather be doing. And there's a lot out there that you want to do. So the opportunity cost paralyzes you.

The thing is, all these different activities have different values to you. That's how you choose, and how you avoid being paralyzed by worrying about the opportunity cost and the time you sink into one thing.

If you can't just decide based on a certain thing's value to you, it's time to put on your adult pants and make

a decision. What's more important?

Doesn't matter if it's *actually* more important to you. If it's that much more important, you'll choose it. Make the decision, and if you regret it, you know what to choose next time.

If you *still* can't decide, here's something else to worry about: the longer you spend worrying about cost, the more it's going to cost. It's going to cost a lot. Because while you're trying to decide, you're doing nothing, and time is *still* slipping

away between your fingers.

So **decide**. Then re-adjust as necessary.

Front- and Back-loading Your Week and Your Life

June 9, 2014—10:15pm

Updated July 18, 2014

Front-loading your week. It's a concept that I came across on Scott Young's [blog](#), where he explains

that, when determining tasks for the day and week, he "front-loads" by trying to do more early on, and have less to do later in the day/week.

Definitely give it a shot. It's a lot less stressful, and having the end part of the week free and relaxing really does wonders.

It's also a good diagnostic tool. If you're stressing out hard at the end of every week (or even day), you know that you've left too many things too late. Fix it by starting to do more in the beginning of the

week, so you have less work at the end.

This also applies to your entire life! If you keep pushing things back, they'll never get done and you won't get where you want to go. The more you push things back, the more they pile up and stress you out.

I would say it's a subtle shift, but it's not. It feels incredibly different to get more done early, and feel better later, and also to push forward in your life like this. It feels much better.

Creativity

April 3, 2014—9:42am

Updated July 20, 2014

It seems like one of the biggest limits in anything you do is your creativity.

In a book about his time spent in

something like PR and marketing, Ryan Holiday outlines how he faked some vandalism to get press for a topic he was hired to spread the word about.

In engineering, creativity is essential to finding solutions to problems, to coming with new approaches.

In any kind of art, creation is almost the defining aspect. Writing, visual art, the ability to come up with something is absolutely crucial.

So how does one nurture it, increase it? There's a lot written about this out there, but there are a few high-level type things that stand out to me.

Creativity seems to involve making connections between things. So:

- Get out, do new things, meet more people; gives you more "connection ammunition"
- Get rid of your limiting mindsets
- Take care of your needs;

it's hard to be creative when you're dejected and worrying about money and your love/social life, and your health

One of the most important things is to be okay with and ready to do your own thing. You won't come up with anything new by doing everything somebody else is doing.

You, Your Goals, and Chess

July 2, 2014—9:24pm

Updated August 4, 2014

Losing the war

I lost a chess game against my dad the other day.

It was hard-fought time, and I

learned some valuable things from it. I learned some new moves, some new strategies for chess, and also practice my strategical thinking, stretching my ability to look ahead.

I also learned some of the reasons why I struggle with achieving my goals.

What does chess have to do with life goals?

Besides a life goal of becoming a local or international chess champion, of course.

Chess has a certain illuminating quality, and it's not the only strategic board game with such a quality; the Japanese game of Go is another great one for this.

This quality: the ability to show you your personal approach to challenges and goals.

What it taught

The biggest reason I lost that game: being too aggressive.

I attacked without "supply lines", without support from other pieces.

The bishops and rooks would be sent in alone, with no other piece to cover for them.

That strategy is good to deploy in going after open targets; i.e., as a finishing move. It's worse than ineffective against a solid defense, or on "battlefields" with low mobility and a large number of obstacles.

Another reason for the loss there is related to aggressiveness: being stubborn and refusing to fall back and regroup.

When I started losing pieces to my poorly-thought-out offensive, I kept throwing more and more into the offensive, and eventually all my troops were gone.

Why does that matter?

It's analogous. That strategy of an all-out offensive is like an all-out push towards completing your goals. It's great for when you're close; if I'm close to finishing a project, then I can stay up one night and give it one last major push

towards completion.

But that doesn't work so well in the beginning. Pushing too hard at the start just burns you out.

So the all-out push is great at closing things out, but terrible as an opening tactic.

Lesson learned

Playing a game like chess or Go is a good workout for your mind, and it can also reveal some things you'll find useful.

And, don't forget the strength and

weakness of the strong push: don't use it right off the bat, and it's great for closing things out.

If I Fail

July 11, 2014—4:47pm

Updated October 27, 2014

If I fail in the things I aim for...
what does it matter to history, to the
world?

There's no guarantees in this

world, nothing to promise me that if I do certain things, I'll get what I want.

If I fail, I'll fade away to join the faceless masses of those who came, and then went, sometimes kicking and screaming. I'll become an invisible part, in the years to come, of the history books that read:

"The population of the United States of America in the years before these events numbered over three hundred million. Afterward, along with the world's population

as a total, it soared, reaching growth rates previously unseen through all human history."

A few of these three hundred plus million will be remembered.

Obama comes to mind. Other world leaders, when you look globally.

The rest will be remembered as a part of that number, and their struggles, their stories will vanish with them.

Another one whose efforts were nearly in vain.

But only nearly, because if I fade,

I go with the knowledge that I
strove for something, that no matter
what came of it, I still
did something.

*Stop Trying So Hard To
Differentiate Yourself*

February 11, 2014—9:57pm

Updated October 28, 2014

The shower is where I have many of my best thinking sessions, as I've heard it is for many other people.

There's just something about the rush of hot water, the constant flow and cascading sound, that helps my brain relax and think.

This was no different. I was approaching the fact that I feel lonely quite a lot of the time, even when I make an effort to be social and spend time with friends. Sometimes, I feel like I don't connect with other people and they don't understand.

It got me thinking, though, about what I like in life. I realized, there

are things that I like in life, specific things, just like others have things that they like. Really, I'm just like anybody else out there.

Every person has their own likes and dislikes, and some of those things may be the same as mine, or they may not. Your favorite foods may include a few of my own. My disliked music may be your favorite genre.

What this all comes down to, then, is relatability. If you feel like you can relate to somebody, and

they you, then rapport builds.

It follows that if you try way too hard to set yourself apart, you'll be making an effort *not* to relate to people, and thus become more isolated, more lonely, and slowly go a little insane.

One solution? Differentiate yourself in other, better ways. Practicing empathy is a damned good one. A lot of people (and this goes up exponentially the younger you are) aren't very empathic nor excellent conversationalists. Basic

social skills are good, but hold no candle to somebody who you feel like truly listens, can empathize with you, and is good at leading or following a conversation.

This sets you apart, because it's so rare, but also helps you learn to relate, and people will want to give you the opportunity to do so.

Being different isn't always good. Being oh-so-special might be good for your ego. Too much of it, however, makes your emotional health suffer.

***You're Told To Push Out Of
Your Comfort Zone, But Where
Do You Push?***

October 7, 2014—2:44pm

Updated October 30, 2014

*(Or, the key to developing
yourself.)*

The concept of pushing out of your comfort zone is incredibly popular lately, and has been.

It's spread from less known cultures and places like the self-improvement people to becoming inspirational phrases and photos on Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook, and more.

It's well and good, but where do you push?

Some people will know exactly what they want to do. The challenge

for them there is mustering the nerve and doing it.

Others will have a vague idea, and there the challenge also involves a bit of independent thinking. They need to clarify what it is that needs doing before it can be done.

Still others will struggle with it.

I'm one of those. I don't come up with ways I think things should be in my life. I'm exposed to them.

Other people do something a certain way, and it takes that

exposure for me to find out where I should push out of my comfort zone.

It took years of being anxious (still am) and socially awkward, then finally discovering things like pickup artists (don't go down this route, it's mentally unhealthy; the only reason I even mention it is in the interest of honesty) even existed, to realize that I could consciously improve my social skills.

I spent the same amount of time thinking I was permanently weak and skinny, and being depressed and

bitter about it. It took exposure to people who changed their bodies and beliefs for me to realize that yes, doing that is possible.

So in the interest of actually making the push happen, something that helps me is thinking about what I don't want to do.

If I don't want to go and get some work done, well guess what? It's time to bite the bullet and go get some work done.

This clarifies what exactly the action to take is. That way, when the

picture of "comfort zone" pops up, rather than mindlessly cheer on the cliché, you realize: *good idea, and here's what I need to do to put it into action.*

*Five Questions To Ask Yourself
Before Arguing (or, Can You
Shrink The Internet?)*

*February 26, 2014—3:20pm
Updated November 3, 2014*

Arguing is a common thing. The word brings to mind images of

romantic partners having a fight, or families having a falling out, or something of more magnitude like that. But really, arguing, at a basic level, is the struggle for dominance over another person, or people.

Even in friendly debates, the person who gets the other(s) to agree has "won". Your friends choosing where to go eat lunch is a kind of argument. The person who makes the best suggestion (or best case, as usually is) that gets chosen "wins".

In certain kinds of people, this is really common, and very bad for their interpersonal relationships.

Of course, arguing is a big part of natural life. People are always in conflict, even if that is just differences in personal preference. If you decide to eat where your friends decide, but that's not where you want to go, you have lost the "conflict" and come out the worse for it.

This all sounds Hegelian, about there always being a winner and

loser. It is. There isn't always a big battle about identity and whatnot, but conflict is always there, whether in friendly teasing or full-blown screaming matches.

So how can you deal with that reality? Answer five questions.

What happens when you argue?

What's the goal of this?

What do *you* get out of it?

What will the cost be?

Does this further your goals?

This occurred to me during a philosophy class in which the class

started getting quite heated over whether you could literally shrink the internet or not. I started getting pretty riled up in my head, trying to think of arguments and counterarguments.

At the same time, I was kind of watching my thoughts, and realized that I was getting really worked up over something trivial. So simultaneously, I was writing down my thoughts in an Evernote note, trying to work through why I was upset and what I could do about it.

The questions popped up.

What happens? I get into conflict with my classmates, I put myself into a bad mood, and put emotional and mental stress on myself.

What's the goal? To prove my point, of course.

What do I get of it? Uh oh. I get nothing but a fleeting sense of superiority, and a rep as a know-it-all.

What will the cost be? Emotional stress, expending effort on thinking up arguments and countering others,

to resolve a trivial debate.

Does this further my goals? A superiority complex is bad to have, why would you put undue stress on yourself, a rep as a nerd and know-it-all does not help me, so expending effort to make those things happen is definitely not in my interests.

So I stopped. I calmed down, let go of all of it, and just watched the class go at it.

This can go for any other situation that I can think of. Arguing

with your significant other? What's the cost? Emotional pain, stress, conflict with a loved one. Think of it like that, and make the answers into what's in both of your interests (and do the questions for yourself, as always).

Get rid of the pointless arguing, and make your life easier.

*More Focus, More Pain,
Greater Reward*

July 23, 2014—4:53pm

Updated December 16, 2014

The person who gets ahead is the same person who is willing to go through more pain and be more

intense in focus.

If Alex and Kelsey both study for four hours, who learned more and better?

Whoever was more focused, was willing to grind through more problems.

Say Alex was half-heartedly working on some math problems, and had a tendency to balk and stop working when he encountered hard problems. Take that in contrast to our hypothetical Kelsey, who was willing to crack open the book and

painstakingly work through every step of the example problems to figure out what to do on a difficult problem.

Same four hours, different focus, different investment, different reward.

Whether Peace or War

October 27, 2014—2:52pm

Updated June 16, 2015

*"Their reputation stands as high
in peace as in war."*

Sometime in Dan Carlin's

Hardcore History podcast, [Episode 41 \(Thor's Angel's\)](#), he mentions a group of people called the '[Chauci](#)'.

The one sentence Carlin says about them really lodged itself into my brain. Evidently, their geographic neighbors and our contemporary historians thought very highly of the Chauci in all their dealings, whether adversarial, mercantile, or something else.

When I heard that, my first thought was *I want to be like that*.

The more I reflect on that, the

more I realize: it's not about the reputation. No, it's about being the kind of person (or people) that acts in such a way, the reputation is a natural, unthinking side-effect.

To adapt the message to a more modern and less combative setting, take 'peacetime' to mean something like in the company of friends and family, or lounging at home. 'War', on the other hand, would then refer to a confrontation (whether adversarial or with somebody you're close to), or a competition.

At home and relaxed, I want to act in a way that, when looked back on, the first words that come to mind are: warm, kind, positive, fun, cheerful, and relaxed. The idea of a cozy, comfortable and festive atmosphere between me, friends, and family is an appealing one.

Or it could be that, with Halloween upcoming, the festive season is approaching and I'm already infected.

What about 'war', though?
Whether that's a disagreement with

somebody dear to me, an aggressive confrontation with somebody else, or in competition in tennis—or anything really—, I want to act in a manner that's associated with words like: grit, spirited, courageous, proactive, caution, wisdom, intelligence and strategy.

I want to approach 'war' with the mindsets and skills of people like Marcus Aurelius, Sun Tzu, Erwin Rommel, and Themistocles; the idea is to overcome obstacles with grit; outwit, outgun, and outrun the foe;

dig underneath the unbreakable city walls; grasp victory with grace and honor; and face the inevitable with head held high and fire burning in the eyes.

In 'peace', the people to emulate are ones with charisma and warmth, as well as a zest for life, like Bill Clinton and Tynan, among others like friends of mine who are cheerful, kind, and fun to be around. This is to bring the party when it's time, to always be fun to be around, and generally have a good time with

the people I spend my time with.

Looking at the list of people for either time gives a reader some sense of overwhelm. Every person mentioned sets quite the bar. But then, actions that gained some kind of accord like that wouldn't be the same without requiring so much of the person acting.

The hope here then, is that I can live up to those kinds of standards and perform at a level for (as well as have a personality congruent with) those thoughts.

To that end, I think meditation will help with that; I already attribute to it an increased level of self-control, especially when dealing with frustration, boredom, or distractions of the reddit kind!

Building willpower and grit in the weight room will also be another part of that.

As it seems, acting in those specific ways seems to be a skill, which by definition can be honed.

In my mind and in the gym is where the tools for war and work

are built. Every time I work, confront, or compete, I can strive to be more wise, strategic, and determined, the better to utilize my resources, the better to do something or build something.

In my mind and in my heart is where I kindle warmth, give generously, and share goodwill with others. Every time I'm around people I can be more warm, give more value, and share fun a little bit more.

Seeking recognition and accolade

may be some kind of selfishness, but in this case, they are for something that will benefit nearly everyone around me, and that seems like a pretty worthy goal: to be a comrade that stands by your side and assists in achieving your goals, as well as a companion to sit and converse by the fire with.

Huan is an electrical engineering student; his website is found at huanmnguyen.com.

His inspirations include:

[Sebastian Marshall](#), [Tynan](#), [Mikael Syding](#), and [Ludvig Sunstrom](#).