



Scott

Stick-to-itiveness

How Commitment Changes Everything

By Scott Ginsberg

Easy buttons are lies.

It might take guts to stick yourself out there.

But it takes gusto to keep yourself out there.

Fortunately, stick-to-itiveness can be learned.

Aka, “Stick to it.”

Aka, “Stick with it.”

Aka, “Stick in there.”

And that single faculty – more than talent, more than visibility and more than networking – is the royal road to success. In any endeavor. Business, relationships, life, whatever.

My name is Scott. I am the world record holder of wearing nametags. I wear it all day, every day – even at the beach, in the shower and to bed.

Because you never know who you might meet.

But in the past four thousand days, I’ve learned lifelong lessons about the practice, the power and the profitability of stick-to-itiveness. And after a dozen books and seven hundred speeches, I decided to put together the book that most begged to be written.

Not because know stick-to-itivness – I am stick-to-itiveness.

The secret is, commitment changes everything.

Whether you're starting a new relationship, moving to a new city, going full time with your business or devoting your life to a charitable cause, it's amazing how many positive results occur when you cross that threshold.

But.

Commitment is not a light switch. It's not something you turn on when the room goes dark. Commitment is a daily demonstration. Commitment is a constitutional core value. Commitment is a posture that makes you more approachable.

This is a 200-day digital devotional to help you find your nametag.

1. **A unity of effort is required.** The word commitment comes from the Latin *committere*, which means, “to unite, connect, combine and bring together.” This makes sense, considering that committing with both feet requires every available resource you’ve got. Whether you’re starting a family, starting a blog or starting a business, there’s one thing you can count on: It will take all of you. And if you’re not passionately pursuing vision-consistent action, you’re likely to wind up as (yet another) decaying slab of road kill on the highway of life. Dee-licious. Remember: Commitment without action is trash talk. *Are you flapping your gums or shuffling your feet?*

2. **Accept that you'll never be ready.** The reason you're still dragging your feet is because you've still convinced that having a plan is necessary. It's not. Failure isn't the product of poor planning – it's the product of timidity to proceed. You can't allow yourself to be stopped by not knowing how. Try this: Lower the threat level of your jump by pulling a partial. Ask yourself: *What is an easy, inconsequential version of this scary action I could take right now?* Challenge yourself to execute three of those a day. Repeat that enough, and you'll either get the whole thing done incrementally, or sustain enough small victories to pull the trigger when the time is right. *Not perfect, but right.* Look: I know you're scared. I also know that constant, determined action cures fear, builds confidence, develops courage, generates inspiration and vaporizes stress. *What other risky (but reasonably) jumps can you make today to move forward?*

3. Acknowledge people’s contribution to your development.

“Ungrateful and overly independent.” That’s another stereotype of the younger generation, according to numerous articles, case studies and message boards – not to mention every person I’ve ever met over the age of fifty. As such, the smartest move you could make is to project a pervasive tone of gratitude. First of all, this demonstrates your willingness to remain coachable and accept help. After all, success never comes unassisted. Secondly, your appreciation won’t go unnoticed by your coworkers. That’s the cool part about gratitude: Whatever you appreciate, appreciates. Third, giving credit to the people whose mentoring built your foundation is a mark of maturity and magnanimity. And not everybody in your generation could be described as such. Ultimately, gratitude is the great gravitator: Of wealth, of success, of assistance and of attention from the people who matter. *When was the last time you made an entry into your gratitude journal?*

4. **Actively champion your own growth.** When I first showed up at my professional association, I was the youngest person in the room. By fifteen years, minimum. But instead of slapping down my application for membership, my mentor suggested I take another approach: *Show up, hang out, ask questions and shut up.* So I did. And it turns out, that was a much smarter investment of my time, money and energy. What's more, veteran members appreciated it. They didn't mind me eavesdropped on their thinking. And after a few years of doing that consistently, I became a board member, then later the chapter president. Lesson learned: You don't have to be a member to join. Never underestimate the advanceability of showing up, shutting up and listening louder than anybody in the room. The only caveat is: *You have to let people like you.* Because if you put box around yourself and rob people of the chance to know the real you, it won't matter how awesome you are. *How are you counteracting generational stereotypes?*

5. **Allow people to speak into your life.** You've already learned about support systems and withdrawals. The final component to the interpersonal side of misery management is receiving the voice of others. Not just their words. Not just their ideas. Their voice. That's the difference between allowing people to *talk about* your life and allowing them to *speak into* your life: One uses vocals, the other uses voice. Remember that distinction. And one more thing: Whomever you let speak into your life, be sure they're right people. Otherwise you trap yourself on the endless, sweaty treadmill of being what the wrong people want you to be. And that's always a crappy workout. *Whose voice is speaking into your life?*

- 6. Announce your intentions to yourself.** Moving forward means architecting a vision, then aligning your daily actions with that vision. Even if you don't have a plan. Even if you don't know how to do what you want to do. If you use a compass instead of a map, it's easier to pinpoint your general direction. Sure beats killing yourself trying to figure out longitudinal coordinates. Remember: How is not your responsibility. Fall in love with why and how will make its appearance when it's ready. Like Nietzsche said, "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how." *What are you forgetting to be intentional about?*

7. **Approach life creatively, not reactively.** Instead of suffocating under the burden of reaction, propel yourself into the heart of creation. That's the key to transitioning from victim to victory: It's all about how you shape your energy. That not only determines if you'll make it out alive, but also *how* alive you are when you rise up from underneath rubble. Remember: There's a key difference between reacting and responding: The first is a reflex – the second is a choice. *Do you face problems or do problems face you?*

8. **Avoid compromising situations.** Mr. Miyagi once said, “The best way to block a punch, is to not be there.” If you want to increase the probability that your commitment is consistently communicated, remember that truth. Also, remember this: What people think when they hear your life speak determines your leadership legacy. The challenge is keeping yourself accountable. Here. Try posting these two questions in a visible location at your office: *Do I want to become known for what I’m about to do? Have I been anywhere this week that might be seen as a compromise?* The good news is: This exercise requires the least amount of work – because all you have to do is say no. The bad news is, this practice requires the most amount of self-control – because saying no becomes seductively easy when saying yes would go undetected by the masses. I learned this from experience. You only have to walk into a strip club wearing a nametag once. *Would the person you want your people to see you as, do what you’re about to do?*

9. **Balance energy expenditure with energy renewal.** As I learned from *The Power of Full Engagement*, “The richest, happiest and most productive lives are characterized by the ability to fully engage in the challenge at hand, but also to disengage periodically and seek renewal.” Lesson learned: The more time you spend “doing,” the more time you need to invest “being.” Suggestion: Create a ratio that fits your lifestyle – and stick to it. Be vigilant about protecting your non-negotiables. Personally, I’ve found great success with Mini Vacations. Here’s how they work: Each day, spend anywhere from fifteen minutes to two hours. Then, go perpendicular to the task at hand. Engage different parts of your mind, body and spirit. Whether you meditate, go for a walk, watch an episode of Southpark or go play the ukulele – you will renew and expand your energy reserves, guaranteed. *When was the last time you took a vacation?*

10. **Be a public spokesperson for your values.** The single most powerful personal development exercise I've ever done is to write my own Personal Constitution. This is a list of non-negotiable values and decision-making mechanisms. I carry it in my wallet wherever I go. And while I don't show it to that many people, simply by virtue of carrying it on my person helps me become a public spokesperson for what matters to me. To write one for yourself, keep a few things in mind: First, the word "constitution" derives from the Latin *constitutio*, or, "ordinance." However, it's a living document. Which means it's amenable. And as you grow and develop personally and professionally, various elements of your constitution reserve the right to modify. Secondly, your constitution is the composition and condition of your character. An established arrangement of your fundamental values governing your behavior. The aggregate of personal characteristics comprising your foundation. The challenge is sitting down and sorting everything out. But if you're willing to reflect on yourself (and have a confrontation with yourself) you'll have no doubt in your mind what you're committed to and why. Remember: Commitment requires a clear and rigorous definition. *How will you make sure people are clear on what you say you care about?*

11. **Be known as someone who owns.** Not like, a condo. I'm talking about owning your truth. Living your name. And remaining unwilling to edit yourself to appease the insecurities of others. That's what really blows people away: When you communicate to the world that you are fully committed to the person you've become. And in this case, to "own it" means to display, embrace it and enjoy it. It also means to participate in the creation *of* it, to take responsibility *for* it and to make all the decisions *about* it. Even when doing so makes you uncomfortable and/or alienates people. Small price to pay for committing with both feet. Besides, better to be hated for the person you are than loved for the person you're not. *What are you known for owning?*

12. **Be the world's expert on yourself.** In *The Tao De Ching*, Lao Tzu wrote, "He who knows other is smart – but he who knows himself is wise." What about you? Which do you focus on? Memorizing the names of Brad and Angelina's fourteen Cambodian children or knowing what makes your heart sing? If you want to be remembered as being wise beyond your years, claim expertise on one domain: Yourself. Otherwise your vast knowledge of everybody else's business is nothing but empty calories. Like the song "Everybody Knows" by Jack Johnson: "Nobody knows anything about themselves because they're all worried about everybody else." Don't be that guy. No matter how tempting the gossip trap looks. Instead, focus on knowing yourself inside out. The people who matter will notice. *Do you need a copy of US Weekly or a blank journal?*

13. **Become a master the mundane.** “Fully extend your dominant arm.” That’s what good coaches will tell you. Whether you’re shooting hoops, slinging slapshots or slamming aces, nothing beats an unbended elbow. It’s just a basic tenet of most sports. The interesting part is how well the pros execute this strategy. Even the ones who get paid millions of dollars a year. They’re never too good, too rich or too successful to master the mundane. You’re looking for the trick play when you need to just work on basic blocking and tackling. Never underestimate the power of continual application of the fundamentals. Forget the rudiments and forego the revenue. *Are you brilliant at the basics?*

14. **Being sure helps.** In the bestselling book *Eat, Pray, Love*, author Elizabeth Gilbert writes, “Having a baby is like getting a tattoo on your face: You really need to be certain it’s what you want before you commit.” But this isn’t about tattoos. Or having babies. If you’re about to commit with both feet, you better love the shoes you’re wearing. Because it’s a long, rocky journey with a lot of potholes and the occasional cowpie. My suggestion is: Listen to your body. It will always speak to you – and it will never lie to you. As you ponder your decision to commit, forget about what you think. Your mind is a moron. Instead, pay attention to how you feel, what you feel and where you feel. Otherwise you might end up listening to the wrong advice. *Are you listening to biofeedback or ego feedback?*

15. **Believe in the availability of your own answers.** If you want to follow your heart, the first step is to establish an internal dialogue with yourself. That means you have to dive in and see what unfolds. Only then can you create the necessary space to hear what your heart is whispering to you. My suggestion: Repetitively ask the following question right as you drift off to sleep: *What am I afraid to know about myself?* In my experience, it's not a question – it's a catapult. And that's the cool part is: By the time you wake up, the answers are waiting for you. Even the ones that sting. And when they present themselves, your only job is to stand steadfast in that knowledge, and then execute from that place of true knowing. The rest is just gravity. Remember: You know you're free when you don't have to bury things anymore. *If overnight, a miracle occurred, and you woke up tomorrow morning and your problem was solved, what would be the first thing you would notice?*

16. **Believe that outcomes are determined by your behavior.** As Pablo Neruda once said, “You are the result of yourself.” And as Scott Ginsberg once said, “Most wounds are self-inflicted.” Either way, the secret is developing an efficacious frame of mind through a fundamentally affirmative attitude. Taking ownership of your experience. Deleting the phrase, “It is what it is,” from your defeatist vocabulary and instead wondering, “What have I done to invite this into my life? Ultimately, you can either be the *architect or the victim of your life’s course*. As you water-ski in the wake of the choices you’ve already made, ask yourself: *How choppy is the lake?*”

17. **Bend your boundaries.** Sometimes the best way to trust yourself is to test yourself. After all: If you never test your limits, you never transcend them. The challenge is, testing means surrendering. And surrendering means being vulnerable. This is a terrifying prospect for many people. Especially if you're one of those neurotic control freaks who shits a brick anytime someone tries to make you abandon your pace. To help preserve your sense of control, consider these three words: *Bend, don't violate*. That's the key to effective boundary management: Being flexible enough to bend when needed, while still honoring your constitution and without compromising foundation. I'm reminded of what Alan Watts wrote in, "You don't grab a hold of the water when you swim." That's how you trust yourself: You let the water swim you. Even if it's lightyears out of your comfort zone. *Where are you willing to bend?*

18. **Beware of excessive restraint.** Commitment changes everything. I believe this down to my bones. At the same time, there's a paradox you'd be silly to ignore: The deeper you commit to something, the more likely you are to become so wrapped up with that something, that your desire becomes bigger than what you're committed to. And that's when people start to get hurt. That's when commitment becomes a detriment. Take it from someone who's been guilty of commitment to the point of detriment: *Overcommitting can be dangerous.* Consider these cautions: Don't disrespect others because you're too fixated on getting your own way. Don't allow healthy boundary management to morph into self-righteous entitlement. And don't blindly follow outdated plans that have no relationship with reality just to avoid looking inconsistent with your commitment. Stick to your guns, but don't shoot yourself in the foot. Stand your ground, but don't step on people's toes. And if you realize that you threw your heart over the wrong fence, that's cool too. Own it, clean up the blood and go find another fence. *Are you a victim of your own conviction?*

19. **Beware of oncoming excuse barrages.** It's easy to tell people, "No more excuses!" Especially if you're my high school football coach. He loved that line. To bad our team went 2-13. Unfortunately, that mantra – even though it looked cool on a t-shirt – wasn't the most practical suggestion for reinforcing commitment. The (real) first step is to administer a shot of self-awareness when you make an excuse – which, by the way, is a self-legitimized story you tell yourself about yourself. A helpful question to ask yourself is, "What lie is this excuse guarding?" I know. It stings. And calling bullshit on yourself requires tons of courage. But when you let action eclipse excuse, commitment becomes a non-issue. *Is there anyone else who has the same excuse as you, but is moving ahead successfully nonetheless?*

20. **Beware of the copycats.** Commitment is an easily confusable entity. And if you don't learn to discern the difference between commitment and its cheap imitations, everything you do will be like winking in the dark. Honestly ask yourself these questions: Are you truly committed – or just involved? Are you truly committed – or just interested? Are you truly committed – or just curious? Are you truly committed – or just concerned? Are you truly committed – or just legally obligated? Are you truly committed – or just not unhappy enough to change? And are you truly committed – or just biding your time until something better comes along? Approach these questions as a personal audit. Use them as an accountability tool to sustain your level commitment. And if you think it sounds like a lot of work, you're wrong. It's not a lot of work – it's a ton of work. But that's the whole point: The reason commitment costs so much is because it pays so well. *Are you willing to make the investment?*

21. **Boundaries are the bodyguards of commitment.** I create and publish a staggering volume of material each year. And my readers, audience members and clients assume that I'm incredibly disciplined. *Which I am.* But the bigger picture is: I'm not just disciplined – I'm obsessively committed to what's really important. I've developed massive intolerance for the inconsequential. And my focus filter doesn't allow bullshit to enter without a few alarms going off. Here's one of the questions I ask myself every day: *Is this an opportunity, or an opportunity to be used?* That's the ultimate commitment question. You might want to write it on a sticky note and keep it above your desk. Because if you don't set healthy boundaries for yourself, people will set them for you. And then they will violate them. And out of guilt, you will overcommit to them and undercommit to yourself. This is not fair to your dream. You need to learn how to say no. You need to practice putting a stake in the ground. And you need to be unwaveringly vigilant about the company you keep. After all: It's impossible to throw your heart over the fence if your feet are firmly planted in the ground of other people's obligations. *What people in your life don't respect your commitments?*

22. **Brace yourself for the waves of antagonism.** When people meet me and discover I've written a dozen books, their gut reaction is to say, "Yeah, but what are you, like, thirty? What did you write twelve books about? How much could you have possibly learned in your meager existence on this planet?" And even if they don't say that – I know it's what they're thinking. And over time, my response has evolved from, "Wait, why aren't you more impressed with me?" to "You know, there is nothing I could say that would make me good enough in your eyes. So I don't need to defend my books, and I don't need to defend my brain. If you don't want them, don't buy them." And although I rarely take the time or energy to go through that whole thing, sometimes it's necessary. Sometimes you just have to stare people straight in the eye and say, "Guess what? I don't have to react to you." It all depends how much self-control you're willing to exert. It's like staring at plate of cookies after you've given up sugar and realizing that they no longer have power over you. Goddamn it's liberating. *Who was the last person you gave your power away to?*

23. **Branding isn't a novelty – it's a necessity.** It's the price of admission. And it's got nothing to do with dressing for success, company logos or flashy websites. Branding is the best version of you. Branding is how people experience you. Branding is how people experience themselves in relation to you. Branding is what you're known for, what you're known as and what you're known for knowing. Think of it from an algebraic perspective: Your brand is the coefficient, and the goal is to make that number a little stronger every day. That way, when a new opportunity enters the equation, you're prepared to multiply the hell out of it. Bottom line: You have to decide how you want people to experience you. Because if you leave your brand experience to chance, the result will never fail to disappoint you. Remember: You never know when your brand will need to rise to the occasion. *What gives your personal brand its power?*

24. **Build a galaxy of mentors.** It's impossible to meet the demands of your constituency if you're not challenged and supported by your mentors. And not just one mentor – a galaxy of them. First, casual mentors: You chat informally. You meet on an as-needed basis. You have lunches, hang out and take walks together. They talk; you listen. They share ideas; you write them down. They ask tricky questions; you spend months pondering the answers. Second, formal mentors: You meet on a regular basis. You have structured discussions. You set goals, parameters and expectations for the relationship. They give you assignments; you return with homework. They expect a certain degree of commitment; you do what they say. They (sometimes) charge a fee; you gladly pay them for their wisdom. Lastly, indirect mentors. You rarely meet in person. You learn by reading and gleaning. You might not even know each other. They write books; you read, highlight and learn. They do stuff really well; you watch, take notes and relate. They set the standard in your industry; you follow their lead. Remember: One mentor isn't enough. These are the different types of wise counsel you might consider keeping. *Whose ship flies in your galaxy of mentors?*

25. **Build a timeline of credibility.** I started my career as a writer and speaker when I was twenty-two. That meant standing in front of hundreds (sometimes thousands) of complete strangers – who had no logical reason to take me seriously. Think about it: No advanced degrees. No real work experience. No amazing story of overcoming adversity. Just some dorky guy, standing on stage, wearing a nametag. Would you take me seriously? Hell no. And that was my deficit position. That’s what I had working against me. Except for one thing: I *did* write a book. Now, it wasn’t the best book. It wasn’t the best-selling book. But it was a still a book. And considering the fact that most people in the world have a book inside of them – but never get it out – I found myself in a potentially advantageous position. That’s why I went out of my way to make sure that every single person knew about the book immediately: I told them personally, I asked other people to tell them personally, sometimes I even gave five hundred copies of my book to the entire audience. I didn’t care. Whatever it took. These people were going to recognize whatever slice of credibility I could serve up within thirty seconds. Period. The cool part is: You don’t need a book to do this. Execution is the great qualifier. Your challenge is to represent whatever measurable successes you’ve achieved in visible, tangible ways – then punch people in the face with it. And not in an arrogant way. Focus on expressing yourself, not proving yourself, and people’s receptivity to your voice will rise. *How will you reinforce your positive pattern of execution?*

26. Build commitment into your personal constitution. When you bring commitment to the forefront of your value system, throwing your heart over the fence becomes easier and easier. My suggestion is to write a personal constitution. If you've never done that before, here's an overview of this crucial life document: Your constitution is the composition and condition of your character. It's the established arrangement of your non-negotiables and the description of your decision-making mechanisms. It's the collection of personal characteristics comprising your foundation. And it's the system of fundamental values governing your behavior. The best part is: It's a living document. It's amenable. And as you grow and develop personally and professionally, various elements of your constitution reserve the right to modify. For now, your challenge is threefold: Find a place in this document for commitment, read it to yourself every morning, and share it with at least one person every day. This fixes commitment into your unconscious and makes a public declaration of your intentions. Then, when the time comes to throw your heart over the fence, you'll have the foundation to execute. *Will you name commitment as one of your core values?*

27. **Build in reflection time.** Some people are so excessively focused on following through that they bury their heads in the heart of exertion, only to miss the very finish they crave. It's like swimming your legs off for ten straight minutes only to realize you've gone five hundred meters in the wrong direction. Woops. And not that there's anything wrong with focus. But it's almost impossible to gauge your progress if you never come up for air. My suggestion: Book blank time. Reflect on how far you've already come. This form of comparative analysis will fuel you with the executional confidence you need to follow through beautifully. What's more, reflection time instills a renewing and reenergizing spirit that helps you return with strength. *Are you staying committed to your own personal reflection needs?*

28. Call upon the full range of your faculties. At my yoga studio, our instructors remind us to use every part of our body to achieve the total expression of the posture. Even the parts that are relaxed. Erin says, “Just become something is disengaged doesn’t mean it’s unimportant.” After three years of practicing, I’ve seen this principle play out during every class. It’s the stillness of one leg that fuels the exertion of the other. It’s the rock-solid locked knee that frees up the motion of your lumbar spine. And it’s the relaxed, drama-free facial expression that counteracts the inevitable mental exhaustion. The cool part is, this is a principle non-yogis can apply to their lives. To call upon the full range of your faculties, all you have to do is ask the right questions. Try these: *What unique aspects of my personality can I enlist to slog through what matters? What personal skills have I not tapped into yet to sustain stick-to-itiveness?* You don’t need yoga to stick it out – you just need you. And according to Walt Whitman, you contain multitudes. Maybe it’s time to start using them. *Are you making use of everything you are?*

29. Carry your own standards for judging your artistic talents.

Creativity is the highest form of human expression. As such, don't let the validity of your talent hang in the balance of some critic's opinion. Or some jealous hater that couldn't create art if he was dropping acid at a finger-painting convention. Keep in mind that the more innovative your brain, the more you invite rejection. Your challenge is to override the disbelievers. To start with the why. And to figure out what your currency is. Then, enlist your motivation and go from there. You'll find that while self-belief doesn't guarantee success –lack of self-believe does guarantee failure. Remember: The creations of innovative persisters will always dwarf the accomplishments of the surrendering masses. *Which one describes you?*

30. **Change your definition of the word mentor.** The word “mentor” first appeared in Homer’s *Odyssey*, signifying a person who was a “wise advisor.” But the term isn’t only limited to people. Everything can be your mentor. Your challenge is figuring out how to allow every situation you encounter – positive or negative – to mentor you in some way. This requires openness, receptivity, awareness and a willingness to find the lesson in everything. The cool part is, once you redefine what it means to be mentored, there isn’t a force in the world that can stop you from learning. The best way to displace the impact of what happens to you is to grow from it quickly. *What mentors you?*

31. **Chaperone the dance between belly and brain.** One you take seriously; one you take literally. One you humor; one you heed. One is run by your ego; one is run but your ethos. One is full of shit; one is full of truth. And this distinction is helpful to understand, especially when you're thinking about quitting. Don't feel guilty. Quitting is underrated. That's a thought everyone entertains at some point. The secret is whether or not you're asking the right organ for advice. My suggestion is simple. First, use your brain to ask the following questions: *Is growing still possible here? Do I still have time to do what matters? Why did I pursue this endeavor in the first place? Will increasing my efforts be enough to make a difference?* Second, use your body to answer those questions. Whether or not to persist will become abundantly clear in no time. *Is the angry voice of your ego making it difficult to hear the subtle voice of your intuition?*

32. Choose your commitment device. If your commitment isn't symbolized, memorialized and personified in a tangible way, you're just winking in the dark. When you choose to make the leap, employ a commitment device that stays in front of your face. Daily. This provides you with a self-accountable incentive to keep your covenant. Plus, it affords you the opportunity to share your commitment with the people around you. Especially your boss, who's been curiously wondering why, exactly, you have a severed goat's head on a stick in your office. Whatever. The flies aren't that bad anyway. Besides, clients love it. *How will you communicate that you are fully committed?*

33. **Chose your vehicle wisely.** Like one of those racecar video games where you get to pick from any number of high-performance European cars before starting the race. Best part of the game. And this isn't even about automobiles – this is about the vehicle of your commitment. Look: I know you're hesitant about what – specifically – you need to commit to. But if you listen deeply enough when the path to true commitment falls into your range of vision, the decision will make itself. For example, I got a tattoo of a nametag on my chest. It symbolizes my commitment to my truth, my name, my identity, my philosophy and my life purpose. Plus chicks dig it. Hey: When in doubt, desecrate your body, right? Anyway, there's something exceptionally inspiring about committing yourself to the point of no turning back. Interestingly, I got my tattoo in 2005, which was right around the time my company first starting making money. Huh. That's interesting. I guess once you choose to commit with both feet, the world says yes to you. Providence moves to orchestrate the ideal conditions for you to make a name for yourself. Remember: When you only commit with one foot, the other foot searches for reasons to discontinue efforts. *Are you prepared to push all your chips to the center of the table?*

34. **Circumvent the lizard brain.** Currently, you're operating under the illusion that you only have three responses to disaster: Fight, flight or freeze – right? Wrong. There's a fourth option: *Friend*. Whatever unfortunate situation is occurring, you have to learn to ask yourself: How can I make friends with this? My therapist taught me this approach years ago as it related to stress. "Greet it with a welcoming heart and accept it as a normal part of the life experience," he told me. "Then, put your arm around it, thank it for stopping by and ask what you're supposed to be learning from the situation." When I embraced this attitude, everything changed. Seriously, it was spooky. Nothing seemed to bother me anymore. Even stress. And yes, it takes about six months to adjust your attitude to this level – but it's worth it. Because when you learn to love what sucks, nobody can steal your peace. Except maybe that creepy guy standing outside your bedroom window with a hatchet. But in all fairness, you probably shouldn't have responded to his Craig's List ad. Woops. *Are you willing to change your relationship to your discomfort?*

35. Commit to a long-term process of education. My friend Chad is a movement educator. He once told me, “You only age if you choose not to use your body.” In the same vein, you only fade away if you choose not to use, develop and preserve your brain. Here’s a simple exercise: Each day, do and document one concrete activity that made you a better thinker. Every month, review your log with a friend who’s doing the same. You’ll become a smokin’ hot piece of brain candy in no time. *How are you creating an environment where lifelong learning stressed?*

36. **Commit with both feet.** Although I started wearing a nametag twelve years ago, it wasn't until seven years ago that I officially got the nametag tattooed on my chest. Interestingly, that was also the same year my company started making money. Huh. Weird. I guess that's what happens when you commit with both feet: The world doesn't just pay attention – it pays dividends. And not just financially. Additionally, when you commit with both feet: You no longer stand immobile. You unlock the doors of creativity. You arrest the interest of the world. You put the strength of heart behind you. When you commit with both feet: You stop accepting excuses that used to work. You connect with others who are similarly committed. You liberate yourself from the tyranny of rational hesitation. You watch providence move to orchestrate the perfect conditions to achieve your goals. Not fiddle with. Not dabble in. Not hope for. Commit.

37. Commitment becomes durable when built daily. The final secret is to regularly review your contract with yourself. This may include writing a commitment statement, e.g., “I commit to being due at the page, every morning, at five,” or “I commit to spending thirty minutes a day walking around the factory floors with zero agenda and infinite curiosity.” Hell, enter it into your daily calendar. Or post it publicly. Might be a cool way to keep yourself accountable. Also, remember to declare – and document – your boundaries. This ensures your commitment isn’t compromised. You might consider keeping a Commitment Log, in which you make nightly entries indicating moments in which you stuck to your commitment throughout the day. I’ve done this every morning of my life for the past eight years. Not only is it a ritual reinforcement of healthy boundaries, it’s a confidence booster when adversity rears its hideous little head. *How will you remind yourself of your daily commitments?*

38. **Commitment is a coronary condition.** I don't know about you, but my heart is a nuclear reactor. And when I feel its inner alarm reverberating through my bones, not a force in this world can keep me down. That's the secret to committing: To stay in tune with your heart. That way, you'll know when it's time press forward. "With great haste and without a moment's hesitation," like Goethe suggested. And while you probably don't want to recklessly surge forward at top speed, you *do* want to execute fast enough to scare away the insufficiently committed chumps watching from the sidelines. After all, few things are more powerful than a person ignited entirely by her own instinct. Come on. Be heartstrong. Say it with your chest. *What will be the domain of actions in which you engage?*

39. **Commitment is the offspring of values.** If you can't discipline yourself to do something every day, there's only one explanation: It's simply not that important to you. *Period.* People always make time – not find time, but make time – for what matters to them. That's how commitment works: It deletes distraction. It makes you wake up early. It turns habits into non-negotiables. When you're committed, you drop everything and get to work. Every day. The hard part is telling the truth about your current level of commitment. And if you're having trouble with that, here's an exercise you might try: Write down a list of the five things you're most committed to. Then open your calendar. See if your life agrees. If you're not happy with the result, either find something else that is important to you and commit to that, or take the current thing that isn't important to you and reframe it as – or reconnect it with – something else that is. *How will you use commitment to open the door to discipline?*

40. **Communicate that you're fully committed.** If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, did it really fall? Most people have heard this riddle before, although few know the origin of the phrase. It comes from a book published in 1710 by George Berkeley called *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. The existential question he poses throughout the text is: Can something exist without being perceived? Berkeley says no. His theory is that if you have a message to share – but never share it – you never really had it in the first place. The tree never really fell. I agree. And I think for anyone in a leadership position – personally or professionally – the “tree in the forest theory” is especially relevant when it comes to the topic of commitment. Commitment is hard. Commitment is essential. Commitment is worth money. Commitment is the cornerstone of good character. Commitment is the keynote of inspirational leadership. But commitment requires consistent, visual and emotional reinforcement. Otherwise you're just winking in the dark. The problem is not a *fear* of commitment; the problem is a failure to communicate that you're fully committed in the hearts and minds of the people who matter.

41. **Conserve your oxygen.** Don't waste your breath on useless chatter. Next time you find yourself surrounded by people consumed with small thoughts, walk away. Set that boundary. Otherwise their mental shallowness will infiltrate your world. My suggestion is to work exclusively in environments that allow you to escape the crutch of small-mindedness and think more importantly. That means hanging with people who ask big, dangerous questions that catapult your thinking. That means talking about big, relevant issues that challenge your thinking. And that means learning about big, new concepts that stretch your imagination. The hard part is keeping yourself accountable. Try this: Be unwaveringly vigilant about the company you keep by asking the question, "Does this person add gasoline to or sprinkle water on my internal fire?" Also, be persistently discerning about the media you consume and the ideas you focus on by asking, "Will I definitely use this information for something immediate and important?" In the end, life's too short for television. Life's too short to surround yourself with people who don't challenge and inspire you. And life it's too short not to do something that matters. *What do you need to delete from your life?*

42. **Consider the source.** People you work with may use your age as a target. Some might downplay your contributions. Some might highlight your lack of experience. Some might reinforce your supposed intellectual deficiencies. And some might even come off as plain mean – even if their intent is nothing but a friendly jostling. My first suggestion: Relax. These reactions are completely normal. You're not alone. And while it's frustrating to be on the receiving end of that stick, consider the source. Remember: If people treat you this way, they're operating out of fear. That's what humans do when they're scared: They scramble for any ammo they can find because they see something valuable and powerful in you. And that's my second suggestion: Practice interpreting people's behavior as subtle recognition of your ability. Every time it happens, tack another notch to your victory column. You're on the right path. Even if you encounter a few haters on the side of the road. *How will you use the criticism to fuel your fire?*

43. **Consider the source again.** Let's be clear: Feedback, at the right time, from the right people – in the right amount – is priceless. That's the best way to grow, get better and learn who the heck you are. But if you're constantly getting rottisserized by people who don't matter, it's time to move on. As Walt Whitman wrote in *Leaves of Grass*, "Dismiss what insults your own soul and your very flesh shall be a great poem." When people dismiss your art as craft, hobby and decoration, learn to tell people you respect their opinion of your work – and then get on with your life. Otherwise the nonstop barrage of unhelpful feedback will slaughter your finest artistic impulses. Remember: People who attack your work are terrified of attending to their own misery. Never let anybody keep you small, scared and dreamless. *Will you risk rejection by exploring new artistic worlds or court acceptance by following already explored paths?*

44. **Consider what affects your ability to be taken seriously.** In Napoleon Hill's classic work, *The Laws of Success*, he writes that the world will forgive you if you make mistakes – but it will never forgive you if you make no decisions. That's the secret: *To achieve definiteness of decision.* Interestingly, the word "decision" comes from the Latin *decisio*, or "agreement." Which means it's a function of values. Which means you gave it serious thought. And which means it's a part your core. The challenge (according to many of my clients) is actually pulling the trigger. Overcoming the paralyzing uncertainty of taking that crucial first step. And that's why I suggest the following: Violently refuse to get snared into an endless tangle of anxiety, regret and second-guessing. You can't go through life regretting every decision you make just because it might not have been the best possible one. It'll eat you up inside like a tapeworm. Shakespeare was right: Delays have dangerous ends. Ginsberg was right too: Reluctance to make a decision is a form of resistance. And the bottom line is: People won't take you seriously if they're too busy questioning your decision-making ability. It's time to put a stake in the ground. *What are you unconsciously doing that's marring your credibility?*

45. **Consistency is the ultimate commitment device.** Every time I find a blog that hasn't posted since George W. Bush was in office, a small part of me dies inside. Seriously: If you're not going to stay up with it, don't bother. Something isn't always better than nothing. If you want people to take you seriously, remember my personal mantra: "Consistency is far better than rare moments of greatness." Whether you're publishing online content, leading a Wednesday night bible study, interning at your dream job or trying to be a better parent, consistency is not an accident. It's a sequence of intentionally consistent, similar actions. It's a timeline of credibility. Personally, I wear a nametag everyday. Plus I got one tattooed on my chest. Plus I post a "number of consecutive days" counter on my website. Those are my commitment devices. What are yours? Because if you want to win, you can't just commit – you have to communicate to the people who matter most that you're fully committed. Remember: Commitment without evidence is pantomime. *How will you reinforce your positive pattern of execution?*

46. **Convince people you can contribute right away.** When dealing with skeptical coworkers who doubt your ability, you have to dress your truth in story. That's the smartest way to make a point and the quickest way to have your voice heard, without involving automatic weapons. As Annette Simmons wrote in *The Story Factor*, "Storytelling is a pull strategy. It doesn't tell people who you are, it demonstrates it." Your challenge is to tell a story that offers evidence of what people doubt. A story that makes people proud to take the first step with you. For example, if your narrative illustrates specific ways you've helped other companies move through problems in the past, people will be more likely to listen to your suggestions. My suggestion: *Keep a victory log*. Compile a list of the strongest contributions you've made to other organizations in the past. Next, document the urgent, pervasive, relevant and expensive problems you solved. Lastly, practice telling these stories in a compelling, emotional way that demonstrates your ability to contribute. They won't be able to resist you. Remember: The earlier you add value, the longer you stick around. *What stories are you known for?*

47. **Cope calmly with this inconvenience.** You think you only have two choices, when in fact, you have three: Fight or Flight, right? Wrong. Never forget your third option: Freeze. It's requires deep discipline to master, but once you've taken control of your breath, your emotions and your reactions; you can turn any situation into an advantage for yourself. That's how you steel yourself against the thundering noises around you. As long as there is no commotion within, let bedlam persist without. Remember: James Bond was an amateur. Next time adversity befalls you, don't be shaken, don't be stirred – just still. *How do you respond to the crap the world hurls at you?*

48. Craft a sincere story regarding your journey – then broadcast it. First, take some time to physically write out your unique story. What crucial decisions changed everything? What questions did you ask yourself along the way? How many times did you stumble? And who was there to help you dust off your pants? These are the things that matter. Second, represent this story three-dimensionally. Write it out. Share pictures. Tell the story on video. Whatever medium works for you. Finally, connect with as many media outlets – mainstream or amateur – to broadcast that story with the world. Because when everybody knows your story, you win. Just as long as your story is engaging, remarkable and relevant. That's how to be taken seriously by people twice your age. Remember: When people understand where you came from, they're more likely to believe in where you're going. *Do decision makers know your story?*

49. **Create a sustainable circle of support.** It's called the long haul for a reason. Whether it's a long-distance relationship, a new career, or an outside-of-work creative pursuit, sticking with anything is never a one-man show. More like a chorus line. Here are the people you need to keep: Family, because they aren't going away; friends, the ones you can call at two in the morning; mentors, who will gladly slap you on the back of the head and significant others, since they're riding shotgun). *Who aren't you currently surrounding yourself with that can help sustain you?*

50. **Cultivate a more acute sense of resistance.** Part of self-discipline is learning how to override yourself. That means becoming a master of your disinclination. That means discovering what frustrates your ambitions. And that means not allowing yourself the indulgence of saying you're too busy. Here's the reality: The problem isn't decreasing productivity – it's diluted priorities. And you will lose the discipline game if you fall victim to what's latest and loudest. My suggestion: Extinguish whatever distractions seduce you. Drown out the world's chatter and find the energy that urges you forward. And for the love of David Allen, stop performing minor tasks that engulf you in pointless, trivial action. Instead, create around the constraint. Take the energy you've been burning on creative avoidance and redirect it to help you execute what matters. *What's your system for stamping out redundancy?*

51. **Deliberately alter your course.** Nashville rocks. Literally. Affectionately known as The Music City, it's packed with millions of passionate songwriters who, at one point, stopped dragging their feet and jumped. My favorite part of the town is the energy. It's as electric as the guitars. And I'll never forget my first trip there. My client took me out on the town after my workshop. When we walked into one of the hundred honky tonk bars on the strip. And I noticed a bumper sticker on the bathroom stall that read: "*Screw it. I'm moving to Nashville!*" There's no better way to personify the risk of jumping than those six words. Because if you put yourself in the boots of somebody who once said that to himself, you understand what this is all about: Accumulating enough frustration, passion and fire that you simply can't take it anymore. That moment when you notice a deficit in yourself because every waking minute of your life is an insult to the gifts you've been granted. That's when you jump. Even if you've screwed up everything so far. You jump anyway. And if you haven't reached that point yet, don't worry: *You will.* You'll know what to do when you get there. It might not be moving to Nashville, but it will involve altering your course. *Will you allow today's possibilities to be shaded the failures of yesterday?*

52. **Deliberately move your goals from nice to necessary.** People always make time for what's important to them. Period. And if you've been having trouble following through with something in particular, you might consider asking yourself how much that thing actually means to you. Because if it's not high enough on your list, it'll get buried under the tyranny of the urgent. Your challenge is to end the war with how and begin the love affair with why. Don't worry: How will make its appearance when it's ready. You'll figure out the formula for following through later. Yes, how is a great educator – but why is the ultimate motivator. Instead of thinking about what you're committed to, try thinking about why you're committed to it. *How did you learn about what was important to you?*

53. Develop strategies for responding to resistance. I've been playing guitar for almost twenty years. And I'll never forget what my teacher taught me on our very first lesson: "If you break a string, don't freak out. Everybody does it. What matters is how quickly you return to the music." That same principle of stick-to-itiveness applies to the song of life. My suggestion is to practice noticing things before letting them nag you. Don't allow the world to choose for you. The most expedient way to overcome opposition is to respond, not react. The difference is that reacting is a reflex – responding is a choice. In *Grounded Optimism*, my friend Kristi Govertson summarized this idea beautifully, "Sticks and stone will break my bones but the words I tell myself and choose to agree with either hinder or hurt me." The point is: You always have a choice. Always. Strength comes from facing storms. But not from inside your cozy house with your nose pressed against the glass. Instead, from bolting out the door and dancing in the rain. *What fuels your strength to remain steadfast in your aims?*

54. Differentiate between commitment and its substitutes. Just because you're interested doesn't mean you're committed. Just because you care doesn't mean you're committed. Just because you show up doesn't mean you're committed. Just because you join doesn't mean you're committed. And just because you feel obligated doesn't mean you're committed. In fact, just because you worked your ass off doesn't mean you're committed. Bummer. But, it's helpful to know the difference between commitment and these varieties of replacements thereof. Think of it like a breakfast table: The chicken is involved – but the pig is committed. *What evidence have you given to people – this week – to assure them that you cluck instead of oink?*

55. **Disarm immediate preoccupation.** Here's a rapid-fire list of the most common stereotypes of young professionals: *Apathetic. Disrespectful. Disengaged. Entitlement attitude. Self-centered. Overly opinionated. Unable to communicate face-to-face.* Now, I'm sure the list goes on. And none of these adjectives are based on scientific data. Merely observations and experiences. Still, while those stereotypes might not be accurate – they're still alive. And it never hurts to know what you're up against. First, so you can go out of your way to behave in ways that dispel the stereotype. There's a simple path to professional development: Just google what world finds annoying about people like you – then do the opposite. Another advantage of such awareness is to understand how other people experience your generation. More importantly, how other people experience themselves in relation to your generation. Those two elements combined will help you disarm whatever immediate preoccupation stands in your way of being heard. *How will you lower your perceived threat level?*

56. Discard the dress of the past. Dwell not on the dreadful torments of what happened. The past is so last week. Stop trying to let go and start allowing yourself to recognize what's already gone. Comb the damage field and spot the usefulness of what happened – then move on. Even if that means capsizing your own ship. You'll find that doing so isn't so scary when you're ready, willing, able and excited to swim. *What is your past prologue to?*

57. Discipline derives from the wellspring of why. Willpower is overrated. If you want execute what matters most – every single day – you need to tap the reservoir of whypower. Here’s the reason: When you actively cultivate the purpose driven nature of your work, discipline becomes a non-thought. What was once a desire becomes a habit. And what was once a habit becomes a non-negotiable. A positive addiction. Just something you do. That’s why I’m able to write for seven hours a day, every day: Because I keep a list of one hundred reasons why I do what I do, in my wallet, and I read it to myself every morning. That’s your challenge: To become a walking translation of stunning clarity of purpose. To pinpoint the deepest motivations behind what you’re trying to discipline yourself to do. Find that, and you’ll have no problem slogging it out every day. Remember: Daily bread without daily meaning tastes like daily crap. *How are you fueling your discipline with a firm why?*

58. **Displace the impact.** In a recent blog post, Seth Godin wrote, “In a long distance race, everyone gets tired. The winner is the runner who figures out where to put the tired, figures out how to store it away until after the race is over. Sure, he’s tired. Everyone is. That’s not the point. The point is to run.” That’s the hallmark of heroic misery management: Displacing the impact. Like the martial arts master who practices how to somersault over the concrete, your challenge is to find somewhere else, some other use, for the heartsickness you feel. Personally, I use my misery to inform my work. As a writer, I don’t just put pen to paper – I put pain to paper. I write the tired out of me. And as a result, my books aren’t printed with ink – they’re printed with blood. Which makes for a hell of an interesting read. Remember: Creativity is the indispensable instrument for enduring poverty. *How will you displace the impact of your pain?*

59. **Distill inner water.** During a recent executive leadership retreat, one of my participants told me that by spending fifteen minutes writing her thoughts first thing in the morning, she found it exponentially easier to tap her reservoir of wisdom, experience and insight. Almost like she was a performer and could be “on” right away, thus showing up with a stronger and more efficacious presence for her two hundred employees. “I no longer to worry about responding ineffectively or incompletely to my staff because I’ve already clarified my thoughts on paper,” Sheila explained. The answer is writing Morning Pages, every day. Do it for a week and you’ll experience noticeable, profitable changes almost immediately. Remember: Tickets to the What I Should Have Said Theater are extremely expensive. *Have you been writing your morning pages?*

60. **Dive into hard work willingly.** When you're downbeaten by the storms of fate, never underestimate the power of staying busy. Learn to disappear. Learn to lose yourself. And learn to let your ego fall away completely. When you enter into the cocoon of concentration, you release your sense of self. And sometimes that's the smartest thing you can do: Distract yourself from yourself. Remember: When you stay insatiably proactive in occupying your mind, body and spirit with activities you enjoy, misery has no choice but to stand in line and wait. *Could your schedule be busier this week?*

61. **Don't get sucked into the vortex.** If you're the youngest person in your office, coworkers may see you as a vault. A safe haven for gossip or trash talk. This is unacceptable, disrespectful and a clear violation of your boundaries. When it happens, let people know three things: First, you're not flattered they chose to confide in you. Secondly, you want no part of their negativity. And third, you're not going to laugh along with an obligatory giggle just because they're the boss. Stand your ground without stepping on people's toes. Use these responses to respectfully refuse condoning negative behavior. Odds are, the respect you exude will be returned in light of your willingness to persist. Or you'll create mass animosity and get fired for being an insubordinate troublemaker. Either way, you win. *Will you be seduced by workplace gamesmanship?*

62. **Don't make choices without mirroring decisions.** My friend Judson lectures to college students about change and choice. During a recent freshman orientation program, he talked about the difference between choices and decisions. Apparently they're not the same thing. And after a two-week long, in-depth conversation, Judson inspired me clarify the distinction: The word "decision" comes from the Latin *decisio*, or "agreement." Which means it's a function of values. Which means you gave it serious thought. Which means it's part your core. The word "choice" comes from the German *kausjan*, or "test." Which means it's a function of context. Which means you give it minimal thought. Which means it's an extension of your core. For example: I made the decision long ago that I would remain in full control of my faculties. As a result, when I'm presented with the choice to do something that violates that decision – like drinking alcohol, for example – self-control is a walk in the park. Therefore: Decisions are about precedent; choices are about preference. Decisions are made by you; choices are presented to you. Decisions are directions from the heart; choices are selections from the head. And decisions are agreements with yourself; choices are tests of those agreements. The cool part is: Once you understand this distinction, you'll begin to make both decisions and choices wisely. And people will be blow away by your commitment.

63. **Dump the damp wood.** Ever tried to make a campfire the morning after a thunderstorm? *Good luck.* Soggy wood never burns. In the same respect, you can't set yourself on fire if the people in your life are dampening your flame. That's why you've got to make conscious choices about the individuals you allow to participate in your life. Learn to ask yourself questions like: Does this person add wood to my internal fire or sprinkle water on it? Is this person helping me become the best version of myself? Which people in my life don't respect my time? Is this person a chronic abuser of my time and attention? Does this person enrich my life in any way? Sure, it hurts to personally amputate people who don't believe or support you. But living a non-flammable life hurts even more. Lesson learned: encircle yourself with kindlers. Life is too short to hang with people who don't set you on fire. *What damp wood do you need to throw back into the forest?*

64. **Employ a commitment rich vocabulary.** Strengthen your language when you talk about your commitments. For example, instead of saying, “I’ll try to,” or “I’ll get around to,” say “I commit to.” Instead of writing, “Our promise is,” write, “Our commitment is.” Also, any time you take action that’s in line with your commitment, reinforce it by saying, “As promised, here is my...” or “As per our agreement, enclosed is...” Language like this demonstrates self-reliance and caring; articulates the gravity of your commitment and sticks in people’s memories forever. *How do the words of your mouth reinforce the covenants of your heart?*

65. **End your obsession with convenience.** The reason follow-through is so rare, so difficult and so valuable is because it requires patience. Heaps of it. And since most people are so addicted to the sweet nectar of instant gratification – not to mention, have the attention span of a goldfish – it’s no surprise that execution is so rare. The two key questions are: How patient are you willing to be? And how hard are you willing to hustle while you wait? Ideally, your answers to both questions should be the same word: Very. That’s the rarity that becomes remarkability. That’s what gets people telling your friends about you: When you’re committed enough to follow through despite a ticking clock. *How much customer loyalty are you sacrificing by wearing a perpetual cloak of convenience?*

66. **Engage your why.** Then work like hell to keep it alive. Otherwise you'll collapse in existential agony. Good luck executing from that position. Truth is: Failure to communicate why is a diamond-studded path to self-doubt. On the other hand, people tend to cultivate their capabilities in activities that give them a sense of self-worth, according to Bandura's book, *Self-Efficacy*. Remember: The thrust of your ultimate endeavors predicts the threshold of your eventual success. *When will mattering trump money?*

67. Ensure your capacity to deliver. All of your customers, employees, members – or whomever you server – are silently asking the same question: *Will these guys deliver?* Especially if they happen to be the person who hired, booked, engaged or commissioned you. That means their ass is on the line. Which also means: They don't want to look stupid. They don't want to lose their job. They don't want to be the first person to trust you. They just want you to follow through. That's all. And you need to be aware of this reality of the human experience. What's more, you also need to be aware that you get zero brownie points for delivering what people didn't ask for or need. Delivery becomes debris if it doesn't align with the needs of its recipient. *Are you following through with a compelling need, or superimposing onto people what you think they ought to want?*

68. **Enthusiasm is a gift – use it while you can.** Last night I met the owner of a local cheese company. Intrigued, I asked him, “What does someone’s favorite cheese say about her personality?” For the next ten minutes, our table listened to Adam rant enthusiastically about all things cheesy. From manufacturing to cooking to milking the goats correctly, it was quite possibly the most fascinating conversation I’ve had in six months. Even the people at our table – twice his age – were engaged with rapt interest. Do you think they’ll take him seriously next time they throw a wine and cheese party? Absolutely. Lesson learned: Never underestimate the power of enthusiasm. As a young professional, your energy is your greatest asset – use it. Every day. Speak with passion or risk being unheard. Just remember two caveats: First, be careful not to overdo it. People can’t take you seriously if they’re too busy trying to figure out what brand of crack you’ve been smoking. Secondly, be sure to match enthusiasm with accuracy. If your energy isn’t supported with truthfulness, you’re nothing but a passionate incompetent. *How are you leveraging your youthful energy?*

69. Envision the end frame. Walt Disney saw everything as a cartoon. And with every new project he started, he'd always ask the question, "What's the end frame?" This enabled him to envision the future, which inspired him to execute the present. And as a result, his work was a factor – not just a statistic. If you want to inject the same magic into your own endeavors, here's my suggestion: Don't waste your time making another bloated list of unachievable goals and a strategic plans that have no relationship with reality. Instead, ask questions that take you back to the future. Try a few from my master list: "If everybody did exactly what you said, what would the world look like?" "What would real fulfillment look like if you were truly living your life purpose?" "If a miracle occurred overnight, and you woke up tomorrow morning with all of your dreams realized, what would be the first thing you would notice?" These questions help you imagine what you need to become in order for your vision to manifest. And they inspire you to paint a compelling, detailed picture of the desired future – then make meaningful strides toward it. Sure beats trying to map out your entire career on a flip chart. Remember: It's easier to get out of bed when you have a horizon to point to. *What's your end frame?*

70. Establish an expectation-free support structure. You never know how strong – or how weak – your support structure is until your world crumbles into a million bloody pieces. Your goal is to find the people that will provide proactive reassurance. The people that will be whatever gets you through. The people you don't need permission to hate yourself in front of. Not the seven hundred "friends" you have on Facebook. Those aren't friends – those are friendlies. And not the thousands of "connections" you have on LinkedIn and Twitter. Those aren't friends – those are fans. Colleagues. Connections. I'm talking about your real friends: The people who know who you really are. The people who will gladly sit with you in companionable silence. The people who will enthusiastically carry you to the other side of the wall. The people who will reflect the best, highest version of who you are. And the people who, if you called them at two in the morning, would answer the phone with, "Are you okay?" and not, "Do you know how late it is?" Those are your friends. *Who has a lifetime pass with you?*

71. **Establish enduring sources of vitality.** If you want to blow people away with your commitment, you need to go looking for oxygen. A wellspring of support that energizes and nourishes you. For example, I practice yoga four days a week. I play music and sing every day of the week. And when I travel, I'm lucky enough to have a girlfriend that fuels me from afar. What are your sources of vitality? What breathes life into you? After all, vitality comes from the Latin *vita*, or, life. And when the air gets thin, you'll need those sources to help you (and your commitments make it out alive). After all, it's kind of hard to blow people away with a collapsed lung. At least that's what my thoracic surgeon told me after he removed my chest tube that one time. *What contains the energy you need to catapult you out of this commitment rut?*

72. **Establish expectational clarity.** This is a phrase I coined a few years back. And when it comes to follow-through, it couldn't be more relevant. One way to eliminate guesswork is to put a timeline on every action. This creates an end game and helps motivate you to move to completion. Also, here's set of helpful questions to ask yourself as you make progress: What will success feel like? When you work on an important project, what do you usually do that might jeopardize its successful completion? And what if, overnight, a miracle occurred, and you woke up tomorrow morning and the problem was solved – what would be the first thing you would notice? Ultimately, even if you're the only person attempting to follow through – and even if you're the only person who will ever know if you don't follow through – what matters is that you know what a win looks like. Speak from the future. Look back to identify the steps will lead there. Paint a compelling, detailed picture of following through. Then make meaningful strides toward it, every day. *How are you telegraphing your reliability with yourself?*

73. Establish your learning plan. I can't tell you how to do this.

It all depends on how you think, how you learn, what you need learn and why you want to learn it. Instead, here's a snapshot of my own learning plan to inspire your to do the same. Reading: Five books a week. Journaling: Thirty minutes, three pages, first thing every morning. Writing: Four to seven hours a day. Mentors: Fifteen people I regular converse with in person or virtually. Mastermind groups: Three that I meet with throughout the year. Speaking: Ten hours of preparation for each presentation. Education: Three to five seminars a year. Miscellaneous: Daily observation, note taking, question asking and research. Now, that's not the whole enchilada, but you get the point. And while I don't expect you to copy or even emulate my learning plan, I do challenge to think about – and physically write out – your own. Commit to doing that, and your wisdom will make your years look like days. *What did you learn yesterday?*

74. **Everybody has a saturation point.** When you simply don't have the personal bandwidth to sit down with every stranger who wants to siphon your genius, you need to have alternative responses ready. Here's what I would do: Make a list of the top twenty questions one of these bloodsuckers usually asks. Answer each question in a paragraph. Save the file in a convenient location. Then, when the time comes, simply say, "You've raised several key issues that I'd be happy to address. Here's a helpful document I've put together that answers most of your questions. If you need anything else beyond that, feel free to holler. Thanks." That's called a deflection. And it works because it's respectful, positions you as an approachable resource; yet still reinforces your boundaries. The best part: Instead of draining your creative bank account, abusing your energy and exploiting your brainpower for their benefit, most people will thank you, review the document, and never bother you again. *What's your system for rejecting people respectfully?*

75. **Fear is the prerequisite of bravery.** Without fear, you wouldn't be human. But, try to escape fear – and you'll do nothing but inflame the agony. My suggestion is: Use it. Turn toward it. Accept fear's bid, throw your shoulder into it and mold that fear into something beautiful. I discovered this in yoga class, specifically, Camel Pose. This challenging, vulnerable, back-bending posture terrified me for years. So much so that I never even attempted it. I just defaulted to my mat without even giving it a chance. But one afternoon, my instructor challenged me. She said, "If you're scared of this posture, that means your body needs it. Try redirecting your fear into a new course and see what happens. Eventually, I figured: *All right. What the hell.* So I plunged backwards, hand in hand with the fear and achieved the full expression of the posture. First time ever. And the crazy part was: It wasn't nearly as bad as I imagined. By the time the posture was over I was like, "That was it? That's what I've been losing sleep over for two years?" That's what fear does to you: It fools you into believing that it's as big as your ego says it is. But it's not. Because your ego is a pathological liar. Kind of like that famous quotation by Roosevelt, which I happen to think, is wrong. The only thing you have to fear is the fear of fear itself. Once you realize that, your capacity to succeed will skyrocket. As long as you remember: While flinching is totally human and perfectly in order, your people *are* looking at your face to see where the organization is going. So, if you do plan to crap your pants, just make sure nobody can see the skid marks. *Are you willing to flinch in private?*

76. **Find a place to put the fear.** Are you scared? Perfect. Fear is a great compass for finding what matters. You just have to be bold enough to put your arm around fear's shoulder and listen to what it's trying to tell you. The world isn't trying to knock you down – it's trying to educate you. The question is: *Are you willing take notes?* That's when stick-to-itiveness develops. When you're willing to view your shitstorm as a tempering experience. And when you're faithful that there are many answers waiting for you to find them. Here's one of the mantras that keeps me going: "I look forward to looking back on this." With that attitude, you approach your fear – which, by the way is completely human and natural and expected – as a teaching mechanism. You stop trying to change what you are only able to understand. *What scared you this week?*

77. Find endless incremental improvements. They're everywhere – all you have to do is listen. I'm reminded of one of my favorite sayings is, "*Quoque mos vultus mihi,*" which is Latin for, "This too will shape me." That's how you turn situations into advantages for yourself – all you have to do is learn. Like an enormous snowball tumbling down a mountain, your goal is to advantageously absorb whatever crosses your path. Remember: Anything that helps you grow and get to know yourself better is never a waste of time. *What shapes you?*

78. **Find work that represents human courage.** Not everyone is brave enough to go after what they want. They're afraid of failing, or, worse yet, afraid of succeeding. So they never stick themselves out there. They never push their chips to the middle of the table. And at the end of their lives, they have nothing to show for themselves but a dusty ghost of a departed dream. If you truly want to be a factor, try this: Use fear as a compass. That's what I do: Whatever scares me the most, whatever invites highest level and self-doubt, I do that. Because I know it's the work that matters. I know it's the work that belongs to me. And I know I'm guaranteed to dip into the deepest parts of my heart. The point is: You can't live your life on the balcony. Eventually you have to get your ass on the dance floor, let the music own you and spin yourself like a crazy person. Otherwise you'll melt into the multitude with the rest of the statistic. Err on the side of heart. People will notice. *Are you willing to keep taking risks until it hurts or works?*

79. **Firefighters are busy people.** These guys work two-day shifts. Naturally, on their days off, the only thing they want to do is sleep. Which isn't a bad thing if you're an actual firefighter. However, if, as a leader, you spend most of your days putting out other people's fires, you won't have any energy left to start a one of your own. Yikes. Maybe it's time to start asking yourself: Who creates fires you waste time putting out? Think of it as a process of elimination. That way, setting yourself on fire becomes a mathematical certainty. You become gloriously unimpeded. That is, once all the bullshit has been laid aside. *What's preventing you from becoming the best, highest version of yourself?*

80. **Flex the muscle of life.** Accepting the constant flux of life is a challenge, but learning to ride that flux makes you a champion. As I learned from *The Power of Full Engagement*, “One should never be too proud to adapt. The person who sees the world as plastic and quite malleable is generally flexible himself.” Your mission is to breathe through the discomfort. To recognize that the detour is the path. And to relax into the realization that you’re always in alignment. Everything happening is exactly what is supposed to happen. *Are you flexible enough to touch the toes of life – and do so with an attitude of openness, surrender and faith?*

81. **Focus activates progress.** Throughout your day, beware of the distraction of the next idea. Shiny object syndrome is executioner of execution and the preventer of progress. Marcus Aurelius addressed this issue a few thousand years ago in *Meditations*, “Give not the strongest foothold to anything else. Nothing will sooner prevent your true spirit from flourishing or be more difficult to root out than the distraction of divided loyalty.” Look: You don’t need more ideas. Pick a lane, crank up the Alpine and drop some led on the gas. Remember: Moving forward means invest time in things that matter – not burning time trivially persisting on inconsequential wastes of energy. *How much time are you wasting (not) focusing on your priorities?*

82. Follow the opportunistic trajectory. A personal mantra of mine is, “The door must be opened from the inside.” I learned this from the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector who climbed the sycamore tree to become more visible to Christ. By putting himself in the way of finding what he sought, he found more and better than what he sought. And he proved that in order to make the world say yes to you, you have to put yourself in the way of what you seek. Lesson learned: Success means putting yourself on an intercept path with opportunity. And it means making the following question part of your daily repertoire: “Now that I have this, what else does this make possible?” Who knows? Maybe you’ll earn a greater workload. Besides: Responsibility is a sign of trust. Take it when you can. Not for the money, but for the experience. That’s the best way to learn how to demonstrate multiple areas of competence and extend your range of business interests. Remember: Opportunity enters through the door of yes. And it never stops knocking – you just stop listening. *What do you need to stop saying no to?*

83. Follow your heart without losing your mind. Following your heart is more than just doing what you want. It's about working without a map. It's about giving the soul its bread. It's about penetrating the stuckness. It's about nourishing your compulsion. Also. It's about taking your dreams seriously. It's about honoring the constants in your life. It's about abandoning things whose time has passed. It's about stepping out and exposing your dream to the light. After all, settling is a silent epidemic. Stop telling yourself that this too shall pass. Stop being a guest star in other people's existence. Just go. Otherwise you really will lose your mind. *Would you rather follow your heart and fall on your face, or swallow your voice and watch freedom escape?*

84. **Get direct experience any way you can.** Wisdom comes from doing. Not from reading books. Or attending seminars. Or listening to audio programs in your car on the commute to work. Those things might make you smart – but not wise. You need to run the gauntlet of genuine experience. You need make mistakes. Travel outside of your comfort zone. Get lost in foreign countries. Maybe break a few hearts. And definitely have your own heart broken too. That'll learn ya real good. *Do you need to read more books about other people's adventures – or go have an adventure yourself that's worth sharing?*

85. **Give yourself permission to feel miserable.** Instead of outrunning your truth, consider sitting closer to the things you're trying to move away from. Like Oriah suggested in *The Dance*, "Whatever it is you don't want to be with, confront that." Then, if you start to feel like crap, so bet it. Let that river flow. It's normal, healthy and cleansing. Plus, when you respond to your specific human needs of the moment, you end up feeling that much more alive. And then your pain becomes wisdom. "The greater the torment the sweeter the glory," as Seneca remarked. That's the best part: The more it hurts, the more you hear; the more you hear, the more you learn; and the more you learn, the more exquisitely you're shaped by experience. But only if you cure your allergy to reality. What's convenient for your ego is devastating to your existence. Make the right choice. *Are you ready to dig a misery hole and jump in with both feet?*

86. Grow a thicker skin towards the naysayers. Believe it not, not everybody wants you to become successful. In fact, much of the world will do everything they can to prevent you from diving into what matters. Maybe because they're jealous. Maybe because they're scared they'll lose you. Or maybe because they know your success will expose their averageness. Either way, you have to accept this reality. You have to be okay with the fact that not everyone you encounter wants you to jump. But, your ability to withstand criticism without crumbling is a leading determinant of your success. And at the same time, don't ignore the naysayers. It depends on the source, the validity of the comment and the context in which the criticism was offered. My motto is: Criticism keeps you in check when it's right, and keeps you in chuckles when it's ridiculous. And as you prepare to jump, just remember: You're nobody until somebody hates you. Besides, if everybody loves what you're doing, you're probably doing something wrong. *Is your skin as thick as a reptile or as thin rice paper?*

87. **Guilt throttles thrust.** One of my readers recently posed a question that forced me into a revision of thinking: “How do you follow your heart when it breaks everyone else’s?” Tough call. On one hand, if you follow your heart without watching the wake you leave behind, somebody you love might choke. Then again, you don’t want to miss out on a life changing opportunity because you’re a prisoner of your own remorse. Here’s what I think: *The people you love aren’t keeping you here – the guilt of leaving them, is.* You have to trust that the people who matter most you want you to be happy. You have to believe they want you to be successful. And you have to know that they want you to live where you can grow into the best, highest version of yourself. I remember when I first told my parents I was moving to Portland. They were shocked, scared and begged me to give it a second thought. But the decision was already made. The voice inside me had simply grown too urgent. The cool part is, that one leap opened doors I never would have had access to otherwise. And the treasure that lay beyond the threshold changed my world forever. *Are you struggling against your own energy?*

88. **Have your armor ready.** Whatever you commit to, there will always be people waiting – excitedly – for you to fail. Why? Because they feel disenfranchised by your success. And they can't stomach the fact that you actually committed with both feet. That's why, with every victory you achieve, they grow increasingly insecure about their own lack of growth. Next time one of these losers tries to dump his Haterade cooler over your head, remember what Epictetus wrote in *The Art of Living*: "Be not diverted from your duty by any idle reflections the silly world may make upon you, for their censures are not in your power and should not be at all your concerns." Remember: Never apologize for being assertive about your commitment. *How will you handle those who hate you?*

89. **I am the person who can do this.** This sentence changed my life. Once I started affirming it to myself daily, I found trusting my resources to be substantially easier. Keep in mind, however, that this practice isn't without its efforts. Note well that I didn't start reciting that sentence to myself until I was thirty years old. And that's what made the technique so successful for trusting my resources: I superimposed the affirmation over ten thousand hours of practice. As a result, I conquered anxious thoughts, reminded myself that I truly was prepared – then began to believe that the time had come to trust my skills, training and experiences and proceed with confidence. *How will you remind yourself that you have what it takes to succeed?*

90. **If you're not current – you're not credible.** The word “credibility” comes from the Latin *creditum*, which means, “Something loaned or entrusted to another.” Interesting. *Credibility is on loan.* Which means your credibility might take years to assemble, but only seconds to annihilate. My suggestion is to stop reminiscing about how things used to be and start reveling in how things currently are. That's the easiest way to invite someone to tune you out: By talking about the old days. Even if the old days were five years ago. Move on. Talk about the new days. Remember: Just because you're older doesn't mean you're owed credibility. It's not an entitlement – it's something you earn. *What irrelevancies do you need to discard?*

91. **Impatience is underrated.** Patience – as a virtue – is a beautiful thing. *Maybe the beautifullest.* And I'm sure I could easily bore you with a bunch of predictable quotes from *The Bible*, *The Koran* and *The Gita* about how patience is love and patience is the fruit of the spirit and the like. But I won't. Instead, let's talk about the value of being impatient. And I don't mea snap at supermarket cashiers who take ten minutes to count your change. Or that I say hurry up when my girlfriend takes forever to get ready. Or that I stand in line at the airport with my hands on my hips, pointing at my watch so the single mother with six kids in front of me knows to move the line along. No. When it comes to situations like that, my mental, physical and spiritual resources allow me to endure. I think I've practiced enough meditation, taken enough yoga, worked enough retail – and worn enough nametags – to learn how to project impossible patience, even in the face of tremendous annoyance. On other hand, there is some validity to experiencing healthy instances of impatience.

92. **Increase the probability.** My favorite scene in *The Bucket List* is when Jack Nicholson makes a crucial decision: He's going to kiss the most beautiful girl in the world. Confused, Morgan Freeman asks him how specifically he plans to accomplish that. And in one word, Jack says it all: "Volume." And a lot of the time, that's what stick-to-itiveness means: Playing the odds. Trusting the numbers. And you have to believe that even the weakest step toward the top of the hill still helps you through the strongest storm. And you have to trust that if you stay determined – not deterred – eventually, you'll engineer your way through the landscape of your life current craziness. Remember: Going until you cannot beats stopping when you still can. *Are you a pioneer of carrying on, or a purveyor of calling it quits?*

93. **Instead of ignoring the elephant, ride it.** Hair dye and plastic surgery notwithstanding, age isn't something you can hide. Face it: You're young and everybody knows it. The good news is, you can beat people to the punch by speaking directly to the age issue before it gets raised. That way you eclipse misgivings before they escalate into barriers. For example, when I first started my career as a speaker, I would open my presentations with a quotation from the wise philosopher, Indiana Jones: "It's not the years – it's the mileage." After a nice chuckle, I'd proceed to share images of my own professional mile markers: *Books I published, clients I worked for and results I enabled.* Sure enough, people uncrossed their arms and paid attention. And that's the secret: Before you convince people of your value, you have to understand and neutralize their resistance to that value. Otherwise your listenability will plummet. *How will you disarm the immediate preoccupation of people twice your age?*

94. **Intentionally put yourself in situations that force you to grow up quickly.** My cousin Justin interned as the village doctor in Honduras during his second year at medical school. My friend Rory spent four summers selling textbooks door to door. My pal Anthony moved to Tokyo without knowing a single word of Japanese. My mate Joey took the hardest, lowest paying job at his father's plumbing company. And me? I moved across the country to Portland because I'd never been there, didn't know anybody and didn't have a job. Notice the commonality? All of these situations were intentional, risk-laden, out of our comfort zones and chock-full of opportunities to depend on our own resources to survive. Nothing will dispense wisdom quicker. *How much longer can you realistically suffer from Peter Pan Syndrome?*

95. **Invest your time; earn people's trust.** Another currency that speaks volumes is when you give up the precious commodity you have: Time. Here's the equation: When people see you consciously investing (not frivolously spending) valuable, billable time on actions that support your commitment, they start to doubt your devotion a whole lot less. That's one of the reasons I remind my audience members that I spend ten to twenty hours prepping each presentation: Because I have a responsibility to rock their faces off. Similarly, that's one of the reasons I spend four to seven hours, every day, writing: Because I'm dedicated to my craft. What about you? How can you quantify your time investment (hours, days, years) and displaying it publicly? Take my friend Sal, a magician, who publicly logs tens of thousands of practice hours for each of his individual tricks on his website. I wonder if his clients believe in his commitment to performance excellence. Remember: The real magic trick is when you publicly and transparently articulate the effort required for your accomplishments. That's the best way to help the people who matter hear your commitment message. *What time can you invest to communicate your commitment to the people who matter?*

96. **It's easy to persist when you know who you are.** And, perhaps more importantly, who you aren't. Otherwise you wind up selling your soul for a couple thousand bucks and a shiny new iPad. My suggestion is to physically write out your Personal Constitution. Here's how: The word "constitution" derives from the Latin *constitutio*, or, "ordinance." Therefore: Your constitution is the composition and condition of your character. Your constitution is the established arrangement of your non-negotiables. Your constitution is the description of your decision-making mechanisms. Your constitution is the system of fundamental values governing your behavior. Your constitution is the aggregate of personal characteristics comprising your foundation. And the best part is: It's a living document. It's amenable. And as you grow and develop personally and professionally, various elements of your Personal Constitution reserve the right to modify. Hell, I've updated mine six times in the past year. But in so doing, I've also upgraded into the best, highest version of myself. Ever. And it's been like rocket fuel for my ability to persist. *What are you a living document of?*

97. **It's not about avoiding ruts.** Instead, it's about developing the self-awareness to know when you're in a rut, understanding the thinking patterns that got you into it, and then strategizing how to get yourself out of that rut quickly. It all depends on how you explain the rut to yourself. And while this process requires a tremendous amount of emotional effort, your willingness to expend it will help you bounce back impressively. *How are you sharpening your rut-fighting skills?*

98. **James Bond was wrong.** Shaken, not stirred, he said to the bartender. But neither of those are good options. Sure, they're fine for martinis. But not for life. When tragedy strikes, when heartbreak hits and when tough times settle in, stillness is the only place from which to take profitable action. Not shaken. Not stirred. *Just still.* That's how you respond to the crap the world hurls at you.

99. **Just go.** Don't ask how it's been done before. Don't ask how everyone else is doing it. Don't go to Google first, read a bunch of articles and then formulate your decision based on those influences. Instead, decide how you want to do it. And then do it. Don't ask for permission. Who cares if you're not ready enough or smart enough? Who cares if you don't have enough money, experience or credentials? It doesn't matter how old or young you are. It doesn't matter how smart you are. All that matters is that you're fueled by passion and fire, and that you channel that energy into making other people's lives better. You don't need somebody else's platform. Change the rules so you can win at your own game. You don't need the approval of anybody. You don't need somebody twice your age who knows nothing about who you really are to validate your existence and stamp your creative passport. It's never too early to begin being really, really successful. It's never too early to begin being useful to the world. It's never too early to begin career exploration. It's never too early to begin chronicling your adventures and lessons learned. It's never too early to begin contributing.

100. **Keep pulling your triggers for joy.** During my last bout with misery, I took Dave Barry’s advice: “Never stop laughing.” You might try the same: Keep your funny bone engaged. Humor is, by far, the highest achievement of human eloquence. It’s also your best friend for making it out alive. Because while hardship forces you in with tears – humor busts you out with happiness. Remember: If you constantly nourish the needs of your soul, nobody can touch you. *How many tokens of beauty and joy are present in your life?*

101. **Laugh out loud – loudly.** My friend Neen James has the most contagious laugh on the planet. Every time her funny bone takes a hit, the people around her are immediately disturbed in the best way possible way. It's truly a sight to see. And Neen taught me that too many people get into the habit of suppressing their laughter, not wanting to draw attention to themselves. Particularly if they have a loud or unique laugh. "Stop suppressing your chuckles. Make it loud and don't worry about who hears you. Laughter is contagious." You don't have to wait and see if the king laughs first. Nobody is going to think you're a terrible person if you let it out. All they're going to do is start wondering what's so darn funny. Mission accomplished. *When was the last time you purposely constricted your laughter in public?*

102. **Leap and the net will appear.** Lastly, it's impossible to make progress if your ego is too invested in trying to define what progress looks like. Just start moving. Let your feet do the talking. Progress will define itself for you. Otherwise you'll prematurely commit to a false definition of advancement. That assumption functions as an arrogant clamp that closes you off to potential growth opportunities. I'm reminded of like *Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade*. In the final scene, we see that only when Indy has courage (and faith!) does the path appear before his feet. The cool part is, when he looks back, the path was there the whole time. He just wasn't tuned into that frequency yet. *Are you willing to close your eyes, extend your leg and breathe deeply into the next terrifying step?*

103. **Learn the new tricks that matter.** Fine. You're an old dog. *Big deal.* The marketplace doesn't care. If there's a new trick that matters to your people, you still have to learn it. For example, if you're struggling with technology they're familiar with, learn it. Take a class if you have to. Otherwise you'll lose them. If you're not up with current cultural trends, research it. Spend an hour on Wikipedia each week if you have to. Otherwise you'll lose them. Remember: The reason people aren't taking you seriously has nothing to do with old age and everything to do with old thinking. *Are the cobwebs in your brain marring your credibility?*

104. **Learn to love the bright side.** First, consider how to use this situation as a gateway to learning something about myself, and then change for the better. Second, ponder how this situation could positively affect you. Third, envision how this situation will make you stronger and better. Fourth, directly connect this situation to your life purpose. Fifth, ask yourself, “Now that I have this, what else does this make possible?” And finally, ask yourself, “What is this an opportunity for?” Ultimately, every side is the bright side if you train yourself to treat every experience with deep democracy. *What’s your secret for finding the silver lining in every situation?*

105. **Learn to love being hated.** Being hated isn't something you do intentionally to make a name for yourself – it's something that happens incidentally when you make a name for yourself. And when I say, "being hated," I don't mean that people literally want to cause you bodily harm. It's more like resentment. Jealousy. Animosity. All of which stem from envy. But that's the harsh reality of following your heart: Do what you love and the money will follow – but so will the resentment. Typically from jealous people who aren't following their own. When this happens, when they try to push boulders into your path, here's what you have to remember: Being attacked is a sign that you are important enough to be a target. It's an indicator of success and a right of passage. And if you're not willing to piss a few people off, you risk never turning any of them on. The question worth asking yourself is: *Would you rather be hated by some or ignored by all?*

106. **Learn to see things dispassionately.** Save the drama for your mama. That's how our yoga instructor, Rebecca, reminds us to breathe with a slow, relaxed pace. Unfortunately, many newcomers and first timers miss the mark on this practice. As soon as their muscles start to hurt, or the heat beats down on their skin, enter the cardiovascular drama. Normally, they'll default to shallow, rapid and dramatic breathing through their chest. And while they think it will help them move through the posture, it won't – it only makes it worse. What you learn in yoga is that the faster your heart beats, the slower your lungs need to fill. And the more that chaos erupts around you, the deeper you need to breath through your diaphragm. The cool part is, yoga is a metaphor for life. The principle of dramatic reaction to internal and external turmoil is universal. You need to practice breathing through it. To put your emotions aside and evaluate your situation objectively. Only then can you respond – not react – from a space of peace. *Through what lens do you view your situations?*

107. **Learn to sniff out falsehood.** There's fine art to calling bullshit on people in a compassionate yet challenging way. I find that posing penetrating, thought-provoking questions is an effective practice for doing so. Try these: *What evidence do you have to support that belief? Why is that important to you? What lies are those excuses guarding?* Interestingly, calling bullshit is a lot like yoga: Whichever posture hurts the most is the one you need the most. Similarly, the people who become the most disturbed when you call them out are the ones who probably need it the most. *How acute is your nose for falsehood?*

108. **Learn to trust your voice.** Feedback is useful when it comes from people who matter. But more often than not, feedback hinders performance. Feedback burdens your capacity to act. Feedback induces unnecessary self-doubt. And feedback forecloses your creativity's full expression. That's why your fingers belong in your ears: It protects you from being swallowed by everybody else's vision. It protects you from people who will try to dilute your core mission by injecting their views. And it helps you develop a chronic predisposition to persistence. You need to decide that you're on a mission and nobody is going to stop you. Otherwise the arena of feedback will be an exhausting and fragile place to be. *Who's stopping you from executing by offering irrelevant feedback you didn't ask for?*

109. **Learn to trust your voice more.** I recently did a five-hour video shoot with my client, The Australian Institute of Management. During our lunch break, my cameraman, Derrick, made an interesting comment: “On-camera work is a completely different animal than public speaking,” he said. “You have to be quick on your feet and good off the cuff. The problem is, most people don’t have the confidence that when they open their mouth, something good will come out.” What about you? Do you trust your voice? If not, consider these suggestions for doing so. First, write every day. Doesn’t have to be much. Fifteen minutes is enough. You’ll discover two things: Writing is the great clarifier; and writing it makes everything you do easier and better – including trusting your voice in person. Second, practice. Debate yourself. Grill yourself. Challenge yourself. Anything to acclimate yourself to articulating your thoughts clearly and quickly. Ultimately, trusting your voice takes time, patience and practice. And here’s the best part: One day, two years from now, in the middle of a conversation with your boss, you’ll pull a one-liner out of your ass that’s so incredibly lucid and insightful, he’ll wonder if you accidentally slept on a dictionary. You’ll give new meaning to the term “wise ass.” *Are you prepared to sign your name under your voice and let the whole world know how you feel?*

110. **Let the performance happen by itself.** As a public speaker, part of my job is to get out of my own way and let the speech give itself. Otherwise I end up micromanaging every outburst of emotion. And that's just not fair to my audience. Fortunately, after a few hundred presentations, you develop the confidence that when you open your mouth, something good will come out. Even if you occasionally spit some garbage. For example, think back to the last time you delivered a crucial message – one to one or one to many – in which you trusted your own voice. How did it feel? Were you content with the delivery? What did you say to yourself to build the trust that fueled your performance? By identifying these keys, you'll be able to recreate it in the future. Remember: When you allow yourself to trust your spontaneous instinctual abilities, you never make a false move or a wrong choice. *Are you giving your audience permission to be taken over by your performance?*

111. **Listen for the guilt.** Being approachable means not afraid to be confident. It means dogged persistence in your own truth. It means you're not haunted by the fear of standing for something. And it means you're willing to stand up in front of the world and put yourself at risk. Even if people think you're crazy. The problem is, following your own heart might break everyone else's. And that's a hard reality to swallow. In fact, the guilt that lay within that reality is the culprit of a million dead dreams. But you can be a prisoner of your own remorse. Better to follow your heart and fall on your face than swallow your voice and watch freedom escape. Besides, the people who love you just want you to be happy. Give them what they want. *Is it worth making your idea ten percent better if you feel thirty percent less free?*

112. **Listen smarter.** The biggest secret to moving forward is closing your ears to people whose toxic noise is holding you back. Don't listen to people who nastily try to induce insecurity in you. Don't listen to people whose imagination can't encompass what it is that you want to do. Don't listen to people who put a damper on your natural versatility. And don't listen to people who did something once and think they know everything about it. People like this undermine your execution. Instead, learn to listen to people whose opinions matter. Surround yourself with a trusted team of life-enhancing high grade people. Spend your time with individuals who are examples of the way you want to live. Growing bigger ears, after all, means growing more mature ears. *Are you listening to people who mindlessly judge you or compassionately honor your perspective?*

113. **Listening is overrated.** History has proved this time and time again. For example: Henry Ford. If he listened to his customers, they would have asked for faster horse. King David. If he listened to his family, he would have kept his job as a shepherd. Thomas Edison. If listened to his critics, we would still be going to bed at seven. John F. Kennedy. If he listened to his generals, Russia would've deployed warheads. Steve Jobs. If he listened to his pundits, we'd still be carrying cases of compact discs. When you're willing to stick your fingers in your ears, you can change the world forever. But if you're too busy listening to everybody, you'll never hear the sound of your own voice. Don't deny what is central to your makeup. Don't let one piece of information fill your entire identity screen. Don't let people's feedback define who you are or dictate how you see yourself. Believe in your dream. Believe in the availability of your own answers. Stick your fingers in your ears. *Who are you still demanding excessive reassurance from?*

114. **Magnifying the unhideable.** There's no need to dye the grey out of your hair. Instead, convert pigeonholes into goldmines. Consider the five most pervasive stereotypes young people have about your generation. Next, ask yourself, "What do I bring that's contrary to those judgments?" Then, use that unique value to disarm the immediate preoccupation in people's mind. Let them know that despite your age – you're different. Not that you're in denial, but that you're the exception to certain rules. Ultimately, by putting your age on the table, you express honesty, humility and a healthy sense of humor. And those three attributes transcend age barriers every time. *How could you express yourself instead of trying to prove yourself?*

115. **Maintain a constant posture of challenging the process.** Be the greasy wrench in the rusty gears of the status quo by asking, “Why do we have to do it that way?” Ask that question over and over until the majority answer is, “We don’t.” You’ll discover that when you show up in full voice and speak the unspokens – you send people on mental journeys. And even if they didn’t want go to there in the first place, once they arrive, they’ll be glad you took them there. Or they’ll have you terminated. Either way, it’s going to be a great weekend. But only if you’re willing to ask a question that will positively upset someone’s whole day. Might be worth it. *What unwritten rules are driving you crazy?*

116. **Maintain a diverse portfolio of happiness.** That's the advice of Scott Adams, creator of Dilbert. "When you do so, nobody or no thing can knock you off course," he says. And he's right: When you assume a baseline posture of abundance, bad situations don't threaten you. Your challenge is to become more aware of your entire horizon. And know that just because "this sucks," doesn't mean, "life sucks." As *The Tao of Abundance* taught me, "The world you see is a reflection of the condition of your mind." *What's that world reflecting back to you?*

117. **Maintain a strong focus when surrounded by chaos.** Good news: You don't have to be overwhelmed by circumstances. You just need to ask: *Which part of this chaos can I tame?* That's how you avoid the ocean of overwhelm. By taking charge of your emotional climate and, with a steady gaze in your eyes, tapping into your indispensable stabilizing element. That's my new favorite phrase: *Indispensible stabilizing element*. Damn that's good. And the best part is, everybody has one. For me, it's my breath. Not just because I'm a yogi, not just because I meditate – but also because I once had a collapsed lung. And I certainly know how essential it is to have a healthy relationship with your breath to sustain stick-to-itiveness. Your challenge is to identify *your* indispensable stabilizing element. And to create a system that enables you to access it instantly. Then, to practice using it every day. Do so, and you will rise again, more balanced and more steeled each time. *What's your inner bolster?*

118. **Make allowance for doubt.** Doubt is healthy. Doubt reinforces humility. Doubt protects you. Doubt stretches you. And while you don't have to become best buds with doubt – you do need to make allowances for it. The challenge is honoring your doubts for the value they carry, and then letting go of those inner voices before they drown out the voice of trust. Every morning during my daily appointment with myself, I affirm the following: “If I notice any doubt, I will greet it with a welcoming heart. I will attend to it as a natural part of the life experience. And I will be thankful for it and the wisdom it brings.” That's how you put unadulterated self-respect at the apex of your value system: By honoring whatever surfaces, by learning from what scares you, and by still believing that you can handle what life sends you. *When was the last time you followed your doubt down into the basement?*

119. **Make frequent withdrawal requests.** Speaking of your friends: Did you know that the people who love you want nothing more than the opportunity to show you how much they love you? Believe it. That's why they signed up in the first place: To be a source of support. Next time you find yourself in the throes of mental, physical or emotional affliction, don't shrink from soliciting that support. Say to people, "Look man, my life is kind of a shitstorm right now. And I'm going to be fine, but what I really need is about two hours of your time to talk and vent and cry. What day is convenient for you this week?" Remember: When you're tossed and tattered by the fury of the tempest, don't hesitate the call the Coast Guard. That's why they're there. *Are you making enough withdrawals from your relationship bank accounts?*

120. **Make progress by making peace with inadequacy.** Here's a trend that's not going away: Finished is the new perfect. As such, progress is a form of accepting. For example: Accept that you're never really ready. Accept that you might fail. Accept that you don't need to know how. Accept that you don't need a complete script to start shooting. The sooner you recognize that you're the only one waiting for you to get everything right, the sooner you can move forward. *What is your bottomless need for perfection preventing you from achieving?*

121. **Make the invisible inescapable.** After a recent speech in Melbourne, I stopped by the city art museum to see the Titanic exhibition. Other than the replicated iceberg you could touch, the most powerful moment of the tour was walking through the Crew Room. We explored dozens of bios and portraits of these beefy, diligent, hardworking men – seventy-five percent of whom went down with the ship. And I learned that they shoveled 825 tons of coal a day. That’s over a million and a half pounds. And above the memorial of the crewmembers that perished in the crash, the epitaph read, “The task is vital, the labor is invisible and the work is an endless cycle.” What about you? What percentage of your work is unseen by the masses? If you want to get people to take you seriously, here’s my suggestion: Make your invisible work inescapable to the people who matter. Otherwise all your time and toil will go unnoticed. *What vital tasks are you turning into viral videos?*

122. **Make the mundane memorable.** If you find yourself saddled with entry-level duties and tasks, view this as a valuable opportunity to introduce remarkability. First, use the unique knowledge you already have. Then, put yourself positions to play to those strengths. For example, if you're an analytical, left-brained, strategic thinker – color everything you do with that brush. Even if you're just getting coffee, making copies or relaying messages. Remember: People don't care what you do – they care how you think. That's what companies notice. That's what companies remember. And that's what companies promote. The second suggestion for making the mundane memorable is to brand yourself as an informed source. Because even if you can't participate in big decisions, even if you can't sit at lunch with the big shots and even if you can't get your name on the super-secret-inner-circle-email-list, you can always be the answer. Not a know-it-all. Not a yes man. Just an answer. The coolest part is, when you're positioned as a source for answers, people don't just come to you – they come back to you. *What pervasive, expensive, real and urgent problem does your brain solve – better, faster, smarter and cheaper than the rest of the losers your office?*

123. **Make turning back impossible.** Everybody has their own version: The Moment of Truth. The Fateful Day. The Crossroads. The Pivotal Point. The Crucial Occurrence. The Hinge. The Irreversible Moment of Momentum. The Rubicon. The Zero Hour. I call this “The Sticky Situation,” or the point of no turning back. And it’s essential to committing with both feet. For me, it was getting the tattoo. What was yours? And maybe you haven’t crossed that threshold yet. No problem. Instead, starting thinking about what it will look like (and feel like) when you make turning back impossible. Yes, it’s a terrifying prospect. But your life will never be the same. Like Bill Cosby said, “Anyone can dabble, but once you’ve made that commitment, your blood has that particular thing in it, and it’s very hard for people to stop you.” *Are you willing to passionately pursue the point of no return?*

124. **Mind over mattress.** Davinci said, “Rouse yourself from sleep because lying down will not bring thee fame.” Ginsberg said, “Lying down will not bring thee forward.” Either way, the suggestion is the same: *Wake up earlier.* You’ll get more done. You’ll avoid having to rush. You’ll prevent the need to launch right into your daily tasks. And you’ll activate a sense of momentum that will set the rest of the day into productive motion. One hour. That’s all I ask. Try it for a month and see how easy it is to move forward. *What time did you get up today?*

125. **Money doesn't talk – it speaks.** It's not a panacea, but *boy* is it effective for attracting people's attention to your commitment. In two different ways. First, let's go back to the nametag tattoo example. Remember how I started making money when I (finally) committed with both feet? Interestingly, something else happened when I started making money: People stopped making fun of me for wearing a nametag. Especially after I was interviewed on 20/20. To my surprise, the news anchor unexpectedly reported that my nametag idea "converted a simple idea to a six-figure enterprise," as he said. And wouldn't you know it? That single fact was the one part of the interview most viewers commented about. Yep. People pretty much shut their mouths after that. My question is: How are you quantifying your success financially? You don't have to lead with it. But it's a nice ace to have up your sleeve when you feel the occasional need to prove your ruthlessness. The other side of the coin (rim shot!) is when you offer money as a gift – or put money up as an investment – to communicate your commitment. Whether you're donating to a cause, investing in a business or putting down a deposit on a loan, if you want to watch money speak volumes, write someone a check. After all, commitment isn't just about the money you accumulate – it's about the money you allocate. *How differently will people react to your commitment once money comes into the equation?*

126. **Monitor the consistency of your virtual personality.** The Internet is forever. Everything matters, everybody's watching and everything's a performance. Which, isn't that hard to do if the character you're playing is you. So, for the love of Google, be careful what you share with the world. If your online performance isn't an accurate mirror of your offline reality, you lose. And don't act like it could never happen to you. Self-incrimination is an easy mistake made by smart people every day. And the danger is: It's cumulative. Which means the more often you do it – that is, the more often you position yourself online in a negative light – the less likely people are to take you seriously. “You know, Julie made a good point during today's meeting,” the boss says. “Then again, Julie's status update from last night says she pounded fifteen shots of Jäger in thirty minutes. No wonder she puked into the paper shredder this morning.” Lesson learned: Avoid sloppy mistakes that make rejecting you easy. Be careful what you publish. *Do you want to become known for what you're about to post?*

127. **Nothing is more followable than stunning clarity of purpose.** It's a surge of momentum in the right direction. That's the consequence of conscious design. Like I mentioned before, knowing why trumps knowing how. The key is regularly asking yourself a series of purpose-oriented questions. And while this doesn't automatically pinpoint your purpose for you – it *does* create the conditions under which vision is most likely to occur. Then all you have to do is work backwards from that space of clarity. First ask, "If everybody did exactly what I said, what would the world look like?" Second ask, "Is what I'm doing right now giving people the tools they need to build that world? Third ask, "Am I teaching people how to use those tools profitably? Do that, and your purpose will become following. As long as you remember one caveat: People buy into the visionary before the vision. Clarity of purpose is wasted if the person holding it isn't likeable. *What three things are you doing regularly that don't serve or support your vision?*

128. **People who leverage, last.** The possession of knowledge rarely guarantees the proficiency of action. Sure, you had a great opportunity – but did you convert? If not, you lose. Because an idea generation without idea execution is idea annihilation. My suggestion is to constantly ask yourself leverage questions like, “Now that I have this, what else does this make possible?” and “How can I make this last forever?” and “How can I reuse, resurrect or reposition something people threw away or quit on? Remember: Your ability is only as good as its execution – and the leverage thereof. *How will you kill two stones with one bird today?*

129. **People will try to push boulders into your path.** In nature, those who leave their flock and go their own way get eaten. In the art world, it's not much different: People are usually unkind to the new. As I read in *Art & Fear*, "Historically, the world has always offered more support to work it already understands." No wonder originality is such a pain in the ass. But, that doesn't mean quit. That means instead of waiting for the rest of the world to tell you your work is okay, tap into your sense of interior stability. Instead, follow the path of your heart. Curb your dependency on externals for equilibrium and draw strength from places you love. Forget about what people will think of you once they see your work. Better to risk executing what matters than to be a victim of resistance. *Whose opinion are you willing to ignore?*

130. **Persevere through the low.** Yes, peaks follow valleys. But recessions renew resourcefulness. As Nicholas Cage taught me in *Bangkok Dangerous*, “The best way to defend yourself is to know when something is about to happen.” If you spot a valley on the horizon, write an action plan for how to leverage it. That’s exactly how I thrived (and how my company thrived) during the Great Recession. If you want to do the same, remember these ideas: Accept what is. Leverage your downtime. Keep support flowing. Stir the pot. Befriend the current. Use every crisis. Foster a pervasive tone of gratitude. Double your dosage of daily inspiration. And keep pulling your triggers for joy. Even when the economy sucks, your economy can still rock. *How will you traverse the tough times?*

131. **Perspective is the rein and rudder.** That was da Vinci's philosophy. And whether you're working on a painting or in project management, the same principle of perspective applies. Take my cousin, Avery, for example. He's fourteen. Recently, he said something that completely blew the lid off my brain. During family dinner one Sunday, I asked him to email me the name of a particular video game he mentioned. And I swear to God – you can't make this stuff up – here's what came out of his mouth, "Email? That takes forever!" Talk about perspective. I couldn't believe my ears. But Avery's comment was spot-on. Apparently, people under the age of twenty don't email. Takes too long. They text, instant message or use Facebook. That's how they communicate. Email is the new snail mail. Unbelievable. And all Avery did was say a few words. Lesson learned: The ability to deliver powerful perspective wrapped in a concise package, to the right people, at the right time, is priceless. More often than not, simile is the perfect tool for doing so. For example, whenever I want to make a point about the increasing irrelevancy of libraries, I'll say, "A library? Is that like Netflix for books?" As much as it pains me as an author to say that, it usually drives home the perspective pretty well. *What drives yours?*

132. **Pick the path of initiative.** You don't need a map. You don't need to wait for instructions. You don't need permission to use someone else's machine. And you don't need to put your life on hold until someone more successful than you stamps your creative passport. Lean into your dream. Forgiveness is cheaper than permission. Personally, I'd rather take action and risk being scolded than stand by for approval to do something great. Besides, the last thing you need is more advice that will force you to work against your instinctive grain. You are the shaper of you. Don't destroy yourself in response to an invitation from others to stop living. Battle that which blocks your free expression with everything you've got. Because in the end, that's all you've got. *What do you need to give yourself permission to stop waiting for?*

133. **Plan to leverage in advance.** If you know you're about to enter into a boring situation – for example, a four-hour meeting in which your participation isn't really necessary – bring a book. Bring your laptop. Anything to help you stay efficient. As long as you do so in a respectful and inconspicuous way, you're not hurting anybody. May as well take advantage of a boring situation to better yourself. *Have you chosen to make personal growth your daily discipline?*

134. **Practice impossible patience.** According to UL 94 Flammability Testing, one of the primary ignition characteristics is “long-term exposure to elevated temperature.” That’s interesting. Maybe the fuel for your the fire isn’t oxygen – it’s patience. Of course, there’s only one problem with that: You won’t find patience anywhere on the periodic table of elements – only within. So, frustrating part is having faith that the heat provided by your eventual flame will outweigh the wait it took to ignite it. *Are you letting the internal movement of patience flavor your fire?*

135. **Practice pressing the off button.** Stress is a funny thing. It's related to ninety-nine percent of all illnesses; yet it's one of the healthiest tools for jumpstarting a new realm of human ability. Truth is, stress can't hurt you if you learn how to displace the impact. That's how you press the off button: By finding a counterweight. Something that creates an inner sanctuary. Something that provides rest, recovery and renewal to balance out your tension. And something that allows space for quiet within yourself. Yoga, meditation, singing, dancing, writing, massages, turning your cell phone off for twenty-four hours, watching low-budget horror movies by yourself in the middle of the afternoon, whatever works. The whole point is to gather the quiet so you're able to stand up in the storm. Otherwise, if you never take the time to press the off button, you become so action-oriented that you forget to stop and reflect on what's happening. And that's when you painfully discover that persistence without reflection is blind ambition. *Have you pressed the off button lately?*

136. Practice tapping your reservoir at a moment's notice.

First, you've got to grow your reservoir with constant water, the inflow of inspiration and ideas into your life. *How many books did you read last month?* Second, this requires the confidence and vulnerability to trust your inner resources. *Do you believe with all your heart that you can respond intelligently and immediately to whatever is said?* Finally, this takes practice and practice and practice. *How often are you making yourself available for questions?* Just imagine: If you focus on living a beautiful, admirable and character-rich life – that you've consistently reflected upon – you won't to have to steal the show because it will already be in your possession. *What's your preparation process?*

137. Present what you do as a legitimate source of income.

Money attracts attention. Period. I'm not saying it's the most important thing in the world, but there is a direct relationship between profitability and legitimacy. Especially when barriers to entry continue to crumble. For example, anyone can start a company. The question is: How much revenue is actually coming in? And anyone can become an expert. The question is: What profit centers are you converting your expertise into? Finally, anyone can build a following. The question is: How are you converting followers into dollars? If you can't spit out (somewhat) quantitative answers to these questions, you lose. Your goal is to reveal enough financial evidence of your success that people nod their heads in approbation; but not so much that they tilt their heads in aggravation. I remember the first time I experience the power of this strategy. It was 2005, and my company was just starting to turn a profit. During a television interview, the news anchor casually mentioned that I had converted the idea of wearing a nametag into six-figure enterprise. I didn't ask him to say that, he just did. And wouldn't you know it? That was the one part of the interview that everyone commented on. Huh. I guess money really does lend itself (rim shot) to credibility. *How are you reinforcing your economical legitimacy?*

138. **Preserve your sense of control.** In the psychology manual, *The Handbook of Competence and Motivation*, the authors' research proved on several occasions that human beings operate out of a model to feel autonomous and in control of their environment and actions. Thus: The feeling of being in control is a basic human need. And while you can't control the world – you can control your response to it. I'm reminded of what Cardinal Hall of Famer Stan Musial is famous for saying: "When a pitcher's throwing a spitball, don't worry and don't complain – just hit the dry side." Lesson learned: If this circumstance is hard to get rid of or is beyond your control, choose to experience it differently. Or, another approach is to pinpoint the things in your situation that are within your control – that you can realistically change – and change them. It all stems from your willingness to be a catalyst, not a controller. *How much time and energy are you wasting on things over which you have absolutely zero control?*

139. **Prolonged laborious effort.** Endeavors that matter demand the persistent investment of time & toil. That's the 90%. The hard, long and smart work that most of your customers will never see. And if you want to make the remaining 10% as beautiful as possible, better bust your ass. Because perseverance means greater efficacy, and greater efficacy means higher probability of success. Ultimately, the road to mastery is marked by periods of minimal progress. You need to learn to be okay with that. Even when progress is discouragingly slow. Just remind yourself that the ongoing process of mastery is your reward. That commanding personal efficacy comes from a resilient sense of self and an amazing reserve of stamina. And that money isn't target – money is what you get for hitting the target it. *What time did you start work today?*

140. **Pursue your passion publicly.** In the book *Do It! Let's Get Off Our Butts*, Peter McWilliams write, "People don't like to see others pursuing their dreams – it reminds them how far from living their own dreams they are. In talking you out of your dreams, they are taking themselves back into their comfort zone." Similarly, Steven Pressfield writes in *The War of Art*: "When people see you living your authentic life, it drives them crazy because they know they're not living their own." The point is: You can disturb people without even saying a word. All you have to do is validate your existence and fulfill your mandate, thereby reaching your quota of usefulness for each day. Just make sure you do so in broad daylight, where nobody can miss it. *How could you shine your light so bright that even the people who look away (still) feel it?*

141. **Raise your hand for pain.** In the movie *Fight Club*, Brad Pitt asks, “*How much can you really know about yourself if you’ve never been in a fight?*” Answer: *Not enough.* Especially if you’ve been surrounded by safety nets all your life. And if you’re one of those people, someone who comes from a trouble-free existence – but who is not willing to expose yourself to the world – you’re doomed. Not to suggest you hit the streets and start punching strangers. This isn’t about violence – this is about voluntary discomfort. It’s about allowing yourself to get hurt during practice so you can avoid injury during the game. That’s the cool part about pain: It’s an invitation to excel. It means your body is alive and talking to you. And it’s a natural and necessary part of achieving success. Volunteer for it. Live out what you already know to be true. Even if it stings like hell. *Do you invite pain in the short term to build your armor against injury in the long term?*

142. **Real commitment is unthwartable by circumstance.** As a musician, I learned a long time ago that it doesn't matter if you break a string – it matters how quickly you return to the music. This same principle of stick-to-itiveness applies to the song of life. If you want to show people you're serious, try not walking away from the eyes of the world when they roll at you. Instead of acquiescing to your circumstances, yield to your core. Use your values as navigators. When things go wrong, when people lash out at you, or when you screw the pooch in public, ask yourself, "If I were me, what would I do in this situation?" Doing so will initiate an instant calming sequence that draws people to you. After all, in times of crisis, people turn to people who are calm. Calm is what builds trust, mitigates stress, remedies confusion and inspires followership. And it's the perfect way to show the world you're serious. As long as you remember: There's a direct correlation between the ability to make a name for yourself and the willingness to make an idiot of yourself. *Are you impervious to embarrassment?*

143. **Real progress starts with self.** You're waking up earlier. Cool. The next step is to practice winning the private battle before going into the public arena. I've been practicing this daily for a decade. But I didn't understand the psychology behind it until I read *Principle-Centered Leadership* by Steven Covey. He wrote, "Early morning private victories give you a sense of conquering, overcoming and mastering – and this sense propels you to conquer more public challenges during the day. Starting a day with an early victory over self will lead to more victories." Beginning tomorrow, I challenge you to use your first waking hour profitably. After thirty days, you'll build reserves of emotional stamina to be called on during the inevitable stress that accompanies moving forward. *Are you willing to take charge of your own development?*

144. **Recognize when life is giving you a gift.** Part of being lucky is realizing that you've been lucky. *Paying attention.* Plucking from the world around you. Noticing when opportunities are presenting themselves and immediately responding to them. From ideas to people to situations, never forget to give thanks for all these great gifts life gives you. *That way, life gives you more of them.* The universe is participative. That which you appreciate appreciates. My suggestion: Every time you turn a situation into an advantage for yourself, log it. Keep a record. This helps solidify your appreciation. *Are you documenting your discoveries?*

145. **Recognize when the hay is in the barn.** Remember cramming for college exams? You put in hours and hours of studying. And by the end of the night, you reach a point where you think, “Well, I guess if I don’t know the material now, I never will.” That’s when the hay is in the barn. When there’s nothing else you can do to increase the probability of success except to call it a night. As my Virginia Tech friend Jim Flowers says, “Amateurs practice until they get it right – masters practice until they can’t get it wrong.” That’s your barometer. Whatever you’re preparing yourself for, you’ll know when the hay is in the barn. That’s when you have to let everything go and trust your resources. *Are you willing to call it a night?*

146. **Refuse to be watered down.** Starting one thing after another doesn't make you committed – it makes you a comma. Strangled by indecisiveness, you score (yet another) “incomplete” on the report card of life. My suggestion: Focus like hell. Don't permit your time to be ruled by other people's priorities. And beware of falling in love with everybody's plans but your own. Instead, pick a lane – then stay in that lane – no matter how closely the truck behind you is riding your ass. Like my friend Robert Bradford reminds me, “Every time you add a comma to the description of what you do, you suck a little bit more.” *Is this an opportunity or an obligation?*

147. **Reinvest your misfortune.** When shit happens, the difference maker is whether we smear the rug with it or fertilize the grass with it. Next time something devastating happens, try this: First, stroke the problem with your eye. Noticing it before you let it nag you. Then, instead of filling with fury, channel your aggravation into something more productive. Instead of telling yourself how much you suck, try affirming to yourself, “Next time.” Instead of drowning in the infinite regression of argument, step back and ask, “Wait: Why the hell are we even have this conversation?” And instead of wasting any energy whining about your current experience, try redirecting any frustration you have into learning from that experience. *What would you have to learn from this mistake to make it no longer a mistake?*

148. **Reject invitations that don't serve you.** If you don't make conscious choices about the individuals you allow to participate in your life, you won't like your life. Period. For example, I recently received an email from a woman I didn't know very well. Her request was as follows: "I'm going through a major life change and need advice from lots of people who aren't close to the situation so they don't approach it with a bias. Would you be willing to hear what it is and share your thoughts? I'd greatly appreciate it." Now, although my ears were flattered by the bend request, my heart told me to stay away. Not that I wasn't sympathetic to her life situation. *But I barely knew her. And this request came out of nowhere.* Out of respect, I replied affirmatively and sympathetically: "Thanks for reaching out. Sounds like you're going through quite the adventure. Currently, I'm already over committed and won't be able to offer my ears. Good luck." That's how you keep backbone engaged. As Julia Cameron explained in *Walking This World*, "Don't turn yourself into a food source for others, allowing them to dine freely on your time, talents and reserves." Remember: Life's too short to surround yourself with people who use you as a garbage dump for their emotional refuse. *Who is a chronic abuser of your time and attention?*

149. **Reject the good to invite the best.** Winston Churchill was a putz. He's well known for saying to never, never give up. This is a dangerous suggestion. In reality, sometimes quitting is the smartest move in your playbook. Especially if you've been persisting down the wrong path for too long. Which happens all the time. People get all self-congratulatory for exemplifying stick-to-itiveness – only to discover that their ladder was leaning against the wrong wall. Your challenge is to answer two questions before popping your bottle of champagne: Does sticking with this mean inviting the best? If not, get your ass out. If yes, persist. "If I chose to quit, what will the reason be? If the answer is, "Because it's hard," you lose. If the answer is, "Because it's right," you win. *What are you willing to say no to?*

150. **Release the need to control your environment.** Everyone is silently controlled by something. And if you don't think you are, then that's what is silently controlling you. I know. Denial is a bitch. But when life starts to suck, your attitude needs to revolve around questions like: Do you actually think you can go on controlling life indefinitely? How much time and energy are you wasting on things over which you have absolutely zero control? In a pinch, am I willing to say almost anything to maintain control? What in this situation is within your control, which you can realistically change? Remember: Assuming you can't go on controlling life indefinitely is a game you won't win. *What are your control tendencies?*

151. **Remain unreasonably peaceful.** Especially when the shit hits the fan. People who provide an unblinking stare instead of becoming preoccupied with the chattering noise of reactive thinking are inspiring. My suggestion: Learn to stay in a state non-resistance. You'll discover that inviting the challenges of life with a consciousness of calm is the smartest thing you could do. The only repercussion is, you might upset the people around you who are pissed off that you're not more pissed off. Remember: You can try to control life, or allow it to flow abundantly through you. *Which will you choose?*

152. **Remove the threat of success.** There's nothing more terrifying than getting exactly what you want. Because if you do, consider the result: You might lose it. You might realize it's not enough. You might discover it's not actually what you (thought) you wanted. You might be afraid of the changes that success would bring into your life. Or you might succeed and to miss your emotional goal of expected failure. To avoid these inevitable anxieties, remember these words of *The Tao De Ching*: "Possess nothing, expect nothing." Whatever you follow through with; don't label it as failure as success. It's neither one. It just is. Nothing but the consequences of your experiments. Doing so makes the process less threatening, which makes the result more educational. *Are you accepting life as it comes or trying to squeeze it into a convenient little box called success?*

153. **Replace bitching with evidence.** Yes, it's frustrating to work at an office primarily populated by people who grew up on vinyl and Vietnam. And it's even more frustrated when those people don't take you seriously. But don't default to shedding tears just to prove your salt. Instead, focus on sharing tangible proof. When you have a problem, complaint or issue, calmly present your issue to the powers that be in a quantitative, organized, legitimate and nuts and bolts fashion. That's the type of presentation style that older generations respond to. Plus, by pressing the off button on the water works, you avoid getting lumped into stereotype of being a whiner. This brings me to *Psychology Today*, which published an article in the May 2010 issue called, "Generation Y or Generation Whine?" According to the piece, those born between 1982 and 2002 are turning the country into a nation of wimps. "Entitled, spoiled, whiney and unable to take criticism," are just a few of the other terms used to describe my generation. Obviously, this is a gross generalization. Unfortunately, this isn't the only publication spouting such stereotypes. It seems like every week you come across another magazine or newspaper spreading similar stories. As such, do whatever you can to prevent putting yourself in that category. Bitching isn't the answer – evidence is. *How much of it is your case presenting?*

154. **Resistance either creates or compresses stamina.**

Against the backdrop of seeming hopelessness, stamina is hard. Especially the stamina to recover rapidly from disappointment. A helpful question I ask myself is, “Is this being done to me or for me?” With an attitude of leverage, positivity and growth, the answer is always “for me.” Just learn the lesson, let go of the emotion and get your ass out of there. See this as a workout for becoming wiser. *What could make this experience easier?*

155. **Risk today's time for tomorrow's treasure.** Stop looking for the easy win and start running the developmental gauntlet. Science fiction novelist Tobias Buckell made a poignant observation on this issue: "Mastery is found not in the easy initial spurt of learning, but in the journey along the flat plane before the next major leap." It's about being patient with yourself, having confidence in yourself and adding value to yourself. Remember: No incremental progress, no incidental profit. *Are you willing to invest time on endeavors that you won't benefit from until next year?*

156. **Safeguard your vision.** Although you don't need permission to dream, you do need protection to make that dream a reality. Otherwise the vultures will destroy your seed before you have a chance to harvest it. The secret is to remain vigilant about the company you keep. In the book *Ignore Everybody*, Hugh McLeod explains: "You don't know if your idea is any good the moment it's created. But neither does anybody else. The most you can hope for is a strong gut feeling that it is. And it's not that your friends deliberately want to be unhelpful. It's just that they don't know your world one millionth as well as you know your world, no matter how hard they try, no matter how hard you try to explain." Stop gushing to people who are going to belittle your ambitions. Surround yourself with mirrors that make you feel beautiful. *Are you listening to your voice or a program created by someone who doesn't get you?*

157. **Saturate your consciousness with victory.** During my daily appointment with myself, I ritually revisit the following reminders: Action-based victories from the previous day's accomplishments. This helps build momentum and self-confidence. Next, personal victories in the form of affirmations of my highest talents and skills. This is the oxygen – the fuel – that my fire requires to grow stronger. By doing this every morning for the past eight years, I've found my inner kindling to be perfectly prepared for ignition. I wonder what your consciousness is saturated with. *How much time – each day – do you spend selling yourself to yourself?*

158. **Seek acceptance, not approval.** It doesn't matter if people like your work. What matters is if they label it as being real. The rest is just gravity. My suggestion: Screw meeting worldly approval. Stop acquiescing to the status quo. Creating a career of approval creates a diminished existence, which creates work destined for mediocrity and doomed to disappoint. And you know the people I'm talking about: They just sort of stare at you with these judging eyes and crossed arms, as if to say, "What are you going to do about the fact that I don't like it?" Answer: *Nothing*. You're going to get on with your life and get back to your work. Because life's too short to let your art live in a desk drawer, too valuable to have lunch with idiots who downsize your dreams, and too precocious surround yourself with people who aren't open to your energy. Keep your distance from those who would dampen your ardor, and keep away from those who would discard the highest vision of yourself. *Whose voice are you done listening to?*

159. **Seek meaningful life pursuits.** Even when the competing attractions look so good you could taste them. Stay focused on what counts. Don't get lost in what doesn't matter. Instead, partake in what Bandura's textbook referred to as, "Developmentally enriching experiences." Do things simply because they're essential to your economic vitality. Then, intelligently reflecting on those experiences. Extract and document the lessons from those experiences. And mobilizing your knowledge by teaching those lessons to others. If you can do so with an attitude of nonprescriptiveness, nothing will be more meaningful. *How minutes of your last hour were aggressively invested in irrelevant action?*

160. **Self-belief dismantles insecurity.** Writing is my occupation inasmuch as it *occupies* most of my time. My job, however, is to be a resource. A vendor of value. And one of the ways my clients use me is through a service called *Rent Scott's Brain*. Now, it's not really coaching. Not really consulting. Not really mentoring. More like a guided tour of my mind that disturbs people who are stuck into executing what matters. Now, the clients I work with – from entrepreneurs to writers to company leaders – pay for this service because it's completely organic. Just them and me, in a room, with minimal agendas, and a desire to get better. Nothing else in the marketplace quite like it. The interesting part is, because of the informal nature of the process, there's no preparation on my part. Outside of our initial discovery conversation, my mission is to show up as the best, highest version of myself, remain respectful of (and responsive to) the needs of the moment, and spend the next four hours adding value in the best way I can. Naturally, this approach requires heaps of self-trust. And admittedly, when I started offering this service five years ago, the first few sessions were pretty intimidating. But here's what I learned: Trusting yourself requires dismantling your insecurities. It means having faith in the wisdom that created you and knowing that you are the person who can do this. So, next time you sit across a table from people who demand that you deliver, keep replaying in your mind: "These people called me for a reason. They want me to succeed. And they're going to get their money's worth." Otherwise they'll smell your fear the minute you walk in the door. *When people rent your brain, what resources do you deliver?*

161. **Self-doubt is underrated.** Although there's a part of you that wants to believe your confidence is unthwartable, you're still human. And all humans doubt. The good news is: Doubt protects us. Doubt keeps us humble. Doubt helps us keep checks and balances on ourselves. And doubt forces us to examine what we think and why we think it. In fact, if you completely believed in yourself – all the time – do you really think you were stretching enough? On the other hand, perhaps it would serve you better to lean into your sense of scared-shitlessness. After all: Fear is the final compass for deciding what matters. Maybe try asking yourself, "What signal is my fear sending me?" Your answer might be the best thing you could have learned about yourself. Remember: There is no courage without the presence of fear. Fear is the prerequisite of bravery and bravery is the precursor to power. Throw your shoulder into it. *When was the last time you doubted yourself?*

162. **Ship only great work out the door.** Piano man Ben Folds reminds us in the song *One Down*, “People tell me to just make up junk and turn it in. But I was never okay with turning in a bunch of crap. And I don’t like wasting time on music that won’t make me proud.” Sadly, many of my colleagues fall victim to that trap. They publish average books with average content. They give unremarkable speeches with unremarkable slides. They write boring blog posts using boring examples. And it’s not like they’re going broke – they’re just not going *for* broke. That’s the next way to show the world you’re serious: *By refusing to execute mediocrity.* Because without making this baseline decision, without setting this standard of excellence, you leave yourself vulnerable to attack. And the sexiness of average will seduce you like six-foot blonde in a black dress. Remember: Being amazing isn’t enough. The other half of the equation is the willingness to wage a war against mediocrity. Burn the beige. Vaporize the vanilla. Banish the bland. Nuke the normal. Annihilate the average. *Are you giving the future something to respect?*

163. **Show massive gratitude to the people who took risks on you.** Success never comes unassisted. Ever. If you're lucky enough to find a champion, somebody to go to bat for you – thank her sincerely. If possible, in person. Here's what you do: Take her aside, look her straight in the eye and say, "Julie, you put your ass on the line for me, and want you to know how much I appreciate it. Thanks for believing in me. You support was essential, and I wouldn't be here without you. I promise to keep you updated with my progress." But it doesn't end there. Gratitude is isn't just a few honest words – it's a calendar of consistent action. And it functions as a thank you in perpetuity to the people who took personal and professional risks to help underwrite your success. *Who did you thank yesterday?*

164. **Show people that you aren't going away.** Reliable. Predictable. Dependable. Consistent. That's the big-picture secret to being taken seriously: Making sure your actions provide people with irrefutable proof that you're in it for the long haul. That's one of the reasons I publish three books a year. Not just because writing is my religion. Not just because I have volumes to say. And not just because books are extremely profitable for my business. But also because with every new book that comes out, I reinforce to people that I'm not going away. That I'm not just another a one-hit-wonder, flash-in-the-pan bullshit artist. Like comedy legend George Carlin, your challenge is to show people that your "prime" will last for forty years. That should perk people's ears up. *What are you doing to last?*

165. **Shut up and trust yourself.** Johann Wolfgang Goethe said that. I agree. I also think that when you trust yourself, several other cool things happen: You earn new energy. You advance inner knowing. You recognize trust in others. You live within your own skin better. You move through whatever happens. You frame yourself in yessable attitudes. You develop a deeper sense of self-acceptance. You radiate trust into the hearts of the people you serve. You avoid putting all your eggs in other people's baskets. You eliminate anxiety that others are going to let you down. You gain a greater knowledge of your body, mind and spirit. You quit trying to control everything and let life make you happen. You stop killing yourself worrying about the judgments of people who don't matter. But trusting yourself isn't always easy. Probably because it involves accepting reality, surrendering control, dismantling insecurity and taking responsibility. Yikes.

166. **Shut yourself up.** In 1933, newspapers around the world announced the death of a Chinese man named Li Chung Yun. Now, the rumor was that he lived to be over two hundred years old. Whether or not that's true, nobody knows. But Yun *did* deliver a series of twenty-eight three-hour lectures at a Chinese university. The topic: Longevity. And when asked for advice on lengthening one's life, his greatest counsel for stick-to-itiveness was always two words: *Inner quiet*. When was the last time those two words described your mindspace? For most people, that's a tough question. For some people, that's an impossible question. But that's why Yun's philosophy of inner quiet is more relevant than ever before. Because the reality is: *Our society doesn't reward idleness*. Money likes speed, not stillness. And when you factor in the information overload, the acceleration of technology and the (almost) non-existent attention span – it's no wonder people can't shut themselves up. Have you ever actually tried just doing nothing? It's like a workout. Apparently non-action is the hardest action of all. But in my experience, practicing regular intervals of inner quiet – every day – is the backbone of stick-to-itiveness. Remember: Tomorrow's strength comes from yesterday's stillness. *At what point did you shut your brain down yesterday?*

167. **Speak up at the slightest sense of discomfort.** If you don't set healthy boundaries for yourself, people will set them for you. And then they will violate them. And then they will tell their friends to do the same. All because you failed to set a precedent of value. And not because they're terrible people – but because you never taught them how to treat you. To avoid this, be prolific in your communication. Constantly educate people on your priorities. Especially those who are habitually taxing, or whose perpetual laziness constantly begs your assistance. Otherwise, in the absence of communication, people will make up their own story. And it probably won't match yours. When all else fails, sometimes you just have to look people in the eye and say, "Let's get something straight: I'm not your playmate, I'm not your project manager and I'm not your delegation receptacle." Don't be unfair to yourself by continuing relationships with people who abuse your energy. You're a person – not a welcome mat. *Is this an opportunity, or an opportunity to be used?*

168. **Speed up your unlearning curve.** Learning is for monkeys and kindergartners. If you want to become wise beyond your years, try forgetting a few things for once. Just beware: Unlearning is a painful process for most people. First, because it requires mental flexibility in an age of terminal certainty. Secondly, because it threatens your ego's power. Third, because cognitive dissonance is a brutal force. And finally, unlearning is painful because it activates the change process. And last time I checked, most people still hate change. If you want to become wise beyond your years, consider unlearning the following things: Dangerous prejudices, outdated desires, false interpretations, inherited biases, outwork assumptions, previous definitions, useless fears and stale scripts. Remember: Any idiot can be smart. It takes real wisdom to unlearn. *What mental constructs do you need to let go of?*

169. **Start teaching earlier.** Stop waiting for permission to be a teacher. You don't need grey hair. You don't need a degree. You don't need a chalkboard. And you don't need a tweed blazer with patches on the elbows. A teacher is someone who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way. Period. A teacher is someone who has the willingness and ability to share what he's learned from what he's done. Period. What's more, teaching is an attractive role. It means authority, it commands credibility and it indicates expertise. The challenge is finding your classroom. Fortunately, the meaning of the word "classroom" word has evolved in the past few decades. Especially with the advent of numerous online portals, you now have thousands of potential classrooms at your fingertips, both online and offline. For example, your classroom might be lunch with your friends. It might be the break room at work. Or it might be the dinner table with your children. Online, your classroom might be on your blog. It might be your Facebook page. Or it might be your monthly teleseminar or webinar series. The bottom line is: There's no better way to learn something than to teach it to someone else. Do that every day and your wisdom factor will skyrocket. *What lesson plan are you preparing this week?*

170. **Stay passionate despite success.** Isn't it frustrating when the waitress stops caring about your table once you've gotten your food? As if that was the last thing you're going need until the check. *Humph.* That's what happen when you get complacent: Your customers get complaining. Lesson learned: Don't disappear once your people have been served. Make sure all the dots in the process are connected. Follow up, follow through and keep your eyes on the target – even after the shot's been fired. Because that's not the final point of action. In fact, there is no final point of action. In the same way that fashion never finishes – business never bails. You're always following through with something. Don't get so excited about the fact that you've delivered that you forget to ask people if they like what's inside the box. *How will success affect your frequency of follow through?*

171. **Stop parading your poverty.** Bitching to people about how hard it is, how much you despise something or how much farther you have to go isn't a merit badge. I don't care what your frat buddies say – it's not cool to hate your job. Don't get swept into the seductive undertow of using misery to get attention. Look. I know persistence is painful process. And I encourage using healthy methods for expressing your frustration. But throwing a pity party won't make the process any easier. No matter how many guests show up, no matter how cold the beer is. If you're going to vent, see if you can't do it without excessive ornamentation. *What pollution does your attitude introduce into the air?*

172. **Stop trying to eradicate feelings of inadequacy.** They won't go away. In fact, the more successful you become, the more those feelings will creep in. Fortunately, feeling like a fraud is one of the best indicators of your legitimacy. It means you're probably doing something right. It means you're risking. It means you're stretching. It means you're successful. It also means that you're not so arrogant as to assume that you've got it all figured out. Truth is: Feeling like a fraud is a right of passage. It's an inevitable piece of leadership landscape. And thankfully, it's an effective form of self-pressure to help you get over – and stay over – yourself. The secret is to offset these accepted feelings of inadequacy by building and nurturing your own self-worth. Even if it's as simple as constantly reminding yourself, "I am the person who can do this." Remember: If you don't feel like an imposter at least some of the time, you're probably not stretching enough. *Have you felt like an imposter yet today?*

173. **Submit to being stripped of your cynicism.** During the months leading up to my induction as the president of a struggling organization, my friend Bill interrupted my stream of complaints and asked, “Have you always been this cynical?” Ouch. Didn’t even realize I was coming off that way. But Bill was right: Cynicism was an outfit that didn’t look good on me. And his honest comment was precisely the kick in the pants I needed to strip myself of such negativity. From that moment on, I promised myself that I would challenge the currents that create negativity or risk condemning myself to perpetual frustration. And now, instead of being cynical, I’m aggressively skeptical. Huge difference. Cynicism, in the words of Henry Rollins, is intellectual cowardice of not having to deal with what is. Skepticism, on the other hand, is grounded in persistent objectivity and intelligent inquiry. Much better choice. Ultimately, people will notice – and be affected – the way you choose to shape your energy. Better watch what fumes you give off. *When you walk into a room, how does it change?*

174. **Summon massive, instant strength.** Announce to yourself that you are well equipped with sufficient internal assets to be successful. Try phrases like, “I trust my resources,” “I am richly supported,” “I am equal to this challenge.” To quote the aforementioned Eric Maisel again, “The resources that you’re trusting are internal – brainpower, heartpower, accumulated experience; external – people; even cosmic – mysterious forces. And they guarantee nothing, but they allow for the possibility that you can perform in a creative, centered way.” *How do you tap into your wellspring of inner strength?*

175. **Surround your dream with support structures.** Success never comes unassisted. That's why I have a team – not just one, but a team – of fifteen mentors. Each of them serves a unique purpose, and each of them I'm forever indebted to. My suggestion is: If you plan commit with both feet – be it to relationship, a business or a major life decision – don't even consider take another step until you have support flowing from many fountains. From friends to family to faith to mastermind groups to online message boards where you can safely and anonymously tell complete strangers how you really feel, I guarantee you'll need every tool in your arsenal. Because when you think about quitting (which you probably will) and when you get knocked on your ass (which you definitely will), you will need shoulders to cry on. The tricky part is, you never know how strong – or how weak – your support structure is until your world crumbles into a million bloody pieces. Don't wait to find out. *Who's got your back?*

176. **Surround yourself with human mirrors.** My support system is unheard of. From friends to family members to colleagues to mentors, the people who matter never fail to come through for me. And I feel incredibly fortunate to have them as an asset. Especially in those moments where I'm having a hard time trusting myself. They serve as human mirrors. Lesson learned: The best way to trust yourself is to keep the company people who reflect the best, highest version of yourself. That means: People who will make you feel heard. People who will reflect your reality. And most importantly, people who will tell you when you're off your tree. Think of these individuals as your source of sobriety, deriving from the French *sobriété*, which means, "steadiness." That's the sort of stillness required to help you listen to your own voice. Remember: Life's short to surround yourself with people that don't challenge and inspire you. *Are you still convinced that success comes unassisted?*

177. **Surround yourself with persisters.** Their enthusiasm will infect you. Their action will motivate you. And their velocity will inspire you. Here, try this experiment. Think about the five people you spend the most time with. On a scale of 1-10, estimate how well each person personifies stick-to-itiveness. Then, grab a calculator and take the average of those five scores. Ultimately, you'll develop a realistic reflection of your own level of commitment; since you're nothing but the average of the five people you spend the most time with. And if you're not thrilled with the score, maybe it's time to rearrange your relationship priorities. Remember: Life's too short to surround yourself with people who don't challenge and inspire you. *Who inspires your persistence and determination?*

178. **Sustain a deliberate commitment practice.** Before he sailed the ocean blue, Columbus had to make a fifteen-year long sales pitch to Ferdinand & Isabella. Can you imagine being that patient? That persistent? There's a man on a mission of cosmic significance. If that's not commitment, I don't know what is. And if you want to mirror that same level of commitment for the people who matter most, try this: Activate a firm sequence of consistent, similar actions. Do this, and your life will become a constant demonstration. Do this, and your commitment will be perceived as unquestionable. Remember: Consistency isn't an accident. Sometimes the easiest way to blow people away is to refuse to go away. *Will you be the last man to abandon the hill?*

179. **Sweep your fire radar.** Have you ever gone through a “non-flammable” period in your life? Where you felt stuck, uninspired and stalemated? *I know I have.* And I remember when I sought counsel from my friend Dixie Dynamite. (With a name like that, I figured she could help.) Predictably, her response gave me chills: “Scott, if your soul was truly ignited, you would have noticed the flame.” *Damn it. Guess my fire is out,* I thought. Fortunately, Dixie gave me the antidote. “If your flame is out, think back to the last time it burned brightly. What was happening? Who was around? How did you feel?” This exercise raises your awareness and makes you more available to future flames. Try it. *How sharp is your fire awareness?*

180. **Take a bite out of reality.** Choosing not to believe in the devil won't protect you from him. Take it from a guy who's been mocked pretty much every day of his life for the past decade: Ridicule is rite of passage. It comes with the territory of being successful. And it should be attended to with love, gratitude and respect. Here's how: First, consider it an honor to be criticized. Second, you're nobody until somebody hates you. Third, anything worth doing is worth being attacked for. Fourth, if your dream isn't being attacked, it isn't big enough. Fifth, if everybody loves your work, you're doing something wrong. And sixth, if nobody hates your work, you're not being honest enough. Once you wrap your head around those realities – and once you make peace with the war against your success – it's amazing how free you become. Remember: The more successful you become, the more torpedoes will be shot at you. But being attacked is a sign that you are important enough to be a target. *Will you accept the bullets as the price of winning?*

181. **Take a tip from the terrorists.** You've got to hand it to those suicide bombers: They sure are committed. Too bad their efforts can't be redirected into something that doesn't murder thousands innocent people. Oh well. Lesson learned: Commitment is a neutral article. Like good tofu, commitment takes on the flavor of whatever sauce it's immersed in. This is a helpful analogy to keep in mind as you communicate that you're fully committed to the people who matter. Because if the cause you're committed to is rooted in dishonesty, disrespect or depravity, all the commitment in the world won't be able to stop you from hurting people. Including yourself. Commitment becomes a detriment when values it's in direct alignment with are rooted in evil. *How are you laying an ethical foundation that builds your commitment?*

182. **Take advantage of unlimited and instant access.** Contrary to popular belief, the Internet *does* serve a purpose besides pornography and online gambling. I'm talking about the democratization of information. The fact that you can find things out that there's no possible way you could have known at your age is a beautiful thing. Imagine: Past generations actually had to wait around until they experienced things to learn them. Ha! You can speed up your learning curve dramatically simply by becoming an avid researcher. And although nothing can replace direct, real experience, the web is a nice placeholder. My only caveat is to triangulate your research. To validate every fact from three credible sources. This helps protect yourself from the worst part about the Internet: Everybody has a voice. And some of those voices smell like farts. Be careful whom you listen to. *What have you researched this week?*

183. **Take seriously the things that matter.** If you want people twice your age to take you seriously, the first step is to *stop* taking yourself so seriously. Obviously, not at the expense of respect or professionalism. Becoming a poster boy for apathy rarely gets you anywhere. Instead, the secret is pinpointing the non-negotiable values in your life that *are* worth taking seriously – health, job, career, family, growth, honesty, whatever – then making sure your behavior reinforces that constitution. That’s what people notice. That’s what people remember. That’s what people respect. Someone with enough strength to be simultaneously self-effacing and self-confident. And admittedly, as a young professional, this is a difficult balance to strike. When you’re working tirelessly to make a name for yourself, it’s easy to get snared into the seductive trap of self-importance. Ultimately, if you truly want people to take you seriously, don’t just get over yourself – stay over yourself. *How are you educating yourself in the language of humility?*

184. **Take the longcut. Commitment is a constitutional core value.** And the capacity to sustain it over a long period of time is not something you'll learn from a book. Or a weekend seminar. Or a membership website. It's cultivated by surrounding yourself with people who are commitment personified, listening to the music of their lives – then replaying that music over and over until you know every word, every note and every beat by heart. Then, over time, allowing that music to profoundly penetrate you – down to the core – and making a conscious decision (not a choice, but a decision) that commitment is something you're going to commit to. And that commitment is something that matters to you. Otherwise you're just committed – you're just interested. And your efforts to blow people away will be filled with nothing but hot air. Like my friend Kristy writes in *Grounded Optimism*, “The fastest and most habit-forming route is to make something more meaningful to you.” Remember: Commitment isn't something you can game. It takes time. It takes work. And it takes the deepest parts of you. *How are you laying a foundation that builds commitment?*

185. **Telling the story isn't enough.** Storytelling is a pull strategy, but only if you understand the larger picture. In the book *The Story Factor*, Annette Simmons says it best, "You are a story to everyone you meet; but don't just tell it, demonstrate it." The secret is, you have to do so both online and off. Otherwise you're just winking in the dark. One way I help my clients extend the influence of their story into the marketplace is by creating customized identity collages, or brandtags. These limited edition artifacts memorialize their story in striking way that invites the customers, employees and partners to join the brand – not just buy it. What's more, the brandtags are given as unique, memorable and spreadable gifts that create an emotional connection that deepens over time. That way, once the art piece is hung, it functions as a social object. And this combination of marketing, art and leadership immediately increases the level of organic, human and authentic conversations about the brand. Remember: Your story can't be a factor if nobody retells it. *What artifact are you using to make yours hang on the wall forever?*

186. **The fence is there for a reason.** It's there to test your commitment. It's there to show you how badly you want something. It's there to help you push off and move toward your dream. Throw your heart over it. Because even if you rip your shirt, scratch your chest and bruise your ass on the way down, commitment is the reservoir of momentum that will move you forward.

187. **The road to mastery is marked by periods of minimal progress.** The world is not arranging itself for your convenience. Nor is the world is waiting breathlessly to hear what you have to say. So, enjoy your plateaus. Celebrate small gains. Run in place today to cross the finish line tomorrow. That's the level of patience required to make a name for yourself. *How long are you willing to do it before the right people notice?*

188. **The world is your mentor.** There's a phenomenally simple book by Mike Hernacki called *The Ultimate Secret to Getting Absolutely Everything You Want*. It can be summarized in one sentence: You have to be willing to do whatever it takes. *Whatever. It. Takes.* The challenge, it will be different for everybody, depending on what you're diving into. My suggestion: Find twenty people who have jumped off the same cliff you have. Email them. Briefly introduce yourself. Tell them you're a fan of their work. Tell them you've decided to jump. And tell them you're willing to do whatever it takes to become the walking execution of your vision. Then, ask them if they'd be willing to offer themselves – in any capacity – as a resource for your success. Not everyone will respond. But the ones who do – the ones who see something in you that someone once saw in them – will be happy to oblige. *How many mentors do you have?*

189. **Try not caring in small doses.** There's nothing more liberating saying, "Ah screw it!" – and not feeling guilty afterward. That's the cool thing about reckless abandon, says Seth Godin: "There is always time to be sensible later." My suggestion: Practice a little selective indifference. It's good for the soul. And I don't mean blow your life savings at the casino or get pissed at the pub and drive home recklessly. Not caring only works when you do so in a way that doesn't disrespect or hurt people. Look: You've been through hell – you deserve this. Find safe places to not care. *Are you willing to temporarily become selectively indifferent?*

190. **Tune into their frequency.** I once asked my fourteen-year-old cousin to email me the name of a particular video game he mentioned. His response: “Email? That takes forever!” I couldn’t believe my ears. But it was a helpful lesson, because the bottom line was: People under eighteen don’t email. Ever. They communicate via text, instant message or social media. As such, before sending your next message, consider how people prefer to hear. Respond to the idiosyncratic needs of each person. Otherwise, if you force everyone to conform to the your communication style, you run the risk of losing people who matter most. Remember: And any number multiplied by zero is still zero. It’s not that they don’t like you – it’s that you’re not speaking on their frequency. *Are you trying to reach people with outdated technology?*

191. **Uncertainty is an asset.** Certainty is highly overrated. Personally, I love not knowing. It inspires the hell out of me. In my experience, when I attend to life wherever it moves, and when I leave room for the unexpected, everywhere I end up is beautiful. That's the key: You risk rejection by exploring new worlds. Otherwise you court acceptance by following explored paths. Blech. I suppose it all depends on how directionless you can afford to be. And I respect your life situation, as I'm sure it differs from my own. I think that's the biggest challenge of following the path of your heart: It's rarely well lit. And everybody is afraid of the dark – everybody. My suggestion: Instead of being stopped by not knowing how, try being sparked by knowing why. With purpose as your baseline, you'll be able to gather enough momentum to sustain your efforts until how comes your way. Look: Life is boring when you know all the answers. Ambiguity is an exhilarating dance. Take its hand and spin it like a prom date. *Are you willing to tear yourself away from the safe harbor of certainty?*

192. **Unmute yourself.** If you don't have a voice, you can't create value. Period. Here's a collection of ways to amplify it. First, learn think on paper. Spend time each day puking, clarifying and classifying your thoughts. You don't have to be good – you just have to be willing. And all you need is a blank page and an open mind. Second, think of yourself as a translator. Forgetting about finding information, focus on interpretation. Because if you can translate better than anyone, your voice will be heard. Third, occupy multiple outlets. Use digital tools to give your voice widening access. At the same time, focus less on the tools you're using to get the word out and more on the word you're trying to get out. Fourth, place yourself in opposition to conventional wisdom. If there's an opinion you're afraid to have, share it anyway. After all, the voice without venturesomeness is never heard. And if you keep saying, "I can't say this," you're never going to say anything worth repeating. Lastly, get people to follow your thinking – not just your profile. Create a listening platform that enables an ongoing conversation to engage the people who matter most. Remember: Volume is the vehicle of being heard. Be prodigious or be ignored. *What did you publish this week?*

193. **Use persistence as your principle instrument.** Speaking of hardship, check out what my friend Chris wrote in a brilliant blog post: “The difference makers aren’t the people who are indifferent to what the crowd does or thinks – but the people that create the world and mold it regardless of resistance. People that ignore the persistent tether of the mediocre and don’t brag about seventy hour weeks, but brag about how much of their mind, soul and spirit they engaged to solve a problem that counts.” Keep in mind, however, that success never comes unassisted. Ever. And if you want to make your mark on the world, you better be sure your support system is in tact while you persist. Because whether it’s friends, family, faith, colleagues, online communities – or a combination thereof – you will need people to turn to. And you will need to get comfortable asking for help. Stick-to-itiveness can get pretty bloody. *Do you value spontaneity over itinerary?*

194. **Usefulness trumps innovation.** Creating something that nobody's ever seen before makes you fresh. But creating something that simplifies people's lives makes you a factor. In the words of software entrepreneur Jason Fried, "If all you bring to the marketplace is cool, your product will never last. Useful, on the other hand, never wears off." The secret is to make sure that usefulness has a palpable presence in your work. Consider asking yourself these questions: Are you making something useful, or just making something? Are you solving a problem that nobody cares about? If your brand vanished tomorrow, how many people would experience withdrawal symptoms? Are you giving people what they need, or superimposing onto people what you think they should want? Or, if all else fails, just ask people. They'll tell you exactly how you can become more useful to them. And all you have to do is listen. Remember: If your work doesn't solve a real problem for the world, you're just doing something cool. *Have you hit your quota of usefulness this month?*

195. **Victory trumps winning.** Wayne Gretzky holds the world record for most goals scored. That's an example of a win – because it makes him look good. Interestingly, Gretzky also holds the record for the most assists. That's an example of a victory – because it makes his teammates look good. See the difference? That's what young professional need to remember: Making a name for yourself means helping others do the same. It's about being a stand for other people's greatness. Creating an atmosphere where they can shine. My suggestion: Step back from center stage. Stop trying to be the life of the party and start bringing other people to life at the party. After all, it's not who you know – it's whose life is better because they know you. And that doesn't mean stop winning; it means help others achieve victory just as often. You will become a voice worth listening to. *How do people experience themselves in a relation to you?*

196. **Wear your commitment like an iron skin.** As a Gen-Xer, I come from a commitment-averse generation. Here's why: Because of our instant gratification culture, we're impatient. Because of our privileged upbringing, we developed a mediocre work ethic. Because of our self-reliant, entrepreneurial bent, we don't offer loyalty easily. Because of our abundance of choices, we're quick to quit and pursue something better. No wonder we can't stick with anything for very long. From college majors to new jobs to romantic relationships, stick-to-itiveness isn't exactly our forte. For that reason, stick-to-itiveness is a non-negotiable pre-requisite for being taken seriously. What's more, commitment isn't something you do – it's something you are. You don't need to get a nametag tattooed on your chest like I did. But you do need to memorialize your commitment and stand proud to the general gaze of the world. That's the tricky part. That whole "every day" thing. Because while it takes guts to stick yourself out there – it takes gusto to keep yourself out there. *How do you wear your commitment?*

197. **You don't have to react to every attention magnet.** Saying no doesn't make you snobby; it makes you discerning. Just because somebody wants to arrange a meeting with you so can he can pick your brain for two hours – and, ultimately, take no action on the advice you give him – doesn't mean you should feel obligated accept the invite. And certainly, there will always be incidents when making yourself available as a resource is a generous, worthwhile endeavor. Personally, I do this on a regular basis as a way to pay forward the help I once received. But you're not a lunch whore. And your time isn't just valuable – it's billable. Besides, in order to be fair to everybody, if you said yes to one person, you would have to say yes to all of them. And that would result in you working a hundred hours a week. Look: Nobody likes to be rejected, and nobody likes rejecting. But you can't let the undertow of social guilt whisk you away into an endless spiral of unnecessary obligations you clearly loathe. Otherwise you'll wind up interacting with people in a false performance mode, which is actually worse than not being there at all. *Who is helping you build a future that you're going to feel obligated to be a part of?*

198. **You will rise to eminence through ambition, toil and blood.** But it has to be your blood. Don't expect to succeed as a leader if you plan to play pitch-perfect cover versions of the previous leader's hit single. Instead, throw your hat into the ring. Stop depending on time to bring change. Take control of the clock, roundhouse kick the doors of opportunity open and make something different happen. That's the approach I took in my professional association last year. As a new, young board, we were tired of waiting for permission (from people who didn't even matter anyway) to try something completely new. Eventually, I just got pissed off and said, "You know what? Screw it. Let's just implement the radical change and see what happens. We have so little lose that it would be dumb (not) to shift our approach." To our delight – and to the delight of our members – it worked. Our new programming schedule and restructured meeting agenda blew everyone away. Even if that meant a few of us on the leadership team had to bleed. Hey, it's not called the razor's edge for nothing. Ultimately, I learned that if you take strategic risks while still respecting organizational tradition, you don't end up making stupid gambles. As long as you remember: There are no cover bands in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. *Are you the echo or the origin?*

199. **You're never unpartnered.** Although not everybody wants you to succeed, success never comes unassisted. That's the cool thing about commitment: Once you stop dragging your feet and dive into what matters, the world begins to yes to you. That's what happens when you put yourself in the way of success and advance in the direction of your dreams: Eventually they will have no choice but to come true. Providence will move to orchestrate the ideal conditions for you to win. As Paula Coelho wrote in *The Alchemist*, "If you follow your dream – your personal legend – all the world will conspire to help you." When this happens, it's almost spooky. In fact, I remember spotting this trend when I first jumped. Help came out of nowhere. Opportunities presented themselves to me. And I was smart enough to leverage every opening the universe gave me. But, the door must be opened from the inside. And you have to be fueled from the heart – not for the wallet. Otherwise your misguided intention will fill the room like a garlic fart. Ultimately, if you want the world to say yes to you, you've got to sing the song that is natural for you to sing, in the way that is natural for you to sing it, and it in front of the audience that needs to hear it the most. *Are you paying homage to the voices that shaped you?*

200. **Your life is your preparation.** Readers often ask how long it takes me to write a book. I have two standard answers for this question, both of which annoy the hell out of most people. The first is my bakery metaphor: “Well, think of it this way: If the pie is five dollars – how much do the apples cost?” Exactly: You don’t know. And it’s impossible to tell because the source is so varied. That’s what writing a book is like: A million disparate bits and pieces that somehow come together as one. And I have no idea how long it takes, I’ll never have any idea how long it takes, and nor will I ever care. The second response is my philosophical answer: “Well, it takes my entire life to write one sentence, so, do the math.” Again, this annoys people because it’s not a straight answer. But that’s the thing about being a writer: My life is my preparation. Everything I’ve ever done since the day I was born has prepared me for this moment. Which is precisely why I never edit. Ever. Sure, I have a proofreader who checks for grammar and spelling and stupid mistakes. But outside of basic, mechanical modifications, I don’t edit, I don’t rewrite, I don’t do drafts and I don’t go back and revisit old work. I write things once, I write them in blood, and I publish them to the world with zero regret and infinite confidence. That’s why it causes me physical pain anytime someone tries to change my work. I’m like, “But it took my entire life to write that sentence!” William Burroughs was right: “Rewrites are a betrayal of your own thoughts.” The key is, this philosophy isn’t just about writing – it’s about life. And your level of self-belief. Just another example of what happens when you trust yourself. *What do you need to stop editing?*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Ginsberg is an author, speaker, consultant, mentor, publisher, award-winning blogger & one smoking hot piece of brain candy. He also wears a nametag 24-7. Even to bed.