

# 5 Simple Steps to An Awesome Life

# Introduction

Hi there. My name is Vlad, and I'm a blogger.

I really enjoy personal growth, and I have written this book to share that enjoyment with you.

In this book, I'm bringing you the best personal growth information I have collected over the past several years, mixed with my own experiences and attitude towards life, slowly cooked together over a period of many months, until now, when you're holding my most delicious personal growth recipe in your hands!

I have narrowed down everything I know about personal growth to the 5 most important steps. The 5 things that will truly change your life!

Every single chapter you are about to read is **densely packed with information**. I don't believe in fluffing about and repeating my point a dozen times. I also don't want you to get bored. Hey, being bored isn't fun, and having fun while growing is what this book is all about!

You can reach me at [vlad@anamazingmind.com](mailto:vlad@anamazingmind.com). I enjoy getting comments and feedback, so feel free to e-mail me if you like (or dislike) this book!

# A Few Quick Notes

Before you get started, here are a few quick notes:

You are reading an e-book. However, that doesn't mean it's best to read it on-screen. In fact, you'll get the most benefit by printing it out, and reading it that way. There's just *something* about printed material.

It's also handy to keep some paper and a pen nearby. You can use them to make quick bullet-point-style notes about the most important points from each chapter. I tried to sum these up at the end of some chapters, but it's always better if you note down the points that struck YOU personally as the most important.

There are some hyperlinks in this e-book. You obviously can't follow these if you're reading a printout. Don't worry - this e-book is a self-contained unit. You could take a printout with you on a deserted island, and it would still be just as useful. The hyperlinks just contain extra in-depth information on each topic. You don't need to follow them, but they're a nice bonus if you want to know more.

Also, there are no affiliate links in this e-book. If I link to something, it's because I really believe it's a great resource. I'm not getting any benefit from you clicking on links here.

And one last thing before we get started:

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- you can print this e-book out, put it in a gold frame and hang it in a prominent spot in the entrance hall of your hundred-million-dollar mansion ( I like to think that's going to happen)

# 1. The Body

Alright! Let's get started! Before we get to the super-exciting stuff about your mind, let's tackle the mildly exciting stuff about your body. Because having your body well handled gives you more energy and less distraction. It's like cooking - even the best recipe won't do you much good if your pot has holes in it. So let's first take care of any potential "holes" in your body through which your energy or focus get drained, and we'll be ready to do the real magic!

Ever heard the old saying, "*There's a healthy mind in a healthy body?*". Yes, I know, sayings are annoying - after all they're mainly used by parents to make you do things you don't want to do. Like eat healthy (yuck), go to sleep early (Yuck.), or go to school (YUCK!). But by pure coincidence, this saying happens to be true!

(By the way, I actually enjoy two of the three things I "yucked" about above.)

Your brain only takes up 5% of your body mass... yet it consumes 20% of the oxygen! (No, I don't have a reference for that. I just heard it somewhere and thought it sounded cool :) ). You need a pretty efficient way of getting oxygen and glucose to the brain if you want to use your mind to its full potential. Thankfully, you've got the blood flow.

The blood transfers the stuff to your brain (one would think blood is the fun red stuff that comes out of people in action movies. But it's actually REAL. Really, I've seen it on a TV documentary.). So you need a good and efficient blood flow to keep your mind alert and full of energy. Lazy slow blood flow won't do you good.

And that's where exercise comes in. (AAArgh! He said the e-word! Run for your lives!) When you exercise regularly (especially aerobic exercise, like running or swimming), your blood flow improves. You get more blood flowing, and it transfers nutrients more efficiently. You will be able to concentrate longer, and think clearer.

## Exercise

Wait! Don't put your hands up in horror just because I mention "exercise"! I'll show you that it can be fun as well as really healthy!

After a few days without exercise, I usually start to get jumpy and slightly irritable. And thanks to science, I know why, and what to do about it. Every day, you encounter some stressful situations that release adrenaline into your blood stream. Your body doesn't recognize the difference between a sabre-toothed tiger and a big work assignment (given to you by a sabre-toothed boss). Both trigger adrenaline release. You'll need to burn up this unnecessary adrenaline somehow.

You could either wait for it to build up, then have a fit of anger and throw your computer monitor out the window (make sure you have a video camera handy if you choose this route :)). Or you could just exercise every two or three days.

Exercise burns up the excess adrenaline that you release during a normal day. It also releases endorphins, the body's natural opiates. This gives you the warm, happy feeling you get after a good sweaty exercise session. It feels goooooood!

## How to exercise

I'm not a big fan of going to the gym. It feels too much like work to me. And I always prefer to [turn work into fun](#).

So I make my exercise fun! I call up some friends for a game of basketball, or do some parkour training, or hit the yoga club, or anything else I enjoy.

When you manage to get your exercise in a fun way, not only do you get all the health benefits, but you also really enjoy it!

Of course, if you enjoy hitting the gym, then by all means, do it!

Generally, experts seem to think aerobic exercise is the really important thing for your health. In other words, exercising your heart and lungs, as well as your outside muscles.

You can recognize aerobic exercise very easily. If you keep going, you run out of breath. With anaerobic exercise, your muscles get tired before you run out of breath.

Or, you can adopt this approach one of my friends uses. He calls it mammalian exercise:

*Do what you like, when you like, exactly as you like it, just for fun. Just like children and mammals. No silly exercise program to tell you what you'll be doing two weeks from now.*

Doesn't that just sound awesome? :)

Another VERY important aspect that I touched on briefly in my article [5 Simple Ways to Increase Your Happiness](#) is breathing. To quote from that article:

*If you don't breathe, you won't be happy. Really. In fact, studies show that 100% of all happy people breathe.*

If that doesn't immediately convince you that breathing properly is very important... congratulations! You have a good critically thinking mind.

## **Breathing**

But breathing right IS supremely important. The yogis have studied the art of breathing for centuries, and have devoted a whole discipline to breathing properly.

I've done some yogi breathing exercises, and I can tell you it's powerful stuff. But you don't need to believe in any eastern spiritual thingy to breathe right. There's plenty of Western scientific evidence for good breathing.

By the way, did you ever notice that every major religion involves singing? Singing gets you breathing deeply and slowly, which are exactly the two right characteristics that allow proper gas exchange (more details in a moment). Religions want you to be happy when you're in your church/mosque/whatever, so you'll keep going there and paying them money. It also explains the old folk wisdom - when you're feeling down, sing a song. Sure, songs do more than make you breathe properly, but that's a big part of it.

So how do you get breathing correctly?

When we breathe shallowly, stale air gets accumulated in the lungs. And every new breath only dilutes that old air in your lungs. You won't get truly fresh air in until you empty your lungs of the stale old air.

In the west, we think that every breath starts with breathing in. But Yogis claim that every breath starts with breathing OUT. Because if you have a glass of dirty water, and want to fill it with clean water instead... you first have to EMPTY the glass.

So start right now by breathing out *really* slowly and completely. At the end, contract your stomach muscles to really push out every last bit of air.

Then just hold your breath for a few seconds with empty lungs. Once you start feeling a physical urge to breathe in again, go for it! Ideally, you will be starting each breath with your abdomen. This shows you that you're breathing with your diaphragm, which is a kind of muscular wall between your chest and your stomach. If you breathe only by expanding your chest, you are vastly underusing your lung capacity.

Breathing with your diaphragm is not only the easiest way to get air into your lungs, it also helps to get old blood from all over your body back into the heart. Your heart pushes out the fresh blood. Your diaphragm pulls in the used blood. So breathing proper deep breaths is the best way to prevent a whole bunch of vein problems.

So here's a simple formula for breathing, like you've never seen it before:

1. Breathe out
2. Breathe in

Wow, deep stuff, isn't it?

## **Food**

I deliberately avoided saying the word diet. Oops! I just said it.

Food is insanely important for your energy levels. The good news is, I won't be forcing you into some crazy roots-and-beans diet. In fact, I will let YOU choose your diet!

I'm sure you've experienced the lethargy and laziness you feel after a huge meal. This is when all the blood draws away from your brain and into your stomach. A huge lunch will leave you unable to think deeply for about 2-3 hours. But wait! Good news! You can avoid that lethargy by eating smaller meals!

I never went for the artificial 3-meals-a-day invention. I generally eat when I'm hungry, and stop eating when I'm not hungry anymore. On my ideal days, when I have good access to good food, I eat about 5-6 times a day. This avoids big digestion drainage, and it also leaves me with constant supply of energy.

Now I'm not saying that it would be ideal for you (although dietary experts support the 5-meals-a-day regime). But if you feel like you have to eat at three set

times a day just because the culture is forcing you... don't :). Eat when you want and what you want. Which brings me to the next point.

## **What to eat**

In a fascinating experiment performed in the 1930s, scientists gave a group of toddlers unlimited 24/7 access to a vast range of foods from ice cream to spinach, essentially allowing them to create their own diet over a period of thirty days based on nothing more than their own sense of what they wanted to eat and when.

The result?

Despite variations in timing, sequence and frequency, every child in the study wound up choosing what was considered to be a "balanced" diet over the course of the month.

Our bodies are a lot smarter than we give them credit for. If we would just listen to them more often. Thankfully, I've got a simple trick for you to do just that!

## **Choosing your diet**

Here's a simple two-step formula to decide which foods are right for you personally:

1. Eat a food.
2. Notice how you feel 1 hour later. If you feel clear and energetic, you have eaten a food that's right for you. If you don't, you haven't.

And that's all I have to say about your body. Here's a quick checklist you might want to write down before moving on to the next chapter:

- breathing
- eating
- exercise

## 2. Awareness

Alright! With your body handled, the first step for your mind is... becoming aware!

In this chapter, you will learn (among other things):

- the number one skill required for psychological growth (without this skill, you won't grow)
  - how to exercise the above skill like a muscle, becoming better at it every day
  - how to extract valuable lessons from your experiences even days after they happened, and commit them to your subconscious mind
  - a simple yet powerful technique to build your awareness every time you walk down the street

So what IS awareness? I call it "awareness", some people call it "living consciously", psychoanalysts call it "observing ego". Don't worry about the buzzwords. It's still the same thing.

It basically means being aware of what's going on around you and in your life, and deliberately choosing all your actions. Without awareness, you'll be running your whole life on autopilot. Like this guy:

*I went through a period where I was depressed quite a bit. I would get up in the morning and my whole day would be pretty much ruined by depression.*

*And then, one day, I got up, and my mind started doing its thing. I decided I was just gonna let it do its thing for a while and watch. So I laid in bed, and just kind of paid attention and made some notes.*

*I sat there for about an hour, an hour and a half. And I realized, as I watched it intermittently, that it was thinking about things I didn't want to have happen, things that I didn't like and focusing on where I wanted to be where I wasn't. And that would pretty much ruin my whole day.*

Awww, I know. Poor guy. Let's give him a big man-hug.

Or, since I don't know where he lives, let's just use him to illustrate a point. There's a guy who at first was NOT aware at all. He was basically running his whole life on autopilot, just letting the depression get the better of him. Then one day, he realized what was going on, and was like "*enough is enough*". It's like he just woke up. Like when the hypnotist snaps his fingers, and you suddenly became aware of the real world.

Now, he had an elephant-size life-changing awakening. But it's amazing how often little awakenings happen to all of us. I just had one recently. I was like "*Hey, just because I signed up for the volleyball trainings, it doesn't mean I have to go there every week!*" You won't believe how much happier I am on Thursdays, now that I realize I can go to volleyball only when I feel like it! (It's almost every time anyway)

## **Why awareness rocks**

You wanna change something? You first need to *become aware* of it! In other words, **awareness is the NUMBER ONE SKILL that allows psychological growth.**

For example, let's say you had to commute to work every morning. Further, let's say you would always take the same route, get stuck in rush-hour traffic, get angry at the traffic, then become anxious because you would be coming late for work. And then, the next day, you would leave your house at the same time and take the same route, get stuck in traffic again, and the whole process would repeat itself.

That would be a life WITHOUT awareness. *With* awareness, after 2 or 3 times, you would realize that you're always getting stuck in traffic, and do something about it. You would try taking a different route, or leave earlier, negotiate flexible working hours to avoid the rush hour traffic, or just get some audiobooks and podcasts to listen to on the car and use your time efficiently.

As you raise your awareness of what's happening around you (and inside you), you will start to collect valuable lessons and learn AS YOU GO THROUGH LIFE. Real-time. You will be collecting useful feedback from every situation.

And, frankly, awareness is fun :D. When you are in a social venue, and can tell who likes who, who's attracted to who, etc. (apparently, women are 4 times better at this than men.) Or when you happen to be talking to some angry person, and you're thinking *"I know exactly why you're angry. If you would just stop shouting and take a good long look at your life, you would realize you hate your job!"* Or if people disapprove of your actions, and you can think *"I know exactly why I'm doing this, and I know it's the right thing to do. Too bad if you don't like it."*

Let me share this story from my friend Ben (Hi Ben!):

*I noticed the distinction between "analysis" (or what I sometimes call "intelligence") and "awareness" when I was playing cards with my father. He wasn't paying attention to all the cards that had been laid; instead of paying attention, he was doing some really hard-core thinking about estimated probabilities, plans, strategies, etc. Meanwhile, I was just watching everything that was happening - while he stared at only his cards, I was keeping track of all the cards that had been played, people's expressions, etc. My father was extremely intelligent, and he worked very very hard, but I outplayed him without much effort, because I developed my awareness more than he did.*

## **Building your awareness**

Awareness is really composed of two bits. General awareness of your life, where you're heading, and what you'd like to improve. And then awareness in the moment.

They're two different sides of the same coin, and need to be tackled a little differently. To gain general awareness of your life, it helps to think about your life, reflect, maybe write things down.

To become aware in the moment, it helps to get out of your head, stop analyzing so much, and instead just live in the moment. Notice your surroundings. Notice what you can feel and see and hear with all your five senses. Notice what's happening around you. Notice details that others might overlook, like what T-shirt the person next to you is wearing. Just get out of your head. Be in the moment. (And don't worry you're going to miss valuable lessons because you're lost in the moment. As long as you have your awareness up and running, you can always think back over your experiences once you're back home, and extract all the lessons you can.)

Now let's tackle general awareness of your life...

## **Journaling**

Journaling is great for becoming aware of your life in general.

It basically means writing a diary. Yes, like a little girl in pink dress writing "Dear Diary" and all the other things little girls in pink dresses write. Except you're going to be writing stuff that *you* write.

This lets you review your progress, feel good about the good things in your life, and figure out how you can improve other bits of your life. I didn't believe it at first, but writing things down is an insanely powerful technique. For some reason, once you write stuff down, something changes in your mind. You never have to read the writing again. The simple act of writing it down lets it sink deep into your subconscious, and gets it organized. I often write down my goals for that exact reason.

It's hard to say how often you should journal or how much to write. I usually pick up a journal when there's something really big happening in my life, and I want to capture all the life lessons I can. Like when I first started university, I journaled a bit.

I prefer using pen and paper, and apparently so do most other people. But if journaling on a computer works for you, that's cool.

Write as much as you feel you need. You can write long elaborate prose, or short bullet points. Feel free to go off on tangents of thought. After all, this is YOUR journal, and the point is to build awareness. To think.

## **Noticing the moment**

Look up!

For years, I used to walk around looking at my feet. Then, one day, I read it's a really cool idea to actually look up and about while walking. So the next time I walked to school (I was in high school back then), I looked up. (It took some serious mental effort to keep my gaze off the ground.)

I was like *"Wow! The world looks so awesome when you stop looking at your feet!"* I would just look in the distance, and a simple walk down the street would turn into an epic movie scene. I would look at things along the road, and notice how the stuff closer to me moves by faster, and the stuff further away moves by slower. I realized I hadn't done that since I was a small kid. And again, it looked eerily like a movie.

I also use this as a metaphor for life in general. Life is awesome once you start noticing it. Once you *"take your eyes off the ground"* (stop being stuck in your head and start noticing everything around you), life becomes so much richer!

As I kept my gaze off the ground, and walked around like that more and more, I started noticing things. Friends would nod and greet me from the distance. Plenty of people at school would make eye contact and smile as we got closer. I realized there's plenty of eye contact WANTING to happen to you. You just need to keep your eyes off the ground.

And it's the same in life. There's plenty of "eye contact" that WANTS to happen to you. People want to know you. Organizations want to work with you. Successful people want to give advice to you. But you will overlook all that if you keep looking at your feet. So glance up, and make the first step of approaching someone. Life is too short to be spent looking at your feet.

Chapter summary:

Awareness is the core skill that allows personal growth. Build it through:

- journaling
- „looking up“

## 3. Curiosity

Curiosity is like the sparkplug that starts your car's engine. Without that small spark of curiosity, the whole engine of your mind will just be sitting idle and watching sitcom reruns. But if you let that spark carry you away, you will grow and improve faster than you ever dreamt of.

Read on to find out:

- how to build your curiosity
- how to leverage your curiosity for massive personal growth
- why enthusiasm alone won't bring lasting positive changes to your life
- ...and a lot more!

Whenever I see a cool new thing, I wonder how it works, and why it works. When I was a kid, I used to wonder how the toilet works. And when I found out, I was totally amazed. The principles behind it were so beautifully simple... It eventually inspired me to write about [7 Simple Inventions I Absolutely Love](#).

I'm not just thirsty for knowledge. I'm also curious about skills - I'm always trying new skills I never cared about before, to see if anything catches my interest. One of the best things I've ever done for myself were Toastmasters public speaking classes. I heard about them from a few people on the internet; so I figured I'd give them a try. And I loved them.

Richard Feynman, a great physicist, used to have great fun being curious about random stuff in his childhood. Then he slowly lost the curiosity, until he only saw physics as a boring job. Here's his account of how he rediscovered curiosity:

*(...) Then I had another thought: Physics disgusts me a little bit now, but I used to enjoy doing physics. Why did I enjoy it? I used to play with it. I used to do whatever I felt like doing -- it didn't have to do with whether it was important for the development of nuclear physics, but whether it was*

*interesting and amusing for me to play with. When I was in high school, I'd see water running out of a faucet growing narrower, and wonder if I could figure out what determines that curve. I found it was rather easy to do. I didn't have to do it; it wasn't important for the future of science; somebody else had already done it. That didn't make any difference: I'd invent things and play with things for my own entertainment.*

*So I got this new attitude. Now that I am burned out and I'll never accomplish anything, I've got this nice position at the university teaching classes which I rather enjoy, and just like I read the Arabian Nights for pleasure, I'm going to play with physics, whenever I want to, without worrying about any importance whatsoever.*

*Within a week I was in the cafeteria and some guy, fooling around, throws a plate in the air. As the plate went up in the air I saw it wobble, and I noticed the red medallion of Cornell on the plate going around. It was pretty obvious to me that the medallion went around faster than the wobbling.*

*I had nothing to do, so I start to figure out the motion of the rotating plate. I discover that when the angle is very slight, the medallion rotates twice as fast as the wobble rate -- two to one. It came out of a complicated equation! Then I thought, "Is there some way I can see in a more fundamental way, by looking at the forces or the dynamics, why it's two to one?"*

*I don't remember how I did it, but I ultimately worked out what the motion of the mass particles is, and how all the accelerations balance to make it come out two to one.*

*I still remember going to Hans Bethe and saying, "Hey, Hans! I noticed something interesting. Here the plate goes around so, and the reason it's two to one is..." and I showed him the accelerations.*

*He says, "Feynman, that's pretty interesting, but what's the importance of it? Why are you doing it?"*

*"Hah!" I say. "There's no importance whatsoever. I'm just doing it for the fun of it." His reaction didn't discourage me; I had made up my mind I was going to enjoy physics and do whatever I liked.*

*I went on to work out equations of wobbles. Then I thought about how electron orbits start to move in relativity. Then there's the Dirac Equation in electrodynamics. And then quantum electrodynamics. And before I knew it (it was a very short time) I was "playing" -- working, really -- with the same old problem that I loved so much, that I had stopped working on when I went to Los Alamos: my thesis-type problems; all those old-fashioned, wonderful things.*

*It was effortless. It was easy to play with these things. It was like uncorking a bottle: Everything flowed out effortlessly. I almost tried to resist it! There was no importance to what I was doing, but ultimately there was. The diagrams and the whole business that I got the Nobel Prize for came from that piddling around with the wobbling plate.*

The above is from the book "But Surely You're Joking Mr. Feynman". It's an awesome book. Get a copy. You'll love it.

## **Rediscover your curiosity**

The good news is, you have all the curiosity you need inside you. If you find yourself just going through life, not really caring about trying out new stuff, it just means you aren't using it. Curiosity is like a muscle - if you're not using it much, it will grow weaker, and you might even forget it's there. But it's still there, and simply using it makes it more powerful. Which means **being curious about ANYTHING will improve your life!**

When I was young, I used to watch my grandma knit, and I was very curious about how it works. So one day I asked her to teach me. (I'm a man by the way.) She taught me knitting and crocheting, and I used to play with it and discover what cool shapes and patterns I could create. I never produced anything big, and I definitely didn't produce anything useful. But I had great fun doing it.

Later I stopped knitting, and went on to do other things. But my curiosity stayed with me. It simply transferred to other things. Things that often brought huge improvements to my life (like blogging). One of the most awesome things you can do for yourself is pump up your curiosity... and it doesn't matter what you're curious about.

So how can YOU pump up your curiosity?

Give it a bit of thought. Surely there's something in your life you're curious about, but you don't let yourself give it a try. Maybe you're saying things like "*Oh, I'm a grown man now, I can't go around building a kite and playing with it in the wind.*"

Or maybe you can't think of anything recent that caught your curiosity. Just give it a bit of thought, there will be something from your past. There always is. Maybe you wanted to learn Spanish but you never got around to it? Maybe you always wondered about rock-climbing? (I sure did, until I tried it a couple of months ago. And it's awesome :D)

Here's a summary of how to build your curiosity:

### **1. Notice what you're curious about**

This could be some knowledge, or a skill.

### **2. Have fun with it**

Let your curiosity run wild. Just enjoy it.

### **3. Notice other things you're curious about**

Inevitably, you become curious about other stuff. Repeat the process, and build your curiosity. Before you know it, you will have tried dozens of new things, some of which will have really changed your life.

Also, notice that the second step includes *action*. Being curious about things is great... but **curiosity without action is just daydreaming**. Don't get me wrong, daydreaming is awesome. But real lasting changes come from **ACTING** on your curiosity! Like Feynman, when he picked up a pen and paper and actually started calculating the equations of the wobbles.

Thankfully, the last chapter of this book is all about taking action!

# Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm rocks! You know, that feeling that you can take on the world. When you jump head first into a difficult software project or a hobby, and overcome incredibly big obstacles.

I've heard a lot of self-improvement experts speak about amping up your enthusiasm. Yes, it's possible. But artificially created enthusiasm usually burns out in a few days. It's like putting newspaper in your fireplace. Great to get the fire started, but before you realize it, the blaze is gone, and you're left with just a pile of ashes.

There are three solutions to that problem:

## **1. Enthusiasm backed by curiosity**

If you're relentlessly curious about a topic, your enthusiasm will stay right there. Instead of an artificially created enthusiasm bubble, this is real and sustainable. As long as your curiosity is there, the enthusiasm will stay.

## **2. A burning desire**

If you have a burning desire to achieve something, a desire so strong you would be willing to walk across the Himalaya mountains and swim the whole length of the Nile to achieve it, then you will make real sustainable improvements to your life. Thankfully, I give you specific step-by-step techniques for finding your burning desire in the last chapter!

## **3. Put some solid wood of HABITS on top of your newspaper of ENTHUSIASM**

Once you get a fire started with newspaper, you normally switch to burning wood. It lasts long and provides lots of solid warmth. And that's what habits do. They create the real lasting changes in your life.

Which is why the whole next chapter is devoted to building HABITS! Woohoo!

## Open-Mindedness

Curiosity is like a many-headed benevolent beast. (Or like a hyperdimensional polyhedron, for you fellow math geeks :p). Yet another one of its faces is open-mindedness. Once you start asking questions like "how?" and "why?", it's only a small step to asking "ORLY?" (pronounced "oh really?"). That is, questioning established assumptions.

There are a lot of limiting beliefs in folk wisdom. Everybody knows that to be a top pianist you need to practice ten hours a day. (Nope. One hour is more than enough. See the free e-book [Fundamentals of Piano Practice](#).) Everybody knows you can't gain 34 lbs. of muscle in 4 weeks without taking steroids. (Nope. Read [Tim Ferris' account](#) of how he did it. Plus, he only went to the gym for a total of 4 hours!) Everybody knows it's impossible to get by with just two hours of sleep every day. Without being tired. (Nope. Check out my article about [Uberman's Sleep Schedule](#).)

It's up to you to decide what to trust. Thankfully, it's easy to try out a dozen crackpot ideas to see which work. I once spent an hour a day for forty consecutive days doing some eye-exercises that were supposed to correct my sight and let me throw away my glasses. After the forty days, I excitedly went to the optician to have my eyesight. The results truly astonished me. My eyesight didn't change *one single bit!* I wasted 40 hours of my life, oh noes, whatever shall I do? :) I also spent hours on dozens of other great things that DID work, like [lucid dreaming](#). It's so much better to try out five crazy things out of which only one works, than not try them out at all!

Chapter Summary:

### Curiosity

- notice what you're curious about
- let your curiosity run wild (i.e. ACT on your curiosity)
- notice new things you're curious about

## **Enthusiasm**

- enthusiasm is awesome, but it won't create lasting changes all by itself.

Make sure you leverage it to create habits

## **Open-mindedness**

- question established assumptions
- find out which beliefs work best for you... by trying them out! (I'm planning to believe in God as one of my future 30-day trials)

## 4. Habits

Remember what I told you last chapter? That enthusiasm alone won't bring huge positive changes to your life? I used to be guilty of thinking it would. Big time!

I used to get really enthusiastic whenever I heard a new personal growth idea. One time I got out there and jogged until I was literally spitting my lungs out, for three days in a row, and then I was like *"meh"* and didn't do any running for weeks. Another time, I wanted to go through the six-week pushups challenge. After two weeks, once the initial excitement wore off, I gave up. Yet another time I wanted to learn more about meditation. So I read up about it, then spent ten minutes meditating five morning in a row. Then I forgot about it for a couple of days, and when I remembered it again I was like *"oh well, never mind."*

Curiosity is awesome. Excitement is great. But your life will be nothing but short bursts of excitement, unless you can leverage them to create long-term positive changes in your life.

Which is where habits come in!

I've had dozens of failures (and some successes) with habits, and I'm starting to get them. But I'm not at a point yet where I feel I completely understand them and can explain them.

So I turned to someone much more experienced for advice. The star blogger Scott H. Young! (\*cue cheers and clapping\*)

Scott earns his living through his blog, he's published several very successful e-books, and he's just an altogether awesome guy. In fact, one of his e-books, [How to Change a Habit](#), is (you guessed it) about habits! If you would like a

more in-depth treatment of building and breaking habits, including a lot on The 30-day Trial (discussed here) and a bunch of other techniques, grab a copy!

The tips I bring you today are specifically about this method for changing habits I learned from Scott - **The 30-day Trial**. It's an amazing technique. The core idea is really simple:

*Focus on one change for a month and it will become a habit. After a month, the behavior will be automatic and won't require any willpower or even conscious thinking to continue.*

So I asked Scott for permission to include the best stuff about habits I found on his blog, and he agreed. But when I re-read it after myself, it seemed a bit bland and boring. Great stuff, but a little hard to digest.

So I thought about how to present it to you. And I came up with a method that will let me water 3 or 4 plants with a single water-bucket. (I always felt a bit uneasy about the metaphor of killing multiple birds with a single stone.) I get to try out writing dialogs on a grand scale, I get the information across in a fun way (I had fun writing it anyway :p), I get to throw a random chapter into my e-book that looks completely different from the other 4 chapters... hell, yeah! :D

And so hereby I present you... **Vadilles and the Tortoise!** All of the dialog are my own words, except for the quoted bits (like Tip #1, Tip #2, etc. ). The tips are the pure distilled wisdom I got from one of Scott's articles on habits.

The Tortoise is supposed to loosely represent the wisdom and experience of Scott H. Young (though he kinda ended up talking and thinking like me :p), while Vadilles is supposed to represent... I'll let you guess that for yourself :).

Okay, no more idle chit chat. Or, rather, MORE idle chit chat. Without further ado... Vladilles and the Tortoise!

#####

**Vladilles:** Hey, Mr. T, can I ask you a question?

**Tortoise:** You just did.

**V:** Ok... how about another one?

**T:** You just did.

**V:** Gah! Two more questions?

**T:** Go ahead.

**V:** Why are we sitting on these couches in the middle of a desert?

**T:** Oh, that. It's just for the plot's convenience. This way, Vlad won't have to explain how we got here.

**V:** Oh, okay.

**T:** Incidentally, do you see that mountain over there?

**V:** Yes.

**T:** That's also here for convenience. I have a feeling it's going to play an important part in this story. Because, I have this feeling, today we're going to talk about habits!

**V:** Wow, what a coincidence. I've just been meaning to ask you a couple of questions about that!

**T:** I know, I'm so smart. Must be the clairvoyant pizza I had for dinner.

**V:** Yea. Or the fact that we're made up characters in a chapter about habits.

**T:** Yeah, or that.

...

V: Anyway, in the past, I have often wanted to take up some habits. But a lot of the time, I can't even get started, or I get started and then drop the habit within a few days, or I just can't keep up the habit.

T: Yes, a lot of people have similar problems. (Hi, readers!). I think –

V: Can you please not talk directly to the readers? You're not supposed to know they're here. Just pretend you don't know they're watching.

T: Mmmm, okay. As I was saying, I think I can show you some useful tools today for helping you with forming (and breaking) habits. Would you like to learn more about that?

V: Yes please! I have wondered about habits for a loooong time!

T: Okay, then get up and follow me.

### Tortoise gets up and gestures for Vladilles to follow.

V: Wait, you mean I have to get up? Can't you just tell me about it?

T: No, I'm afraid that's not how it works. I *could* just tell you about mastering habits, but that wouldn't really help you much. I believe you'll learn the lesson much better this way.

V: But...

T: Do you really want to learn how to master habits?

V: Yeah, okay.

### Vladilles gets up.

V: Where are we going?

T: See that mountain I showed you earlier? I call it the mountain of Habit Mastery. We will walk there, and then walk up a path along that slowly spirals around the mountain. As we walk up the mountain, there will be lessons for you to learn along the way. Once you reach the top, you will achieve complete mastery of

habits.

**V:** Wait, you mean we're going all the way to the top? No way, that mountain must be several kilometers tall! Forget it. I'm sitting back down.

**T:** Wait! I'm not asking you to go all the way to the top.

**V:** No?

**T:** No. Right now, all I ask of you is to walk to the first milestone with me. The first lesson. It's located along the mountain path, only about 100 meters above ground level.

**V:** Only 100 meters? That sounds reasonable.

**T:** Yes. However, before I take you there, I will need you to promise yourself one thing. You WILL walk with me all the way to that first milestone. You won't turn around, or back down, or get distracted and forget. Then, once we reach the first milestone, you can decide whether you want to keep walking or just turn around and come back.

**V:** Okay. I promise.

**T:** No, don't just say it. *Mean* it.

### Vladilles pauses to think for a few moments.

**V:** I promise.

**T:** Okay, let's walk! And, so that your journey passes quicker, here's a great article I found that relates to habits.

### Tortoise pulls out a printout of a blog article from the inside of his shell and passes it to Vladilles.

**T:** It's called [30 days to success](#), and it was written by this blogger guy, Steve Pavlina.

**V:** Awesome, thanks! I'll read it as we walk.

### Some time passes.

**T:** Okay, here we are! We're now at the foot of the mountain. This is where your journey towards habit mastery starts. Incidentally, it will take us about 30 minutes to reach the first milestone.

**V:** Sweet. By the way, that was a great article you gave me back there.

**T:** I know, I also really liked it. Come on, let's start ascending!

### They start walking up the mountain path.

**V:** You know, some of the more attentive readers might have realized it's a ridiculous idea to read a printed article while walking.

**T:** Yeah, good thing we're fictional characters. We're not hindered by trivial gaps in logic.

**V:** Yeah.

### They walk for a couple of minutes.

**V:** I'm getting a bit tired. How about we just sit down for a while? I like this shade right here just under those trees. Oh, and look, some fallen pine cones! Let's play with them!

**T:** Huh, are you serious? Do you want to learn about habits or not?

**V:** Well, yes, but...

**T:** Are you really tired?

**V:** Now that you say it... no, I'm not actually feeling tired. My mind must be

playing tricks on me.

**T:** That's ok. That always happens when you first walk the path of change. Your mind will make up all sorts of nonsense reasons to keep you from changing. Just remember, right now we only want to make it to the first milestone. After that, if you want to, you can play with pine cones all you want.

**V:** You're right. Let's keep walking.

### Some time passes. Vladilles is walking a few steps ahead of the Tortoise.

**V:** ... and the function says: "Ha, too bad, I'm e to the x!" And the diff-

**T:** Hey look what I found on the ground! The first milestone!

###Vladilles turns around. The Tortoise is holding a stone tablet with some writing etched into it. He hands it to Vladilles.

**T:** This is your first lesson about changing habits. Read it.

### ***Tip #1 - Start Simple, but Meaningful***

*Giving up a minor habit like sleeping in is an order of magnitude easier than stopping a dependency like smoking. If you have many habits you want to change, I suggest starting with one that is simple, but meaningful. Build confidence using the 30-day trial before trying to take on the most difficult steps.*

*What is a simple change? A simple change can be big or small, but it has a few ingredients that make it particularly well-suited for a 30DT:*

1. *It is something you do every day.*

2. *It is something you do in the same way, every day. (e.g. waking up in the morning)*

3. *It is a straightforward improvement. This is more subjective, but it means that there aren't going to be large, painful side-effects to changing a behavior.*

4. *It is something you intend to be permanent. Its easier to be motivated to make a permanent change than one you only expect to last a month.*

5. *You know clearly whether you are sticking to your change or not. Exercise is a yes-no question. Either you go to the gym or you don't. Being friendly is far more subjective and harder to do with a 30DT.*

*Your first 30DT should fulfill most, if not all, of those criteria. But, above all, it should be something you consider meaningful. If you don't see the change as important, you won't invest the energy for an entire month.*

**V:** Hmmm, interesting. Now I see where I went wrong with some of my past attempts at building habits. For example, this one time, I wanted to try running every morning. So, about 4 morning in a row, I got up at 6 am and went for a run in the park. Then I realized running is not really my kind of thing. No, not because it was really hard and tiring. I would expect that at the beginning of a 30-day trial. But because even if I did make it a habit, it would just be mindless mechanical exercise. I prefer to get my exercise in a fun way, like team sports.

**T:** Go on.

**V:** That means I didn't really consider the change *meaningful* enough to me, and I just couldn't be bothered to invest the energy to wake up at 6 am for an entire month.

**T:** Good. I see it's making you think. Well, what do you say about our journey to Habit Mastery? Do you want to continue, or do you want to stop?

**V:** You know what? The last couple of minutes actually passed surprisingly quickly and effortlessly. I think I want to keep walking. Only until the next milestone, that is. I don't feel like committing to reaching the top yet.

**T:** Alright! Let's go on to the next milestone! Another thirty minutes' journey!

### They start walking again. A couple of minutes pass.

**V:** Wow, no way!

**T:** What?

**V:** See that slide? A big, big, smooth slide, cut into the rock, leading aaaaalllll the way down! There's no way I'm just going to pass this by! Screw learning about habits!

**T:** Remember, you made a commitment to reach the next milestone.

**V:** Yeah, but this is too much to pass up!

**T:** Okay, Vladilles, it's your decision. But first hear me out. When you work on a new habit, things will sometimes come up. An emergency, or a really fun opportunity. Then you have to weigh the possibilities. Right now, you could just get on that slide, ride all the way down, enjoy the fun, and then start your journey towards habit mastery all the way from the bottom again. If you decide that, that's cool. But let me tell you right now – these slides are actually pretty common on this mountain. You'll come across another one, and another. There's no real reason to break your commitment to reaching the next milestone. You can just use the next slide after that to ride down, if you want to.

**V:** Well... it's really tempting to ride down right here... but I think I'll pass. I really WANT to learn more about building habits.

### They walk again. Vladilles is walking a couple of steps ahead of the Tortoise.

V: ...and the bartender says "You are all idiots." and just pours two...

T: Hey look! The next milestone!

### Vladilles turns around. The Tortoise is holding up a stone tablet. He hands it to Vladilles.

### **Tip #2 - Don't Start Trials You'll Forget Later**

*In doing over two dozen 30DTs (30 Day Trials), I've found that willpower isn't usually the biggest problem with going an entire month. Sometimes you'll have to use your self-discipline to grind your way through. But, more often, the bigger problem is simply forgetting about the trial.*

*Forgetting about a trial and accidentally missing a day or two is more common when the trial is easy. Take something simple, like reading for 15 minutes a day. This might seem like an easy 30 Day Trial. But in some ways, it is a harder trial to finish than reading for 60 minutes a day. Why? Because 15 minutes is forgettable.*

*If you're starting out with the technique for the first time, I suggest picking changes that are difficult to forget. Giving up all junk food, omitting television, exercising for an hour every day or something similar is difficult to forget. Short or infrequent habits are more likely to be forgotten before the month is over.*

V: That totally reminds me of myself! A LOT of times I tried to use the 30-day trial I simply forgot about it. This one time, I wanted to try meditation, because I read about it and it sounded pretty cool. So I decided to meditate for 10 minutes every morning. Sure enough, after about five days, I simply forgot about it for two days. I couldn't be bothered to start again once I remembered. Or the time I was trying this exercise in writing down something I really wanted to happen to me, 16

times every day, for a few weeks. I forgot a couple of days here and there. Maybe that's why it didn't work?

**T:** Yea, that –

**V:** Maybe I should have tried 30 minutes of meditation each morning? That would definitely make it harder to forget. Oh, and by the way, it was actually a lot easier during to keep walking towards this second milestone than the first one. Let's keep walking, I want to learn more about habits!

### They walk again. Some time passes. Vladilles is walking a couple of steps ahead of the Tortoise.

**V:** ...and the mathematician says: "If one person now walks into the building..."

**T:** Hey look! The next milestone!

### Vladilles turns and the Tortoise hands him the next stone tablet.

### ***Tip #3 - Do Less***

*Only one 30DT at a time. Do less in your trial than you consider possible. Intentionally do less than you feel you are capable of. By limiting yourself, you'll avoid the common problem of burning out in the first week or two.*

**V:** I kind of discovered that idea myself. I'm a pretty scatterbrained person. I tend to read up on a cool idea, think "Awesome! Let me try that!" Get really excited for a few days, then read about another idea, think "Awesome! Let me try that!", then read about another great idea... by which time I forget about maintaining the first idea.

Another of my problems is unbacked enthusiasm. Like when I first started blogging – I got really excited, I wanted to post 5 times a week, get rich, become

famous! Within 10 days, I burnt out, and then didn't post to my blog for like three weeks.

And hey, this journey is getting almost effortless! Let's keep walking.

### They walk for a bit.

**V:** You know, Mr. T, this place looks a bit familiar.

**T:** Yeah, that's normal. This is the mountain of Habit Mastery after all. A lot of things repeat themselves here.

**V:** Oh, okay.

### They keep walking. Some time passes. Vladilles is walking a couple of steps ahead of the Tortoise.

**V:** ...the mathematician wraps a piece of barbed wire around himself, and says "I declare myself to be...

**T:** Hey look! The next milestone!

**V:** Mr. T., I swear, I'm getting suspicious you deliberately never let me finish my math jokes!

**T:** But that's ridiculous! How could I control where I find the milestones?

**V:** Hmm, that's true...

### The Tortoise hands Vladilles the next stone tablet.

#### ***Tip #4 - Write it Down***

*Writing down the habit is like forming a contract between you and your future self. If you don't write it down, the future you is more likely to*

*abandon the contract when things get tough. Having a written record also lets you keep track of what 30DT's you've done in the past, so you can monitor them.*

**V:** I definitely agree with that. Somehow, writing down my goals gives me a much bigger chance of accomplishing them! I always carry around a little pocket notebook and a pen, and I also keep a sheet of paper pinned on my wall at home, where I write down my Most Important Goals. There's just *something* about writing my goals down, it's hard to describe. It makes sense it would work for habits as well.

### They walk again.

**V:** I'll be damned, but this place seems REALLY familiar. I can distinctly remember marveling over the leaves on that tree over there.

**T:** As I say, it's nothing unusual on this mountain.

**V:** Hmm, ok.

### Vladilles looks at the Tortoise suspiciously, but keeps walking. Some time passes. Vladilles is walking a couple of steps ahead of the Tortoise.

**V:** ...the mathematician says "No, in Scotland there is at least one field, on which there is at least...

**T:** Hey look! The next milestone!

**V:** Oh come on! This is getting ridiculous! I never get to finish my-

### The Tortoise hands him the stone tablet.

V: Hmm, this one looks interesting.

*Tip #5 – Get Obsessed*

*Obsession is your friend with the 30DT. If you can get obsessed about a change for at least one month, you have much better odds to last the entire month. Losing focus or interest after the first few weeks is a common problem.*

*I suggest, after you start a trial, to pick up one or two books that advocate the change you're trying to install. If you're becoming a vegetarian, Diet for a New America, during the first month. If you're giving up smoking, read books about the benefits of quitting. If you're starting a new productivity habit, read books on goal- setting.*

*Read the most over-the-top, motivational hype you can find. I normally favor less emotional reading material, but when you're in the middle of a difficult trial, you need all the motivation you can get. After the thirty days are done, that is a time when you might want to reflect, read contrasting opinions or change your focus.*

V: I definitely agree with that. I can remember doing that with some of my successful habits. Like [lucid dreaming](#) – the art of becoming aware of the fact that you're dreaming, *while you're dreaming*, and then being able to control your dreams. I kept a dream journal, and did my regular reality checks. Meanwhile, to keep my interest, I read other people's experiences and tips every couple of days. In the end, it paid off in a big way! I have had a lot of AWESOME experiences with lucid dreams since then!

T: Ah yes, lucid dreaming. It always amazes me what the human (and tortoise) mind is capable of.

V: By the way, keeping going was really easy this time. Right now, as far as effort is concerned, I'm pretty much indifferent as to whether we keep going on this

journey, or stop and take a slide back home. It's become effortless to go on.

**T:** Nice. Do you fancy keeping going?

**V:** Sure. I'm still learning a lot here.

### They start walking again. Some time passes. As Vladilles starts to tell his next math joke, he realizes he might get interrupted again and keeps looking over his shoulder at the Tortoise. The Tortoise isn't looking at Vladilles. Instead, he scrambles around in his shell for a few moments, takes out a stone tablet, places it on the ground, pretends to pick it up and says...

**T:** Hey look! The-

**V:** Ha! Busted! I'm on to your dirty tricks Mr. T.! I know you-

### The Tortoise just looks Vladilles in the eye calmly.

**T:** Finally. What took you so long?

**V:** -have been pretending-... wait, what?

**T:** Well, since I already took the effort to find this in my shell, you might as well read it.

### ***Tip #6 - Check the Autopilot***

*Thirty days is a rough estimate, not a scientifically precise number. Thirty days is about what it takes to form a habit that no longer requires constant vigilance. But that depends on a lot of factors. If your habit is infrequent, inconsistent or too varied, it might take more than a month.*

*After you finish your 30 Day Trial, review your habit and ask yourself whether you have been doing it almost automatically for the last week. If*

*the answer is no, and the change is important, you might want to follow up one 30DT with another identical one, back-to-back.*

*Automatic here doesn't mean you're doing it in your sleep. I've been going to the gym regularly for a few years, but I'd never sleep walk to an exercise machine. By, automatic I mean that it feels like a natural part of your routine. You're at the stage where you're indifferent to continuing or stopping.*

**V:** Ah yes, I see. Hey, wait! Don't try to distract me!

**T:** I'm not distracting you.

**V:** No? The whole time-

**T:** You're here to learn about habits. I'm providing that.

**V:** Yes, but... but... you lied to me!

### The Tortoise smiles

**T:** You don't know the half of it :)

**V:** Now what is THAT supposed to mean?

**T:** Before I tell you, answer me one thing. How well do you think you understand habits now, on a scale from 1 to 10?

**V:** Well, I've learned a lot today. I would say about 7.

**T:** Okay. Do you see that tree over there?

**V:** Yes...

**T:** Does it seem at all familiar?

**V:** Well, now that you mention it...

**T:** That's because you've seen it five times before. Remember when I told you

this path spirals up all the way to the top of this mountain?

V: ...

T: I lied. This path is in fact a circle, with only one path coming up so you can get here, and only one slide leading down.

V: Great. So all along-

T: It's time for your final lesson.

### The Tortoise retracts his head for a few moments, and then re-emerges holding a piece of paper.

T: Read this. It's an excerpt from an article by Steve Pavlina called [How to get from a 7 to a 10](#). In there, he talks about how to achieve perfection (a "10") in your skills.

*As you begin charging ahead towards your 10, you'll eventually discover that there is no 10, at least not in the sense of a fixed position. It was just a mirage. You may reach the 10 you defined back when you were a 7, but once you reach it, you'll see a new 10 off in the distance. There will always be another pot of gold ahead of you.*

*The real 10 is not some position. It's the path itself. Human beings aren't cattle - we aren't supposed to be settled and domesticated. We need to keep things stirred up in order to continue learning and growing.*

*No matter what fixed position you arrive at in life, it will never be fulfilling. Fulfillment comes from action, not position.*

V: I don't quite see...

T: Remember how I told you to get up and walk with me? That you'll learn more that way?

V: Yes...

T: Okay. Remember when I told you we're going to the top of the mountain?

V: Yes...

T: That's your 10. In fact, you can never reach the top of this mountain, because no path leads there.

V: Yes, but...

T: And for the last five milestones, you have been at the same height. Your 7.

V: Yes, but...

T: So even though the 7 represented a different level of mastering habits every time, it is still the same relative position to the perfect 10 of Habit Mastery.

V: Yes, but...

T: Even though you might have called it a 7 every time, your skill with habits kept growing. You kept walking forward, taking action, and you kept learning and growing. Your skill relative to the perfect ideal didn't change. Yet your skill relative to your past self sure did. If I asked you now what your skill with habits was at the beginning of this journey, what would you answer?

### Vladilles pauses to think.

V: Okay, I see your point.

T: Sweet! That's it for today. Let's go hop on that monster slide!

V: Weeeee!

#####

The above story works on several different levels, although you probably already noticed that :). There's obviously the dialog itself, and then everything that

happens to Vladilles and the Tortoise in the story. I also spiced in a few lessons relating to other concepts from this book - like awareness, curiosity, and especially taking action (discussed next chapter).

In case you feel a bit overwhelmed by everything you just read, here's a quick summary of how to build habits using the 30-day trial:

- 1. Pick a habit that's *meaningful* to you.**
- 2. Make sure it's big enough so you don't forget easily.**
- 3. Focus on it every day, for thirty days.**

And now that you know how to tackle habits, it's time for the last chapter! The one that will allow you to take everything you've learned here so far, and use it all together to create huge positive changes in your life!

It's action time!

## **5. Action**

You have reached the holy pinnacle! The ONE THING that will let you transform all your dreams into reality.

Action.

It doesn't matter if you have read hundreds of books of theory, and attended dozens of classes. Without action, you haven't really done anything yet.

### **Two kinds of people**

There are two kinds of people regarding action.

Those who like to have things figured out and be well prepared before taking action, almost to the point of being overly analytical. And then there are those who simply jump into things head first, and correct their course along the way.

I definitely belong to the first group of people. And if you are reading this, you probably do as well! I have some bad news for you, but also some great news!

The bad news is, people in the second group are usually more successful. Because if you had to choose between reading about riding a bike, or just jumping on one and learning by trial and error, the second way will be far quicker and better.

And now for the good news!

Theory alone isn't very useful. Practice alone is pretty cool. But when you combine theory AND practice, you're gonna ROCK :D. And since someone who does practice alone will do reasonably well, they won't feel such a need to go get the theory. So you will end up with the best of both worlds :D.

Now you just need to develop the habit of taking action. Since we already tackled habits, that part won't be too hard. And combining theory with practice, you can achieve anything!

## **When to take action**

One question that used to plague me was "*When is the right time to take action?*"

And I have found the answer. Are you ready?

**There is NEVER a right time!**

If you wait to be 100% certain before taking action, you will be waiting forever. Thankfully, there's a solution. [The 70% Solution](#). Read the linked blog post for full glorious detail (it includes the story of a US marine!). But basically it comes down to this:

*Once you are about 70% certain about the right course of action, just DO IT.*

## **Take Action Early, Take Action Often**

*The ceramics teacher announced on opening day that he was dividing the class into two groups. All those on the left side of the studio, he said, would be graded solely on the quantity of work they produced, all those on the right solely on its quality. His procedure was simple: on the final day of class he would bring in his bathroom scales and weigh the work of the "quantity" group: fifty pound of pots rated an "A", forty pounds a "B", and so on. Those being graded on "quality", however, needed to produce only one pot – albeit a perfect one – to get an "A".*

*Well, came grading time and a curious fact emerged: the works of highest quality were all produced by the group being graded for quantity. It seems*

*that while the "quantity" group was busily churning out piles of work – and learning from their mistakes – the "quality" group had sat theorizing about perfection, and in the end had little more to show for their efforts than grandiose theories and a pile of dead clay.*

We learn best by DOING. I learned snowboarding in two days without any theoretical advice (Sure, I had years of experience of skiing. That probably helped a lot.). I was just in Switzerland, on a skiing trip, and one day I was like "Hey, I wanna try snowboarding!" So I went to a ski rental shop and rented a snowboard.

On the first day, I fell about 50 times (ouch my knees). But I didn't care, because my goal wasn't to look cool, or to stay on my feet. My goal was to figure out how the thing works and behaves, what happens when I put my weight on which foot etc. etc.

And it worked like a charm!

Some smart folks did a study on marketers, to figure out what the top ones are doing differently from the rest. Do you know what separates the top 5% of marketing experts from the 95% of the field?

### **The speed of implementation.**

When the top marketers hear a cool new idea, they go like "*Hey, let me try that out!*" They grab their laptop, jump online, and within a few hours, they're trying out the new idea.

Meanwhile, the rest of the marketers would be sitting around, discussing the merits of the idea, why it *should* work, why it *might* work... while the top 5% are already getting back feedback, making tweaks, and usually making profit!

Sure, there are times when you can't jump in head first and correct your course along the way. Like when you're building a house or getting married. But

those cases are pretty obvious, and in the vast majority of other cases, quick action is the way to go!

Don't be afraid to take action. Make your decision quickly, take action, and then make the necessary tweaks along the way.

## **Stop delaying action**

Is there something in your life where you've been delaying a decision for a long time? Maybe you're not sure if you should end that relationship, or you don't know how to ask for a raise.

Just make a decision. Because every time you make a decision, you learn something. You get feedback from the world. Making a decision... ANY decision... is better than making no decision at all!

That's the secret behind why the 70% solution works so well in life.

You get far more feedback if you take action early and often. And feedback is [\*the secret behind learning super fast.\*](#)

Further, you'll go wrong far fewer times than you think. And when you do, you'll usually find it's easy to correct.

## **Do this NOW**

The last thing in the world I would want you to do is read all about the importance of taking action... and then do nothing about it! So I'm going to do my best to make the first step as easy as possible for you. Because as I explain in my post on [Activation Energy](#), taking the first step is often 80% of the battle!

So let's do this quick exercise. Grab a big sheet of paper and a pen.

**1. Write down three important things you would like to achieve** in your life within the next five years. Don't let common sense hold you back. Don't worry about your goals being reasonable – make sure they're something you REALLY want! Maybe you want to become self-employed, or find a great relationship, or get in shape.

After you have written your goals down, close your eyes, and just imagine what each of them would be like. For example, the scene that sums up being self-employed for me, would mean sitting at home in front of my laptop, earning my living by writing.

See the scene through your own eyes, hear the sounds through your own ears, and feel the great emotions that come along with the situation. Go through each of your 3 goals, and do this for each of them in turn.

## **2. Imagine big milestones that need to happen along the way**

For example, if your goal is to get in shape, the following things might need to happen along the way:

- you run in the park
- you go to the gym
- you eat healthy (yet tasty) foods

So imagine each of these. Take your time.

Now that you have figured out the big goals, and the major milestones for each of them, it's time for the fun stuff!

## **3. Figure out the NEXT STEP for each of your goals**

Here's where we move from wishful thinking to making it happen! For each of your goals, I'd like you to figure out three simple one-step actions that bring you

closer to that goal:

- an action that you can do within the next 48 hours
- an action that you can do within the next 24 hours
- an action that you can do RIGHT NOW

And **write them down**. Writing them down makes a much bigger difference than you might think.

A simple one-step action might be...

- contacting someone you didn't dare contact until now
- registering a domain name for your new online business
- brainstorming product ideas
- going for a jog in the park
- signing up for a gym membership

Any bigger goals can be broken down into simple one-step actions. Once you do that, you're much less likely to get stuck in analysis paralysis. Instead, you'll always have an ACTION lined up to take next.

And after you have done all that, pause to think for a moment. Which of your three goals is the most meaningful to you? Which one of them do you want the MOST? Pick one. And then continue reading, to the climax of this book! The challenge to truly change your life!

**For the next thirty days, take one action EACH AND EVERY DAY towards your most important goal.**

If you did the above exercises, you will have your actions lined up for the next three days. Hopefully you started with reasonably small action steps. Ones that will be easy for you to take. And as you take action towards your goals EVERY DAY, you build up the *habit* of taking action. You build up momentum. Taking action towards

your goals becomes easier every day. Before you know it, you will have completely changed your life.

And with that thought, I'll leave you. It's time to stop reading, and start DOING! Get out there and take some action!