

*THE FOLLOWING ARE SHORT EXCERPTS
FROM SELECT CHAPTERS. THE TABLE OF CONTENTS WINDOW
LISTS ALL CHAPTERS IN THIS VOLUME. ART CREATED BY ME.*

VOLUME ONE

THE ESSENTIAL

THE BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT THE
CHALLENGING PURSUIT OF
PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FULFILLMENT



THE BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT

It all Begins and Ends with Health



Throughout life, we all can become wrapped up in the demands, dramas, and delights of family, friends, school, and career. These external sources of joy, pain, struggle, and triumph can be so exciting or exhausting that it feels as if there's never enough time and energy to focus on the internal concerns of our physical, mental, and spiritual health.

THE BODY

Everyone has their own custom-designed bullshit to avoid letting go of the unhealthy habits that keep them from achieving a balanced life. My customized crap was rooted in the inability to imagine a future.

When contemplating the prospective length of my lifespan, I'd always found it bordering on the arrogant to just assume I'd live a long life. I simply didn't grant myself such a delusional extravagance—thanks to all the dangers and diseases that could find me down the road.

This inability to presume I'd be guaranteed my golden years enabled me to overindulge without having to worry about any long-term risks. As the years passed with a thrilling career and the best of friends, and I was still on planet earth and not buried in it, the furthest I dared go was to grudgingly consent to the *possibility* I might be around for a while.

Once I'd acknowledged my potential longevity, I had to decide what I was going to do about it. To accomplish the goal of a healthy lifestyle, the commitment to a healthy body was not enough. I would need to explore two more parts of myself to discover a path to balanced health. The first relied on the power of thought, and the second, on the power of belief.

THE MIND

About twenty years ago, my priority was to focus on my physical wellbeing. Yet, as the potential for cognitive decline looms from the onslaught of aging, I must master new tools to protect the power of my brain.

- Avoid smoking, drinking, and eating too much crap goes a long way to maintaining a clear head.
- Practice the physical disciplines of yoga and exercise to sharpen mental precision.
- Remember to take lots of deep breaths and drink lots of water to keep the brain oxygenated and hydrated—and the ideas flowing.
- Spend time with friends and family to bring the love and laughter that fills the head with happy and healing vibes.

I don't pressure myself to apply all these habits every day, as that would cause unrealistic expectations, unnecessary stress, and inevitable disappointment. But I do keep them *in mind* and follow as many as possible.

THE SPIRIT

Devoting time and effort toward the physical and mental aspects of my health wasn't enough to complete the plan to establish a lasting commitment to maintaining optimum health. It took a spiritual revelation to discover the single sentence that could serve me for the rest of my days.

*I want to feel as good as I can on my last day,
Whether I drop dead tomorrow or live to 100.*

This declaration of good health no matter how long I lived filled three essential needs. (1) I didn't have to presume I'd live a long life to make healthy choices. (2) I could no longer use the excuse of a potentially shortened lifespan to justify an unhealthy lifestyle. (3) I was taking responsibility for taking care of myself for the time I do have.

It's amazing that after all the discipline and effort I invested in protecting my body and brain, it still took the dreamer in me to discover the philosophical affirmation that would complete my approach to holistic health.

THE BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT EXPLORES:

- *Taking Responsibility for Your Health*
- *Having Gratitude for Your Healthcare Professionals*
- *The Clarity of Meditation*
- *The Honesty, Insight, and Action that Therapy Brings to Health*
- *Emotions as a Tool to Heal the Body*
- *Eating as a Spiritual Act*
- *Good Health as an Essential Support to Professional Prosperity*

THE BEST POLICY

*In Every Worthwhile Relationship,
Often One Quality is Valued Above All Others...*

Honesty.

Life delivers countless relationships with family, friends, lovers, classmates, and coworkers. These connections will come and go from childhood to adulthood, yet the one bond that will stick with you every day is *your relationship with the truth*.

Being honest is not about being right. Telling the truth is the ability to authentically express your emotions, opinions, and hopes regardless of the consequences.

Being honest does not require having all the answers. Often the most profound moments of being forthright rely on having the guts to admit when you're feeling confused, angry, scared, or any other troubling emotion—and then asking the questions to others *and to yourself* that will reveal the truth to enable the relationship or situation to move forward.

THE BEST POLICY EXPLORES:

- *What's the Definition of an Honest Person?*
- *The Healing Powers of Honesty*
- *Honesty and Success*
- *The Battle with the Truth*
- *What's the Definition of an Honest Person?*
- *The Complexity of Honesty*
- *The Brutality and Beauty of Honesty*
- *The Forgiveness of Honesty*
- *Surround Yourself with Honesty*
- *Honesty Is Found in the Mirror*

THE BRUTALITY AND BRITTLINESS OF BULLYING



In sixth grade during the 1970's, the jerks in our class treated one of the girls like a human toilet in which to dump their anger, sadness, and pain. I would watch her be reduced to tears at recess and get hassled on her walk home.

One day, as my classmate was being bullied, something snapped in me. I told the jerks to leave her alone. A teacher wrote a note to my parents about me trying to help my classmate. I think they felt more pride over that note than any academic accolade I achieved.

Although I feared there was a good chance that after I stood up for my classmate I'd be banished to *Loserville*, there was a deeper reason for defending her that transcended any possible demotion in my social standing.

I was once in her place...



“Matt Mahurin... Matt Ma-*URINE*!... Matt Ma-*PEE-PEE*!”

In third grade, once the first clever little shit made the connection between my last name and taking a piss, it was all over.

I was already a nerd—a member of that shunned club of misfits, eggheads, and dorks I had no choice but to join. No matter how cool I tried to be, my gawky attempts to fit in with the hip crowd only sealed my fate to *Geekdom*.

How I went from being bullied as *Matt Ma-pee-pee* to being voted *Most Likely to Succeed* out of 800 kids at high school graduation was a long and often painful journey. On my path to being free from the curse of being bullied, I believe my superior artistic ability served two healing purposes.

1. I took pride in my creative talents, which empowered me with a confidence that transcended many of my insecurities.
2. Over time, as my classmates saw how cool it was to be able to draw, I began to be treated with more respect, which healed the pain I endured from being bullied.

Whether it's finding that effortless charm, that killer sense of humor, or that kick-ass talent like being able to draw better than any kid in the whole school, we all have something special to offer that is all ours. And even though we might be on the receiving end of bullying, we must never give up on seeking out the friends and mentors who can help give us the courage to believe in our uniquely valuable self—and to trust the power of that uniqueness to overcome the often cruel and unfair rights of passage we must all survive on our path to healing and happiness.

After high school I had to decide on a career. Determined to become one of the top illustrators in the biz, such a challenging professional pursuit would demand fortitude and focus. I had no time to let anyone push me around.

Don't get me wrong, I'm still a nerd, but I am an *awesome* nerd.

THE BRUTALITY AND BRITTLINESS OF BULLYING EXPLORES:

- *Seeking Help from Others if You're Being Bullied*
- *Empathy as a Tool to Understand Bullying*
- *Connecting to the Root of Bullying Behavior*
- *There's Life Beyond Being Bullied*

THE COMPETITION

Once You Know the Players, It's Time to Get in the Game



Every worthy contender in a race can be counted on to do their best, yet a select group spearheading the surging mass of determined competitors is *The Lead Pack*—that elite breed who, through a rare amalgam of talent, training, and tenacity, seem to be running their own race.

Before you explore the thrill of first challenging and then prevailing over your competitors, be prepared for the times when you will not be the victor. As in a marathon, you must *take in stride* the inevitable obstacles and disappointments you'll encounter during the long and challenging journey through school, career, and life when others will win—even though you've given your all.

There's only room for one competitor to claim first place. This leaves each member of the race to claim their own *victory* if they can honestly declare they gave everything they had in their preparation and effort to compete. The contender who finishes last may be seen as the biggest loser, but if they ran their fastest time ever, would not that new personal best fall into their *win* column?

If all who enter the race join the collective spirit to push one another to do their best, no matter when they cross the finish line, everyone is a victor.

In the pursuits of business, finance, law, government, industry, entertainment, science, and the arts—from rookie to pro—the formidable opponents whose skill and stamina threaten your odds of winning, are in fact *your greatest motivators*—those talented and tireless competitors who are constantly upping the bar of success.

In my quest to win, I never want to hurt someone's feelings, but if it's between me and them, *the gloves will come off* as I shed any niceties that could imperil victory.

Many accomplished people attribute their success to the ability to see their competitors as the enemy. I've never felt the need to turn another talented and determined pro into a villain to give me an edge. To demonize another's will to win would betray my own passion to prevail. Respecting my opponents' skill and ambition *forces me to confront their true potential to beat me*, which only makes me better prepared to kick their ass, fair and square.

No matter the intimidation that can come when facing your competition, always be motivated, prepared, steadied, and heartened by the fact that as members of the previous generation of winners fade, quit, or die—you have given your all to be ready to step up to the starting line when that next open spot must be filled by the newest member of *The Lead Pack*.

THE COMPETITION EXPLORES:

- *The Love of Competition*
- *My Approach to Competition*
- *Overcoming the Intimidation of the Competition*
- *Sometimes Your Greatest Competition Is in the Mirror*
- *The Value of Competing*
- *Respecting, Appreciating, and Learning from Your Competitors*
- *Play the Part of the Winner*

FUCK LUCK

Other than this paragraph, the word, *luck* does not appear in the pages of this book. Not *lucky*, *luckiest*, *unlucky*, *bum luck*, *the best of luck*, *the luck of the draw*, or *dumb luck*.

I don't use it because I don't believe it exists.

What *does* exist is *You*.

And with *You*, come your strengths and weaknesses—a blend of insight and ignorance, joy and sadness, stamina and sloth, purpose and apathy, dread and hope. It is these positives and negatives woven within your character—not some *celestial role of the dice*—that will determine your future failures and successes.

Of course the bewildering forces of *randomness and unpredictability* figure into every equation of fortune and fate as you encounter the fluctuations of life and career that will bring both harmony and chaos. The key is to avoid being at the mercy of life's instability and volatility by developing the ability to rely on your talent, discipline, and optimism to prevail over the inevitable moments of the unexpected, the unwelcome, and the unknown.

The stronger your belief that you are the dealer of your cards and sealer of your fate, the deeper you will take the responsibility to gain the knowledge, skill, and energy to attain personal fulfillment and professional success.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF DISCIPLINE

Be it penning a persuasive letter, polishing off a daunting list, or probing the challenge of therapy, such crucial tasks command distinct and demanding expectations of mind, body, and spirit. Yet there is one quintessential practice to reaping the rewards from the wide range of life skills. *Discipline*.

To have discipline in pursuit of a personal or professional goal addresses the question, *What is the right thing to do?* Followed by determining the correct positive action to take—no matter how daring or dreary—to do *that right thing*.

To be successful is hard. If it were easy, everyone would be at the head of their class or top of their field. Having the discipline to prevail dwells in a healthy, purposeful, and optimistic sense of self. Having self-respect, self-confidence, and self-reliance through discipline leaves you no choice than to *do that right thing*.

I can't help but connect many of my most impressive displays of discipline to my deepest moments of doubt—pulling an all-nighter on a project devoid of joy, enduring the stress of disagreeing with a valued client, or finding the grace to admit when I'm wrong in my marriage. Those are the moments when I'm at my weakest, lowest, and most humbled—and must summon the effort, strategy, honesty, courage, and hope it takes to trust in my discipline to finish the job, take a stand, or say I'm sorry.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF DISCIPLINE EXPLORES:

- *Where Does Discipline Come From?*
- *How Does One Develop Discipline?*
- *What if You Lack Discipline?*
- *Discipline Is in the Here and Now*
- *Discipline and Joy*
- *Discipline and Therapy*
- *Discipline Keeps You Honest*
- *Discipline Is Decisive*

FAILURE, FAILURE, FAILURE, **FAILURE**,
FAILURE, FAILURE, **FAILURE**, **FAILURE**,
~~FAILURE~~, FAILURE, ~~FAILURE~~, FAILURE,
FAILURE, FAILURE, ~~FAILURE~~, FAILURE, FAILURE,
FAILURE, FAILURE, FAILURE, **FAILURE**,
FAILURE, FAILURE, FAILURE, **FAILURE**, FAILURE,
FAILURE, FAILURE, **FAILURE**, FAILURE, FAILURE,
FAILURE, FAILURE, FAILURE, FAILURE,
FAILURE, FAILURE, FAILURE, FAILURE

No matter the flair or force of the font, the combination of these seven letters is hard to look at—a woeful word dripping with disappointment and ripe for regret.

WHAT IS FAILURE?

A mistake?

A misjudgment?

A misunderstanding?

An opportunity?

When a project, relationship, or endeavor is botched, bungled, or blown, the quality of preparation, motivation, and execution of one's efforts will determine *the flavor of failure*. A shitty attitude and piss-poor plan will dispense a toxic brew of disappointment, while a sturdy attitude and bold strategy that simply falls short can offer a healing tonic of lessons learned.

FAILURE EXPLORES:

- *Failure Is Guaranteed, Success is Not*
- *Failure Is Exciting*
- *Failure Is Your Friend*
- *Failure Is Everywhere*
- *Overcoming the Fear of Failure*
- *Putting Failure in its Place*

SUKSESI, SUKCES, USPJEH, הַצְלָחָה, IMPUMELELO, BAŞARI, yCΠEX, ΕΠΙΤΥΧΙΑ, VELGENGNI, NASARA, ፍጥረት, SUKSES, सफल, LLWYDDIANT, ERFOLG, YCΠIX, ASEYORI, TAGUMPAY, SÈKMÈ, İGA NKE ỌMA, MENESTYS, ÚSPĚCH

There are about 7,000 languages in the world, and despite this impressive number of ways to say success, there are countless more ways to *be a success*. Unlike love, hate, sadness, and joy, success is not an emotion, yet *to feel successful* is as powerful as any matter of the heart.

The world needs successful people. *Lots of them.*

As the earth turns, life demands countless motivated and skilled souls who must be entrusted to contribute the experience and excellence to invent, build, heal, create, express, solve, teach, research, entertain, govern, invest, protect, and harvest the riches necessary for humanity to succeed.

We each must discover our own definition of success *if we dare*. To do whatever you must by finding the courage to ask yourself the question, What is *my* success? And then summon the even deeper courage to make the answer your *expedition to excellence*.

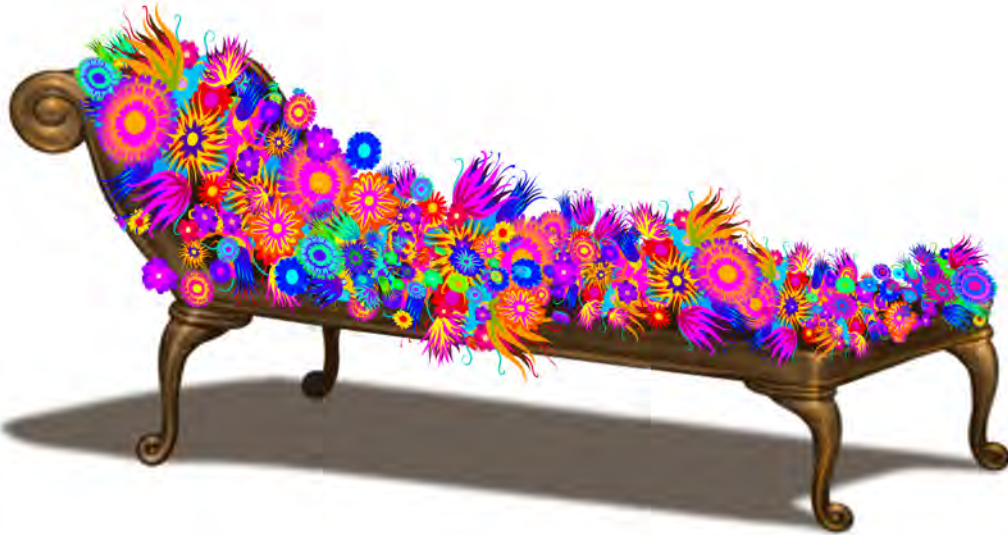
Success cannot be bought or taught. It goes beyond wanting, beyond planning, beyond hoping. The *need to succeed* is more of a hole that must be filled. A mystery that must be solved. A theory that must be proven. A fever that must be broken. Success is a dream that must be *lived*.

SUCCESS EXPLORES:

- *Success Is Shared*
- *Success Is Balance*
- *Success Is Scary*
- *Success Is Fun*
- *Success Is Power*
- *Success Is Worth It*
- *Success Is a Choice*

THE GROWTH OF THERAPY

*Accepting the Need and Value of Professional Help
to Face, Understand, and Heal Pain, Sadness, and Fear*



As a teenager, I'd tune in to a phone-in radio program that involved a therapist taking calls from listeners who wanted to quit their jobs, save their marriage, or handle their kids—yet lacked the clarity or courage to take action.

Whether sad, mad, or simply at the end of their rope, housewives, truck drivers, lawyers, and nurses expressed a universal need to ease their pain or gain the insight to move forward in their life.

I was fascinated by the intricacy and intensity of complete strangers' everyday struggles to seek understanding and healing. Although these therapy sessions were open to anyone with a radio, there was a kind of *clinical intimacy* between caller and therapist. This connection depended on the caller's willingness, and for some, their *eagerness* to reveal a deep personal trauma.

These revelations enabled the therapist to respond with observations and suggestions that could provide the caller with a new awareness of their struggle—which opened up a previously unexplored world of solutions.

Becoming emotionally invested in the predicaments of others from all kinds of upbringings and circumstances through these radio therapy sessions, opened my awareness to the unifying belief that no matter how diverse our differences, we are all woven together through the frayed yet enduring tapestry of life.

After revealing their problem and receiving the therapist's advice, the callers actually became empowered, focused, and hopeful. Hearing these transitions from struggle to strength, and from confusion to confidence, I realized there was this proven process of *therapy* that could help people help themselves.

No matter the topic at hand, the therapist commended callers for taking the first step, which often was simply getting up the guts to acknowledge their challenging issue.

I realized I had similar issues as some of the callers, and listening to these therapy sessions gave me practical insight into my own bullshit. Also, discovering there were people out there who had far bigger problems than me kept my troubles in perspective.

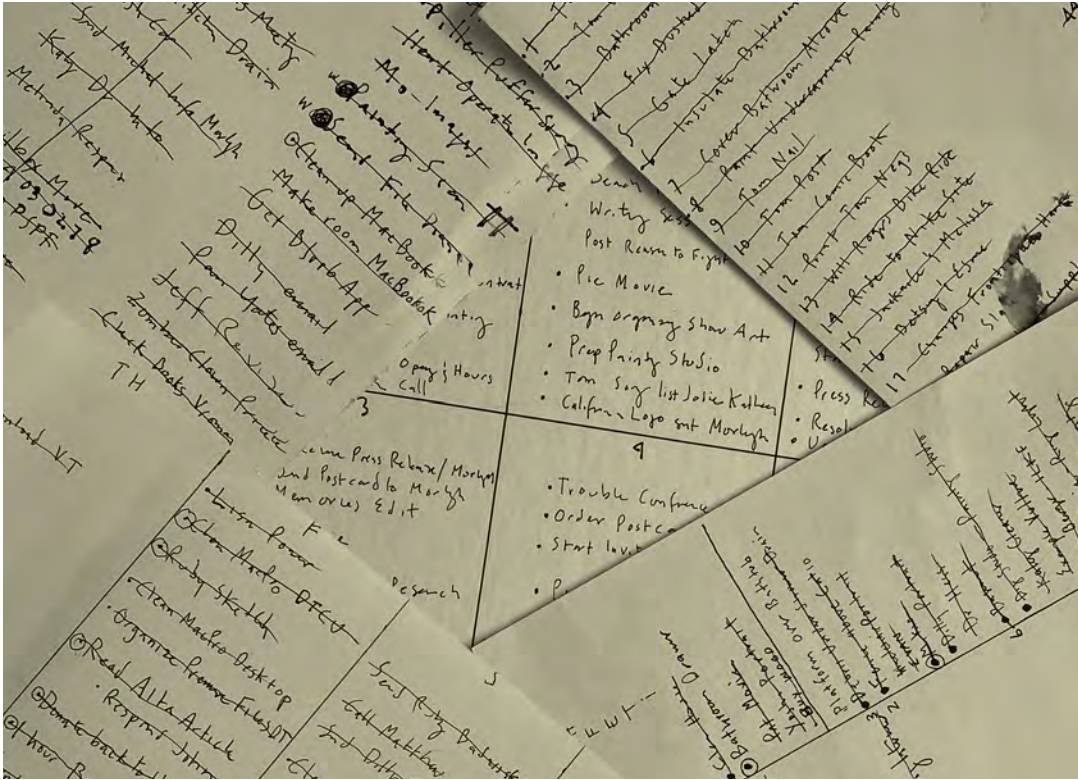
I'm grateful to have grown up around the process of healing the entirety of one's being, which fostered a healthy view of therapy—*especially considering how much I'd need it in order to keep my shit together.*

THE GROWTH OF THERAPY EXPLORES:

- *Truth and Therapy*
- *Therapy as a Life Tool*
- *Getting up the Courage to Get Help Through Therapy*
- *Believing Therapy can Work*
- *Therapy Is Knowledge*
- *My Journey through Therapy*
- *Therapy Is Empowering*

THE POWER OF THE LIST

Developing the Skill, Focus, and Guts to Organize a Collection of Tasks that Will Give You the Best Chance for Success



A pilot must sign off on a preflight checklist to ensure the safe arrival of a couple hundred souls. An astronaut must authenticate a series of countdown tasks before blasting to another planet—yet a trip to the corner grocery store can crash and burn without a shopping list.

As a professional artist, my own lists are as crucial to my success as my paintbrushes, cameras, and computers. My ability to cross an item off a list must match my most formidable creative talents.

A list is a plan.

A list is a partner.

A list is a *promise*.

How you make a list is *a reflection of your aspirations*. How you finish a list is *a reflection of your character*.

If you decide to make lists a part of your life and career, you'll be pledging to honor documents that will be relentless in declaring your commitment to being your most productive, fulfilled, and successful self.

On some days, you'll possess the focus, effort, and optimism to tackle a daunting list. On other days, when distraction, fatigue, and pessimism get the better of you, your list won't stand a chance. The frustration with such ups and downs may tempt you to abandon lists as a daily tool. During these bouts of doubt, remember making and completing a list is a skill that demands focus, commitment, *and practice*.

The potential value of a list dwells in *your state of mind* as you...

- Declare its *intention*.
- Demand its *execution*.
- Deliver its *completion*.

A LIST IS A LIVING THING

My lists are a part of me. They embody the responsibilities I expect to fulfill and the possibilities I hope to attain. If I were to save every list I've made, they would be a record of my imperfect yet ultimately successful effort to make the most of the time and opportunities I've been given.

THE POWER OF THE LIST EXPLORES:

- *The Mystical Force of the List*
- *A List Is a Contract with Yourself*
- *A List Is Private Property*
- *A List Is a Spiritual Exercise*
- *Your Lists Talk to You*
- *How to Make a List*
- *Handwritten List Vs. Digital List*
- *Lists for the Day, Week, Month, Year, and Beyond*

THE GRIND, GUTS, AND GLORY OF WORK



With so much that needs to get done in life, everyone has the duty to define what *work* means to them. Despite this diversity of definitions, there are four basic types of working.

1. Not Working.
2. Hardly Working.
3. Working Hard.
4. Working Too Hard.

Not Working means you're wealthy or lazy and so this chapter has little relevance on your everyday life of luxury or lethargy.

Hardly Working indicates that work is *just a job* to keep a roof over your head and stay out of trouble so that you don't end up in the poor house or the big house.

Working Hard is the sweet spot of effort and purpose that expands your expertise and deepens your contentment, while filling your soul with well-deserved enlightenment and pride that comes from being a productive and prosperous contributor to the greater good. Working Hard can also reflect the integrity and sacrifice of those who must toil in a back-breaking or mind-numbing job to provide for themselves, their family, or their community.

Working Too Hard is the sour spot of an obsessive grind that is powered by a desperate and destructive need for achievement or approval.

Which of these four variations of *work* honestly describes *your attitude* toward committing mind, body, and spirit to getting shit done?

The answer to this question becomes especially relevant when it reveals that one's ability to exert energy and sharpen strategy can be matched up with one's personal and professional goals.

Whether I'm nailing a deadline for a demanding client, mixing cement to support a crumbling wall, or uprooting a painful truth in a therapy session, the grit, guts, and glory of *a job well done* has given me my definition of work.

*Work is The Salve that Heals My Cosmic
and Earthly Wounds.*

YES & NO

Growing up, I'd always been led to believe the most powerful word in any language is *Yes*.

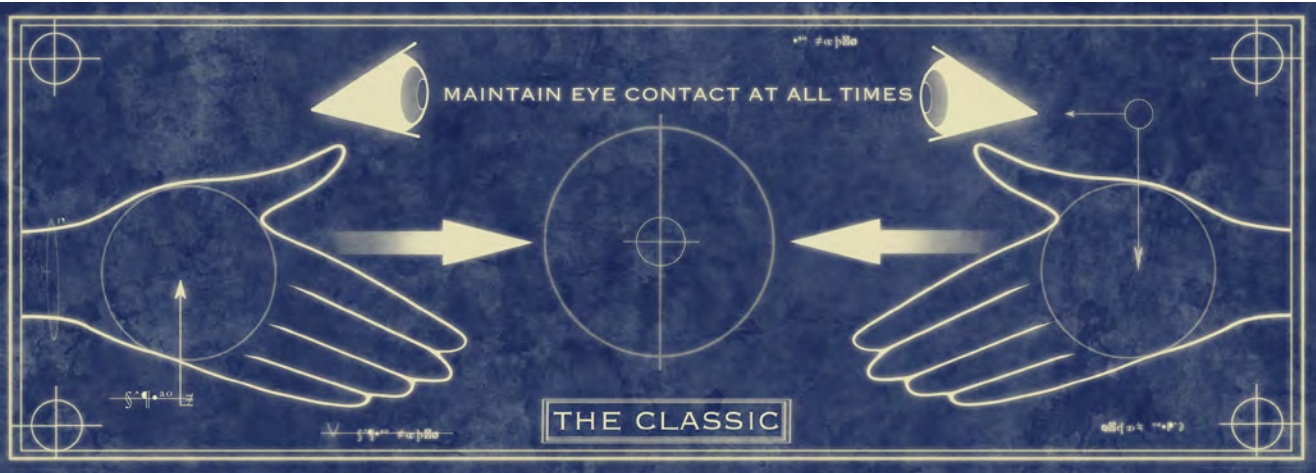
Despite my own trust in humanity's endless love affair with looking on the bright side, after a half-century of being under the societal spell of offering a *Yes* to keep others happy or keep myself out of trouble, I've discovered *The Power of No*—that monosyllabic *negativo*, that when delivered with forethought, is far more formidable than any flippant, slippery *Yes* which can be declared all too easily if one is eager to please—or scared shitless to say *No*.

Contrary to its often negative perception, a sincere and succinct *No*, wielded with forethought and grace, actually can be a strong contributor to the success of any goal.

- *No* can make you efficient by saving the time and stress that you would otherwise endure if you were to agree to take on a pursuit that isn't in your best interest.
- *No* can help you create healthy boundaries by stopping you from getting stuck in a predicament that can be emotionally disturbing or professionally damaging.
- *No* can be a sign of confidence through building your ability to survive the often uncomfortable consequences of saying *No*—and thereby acknowledging the positive results from standing your ground.
- *No* can be your last hope to save your ass by avoiding the temptation to be sucked into a lame project or doomed relationship that you eventually would have to end anyway.

Considering the countless endeavors you'll encounter in life that require you to deliver a *Yes* or a *No*, what matters is to develop an equal respect for the value of both words in their power to play a decisive role in a successful result.

THE HANDSHAKE LESSON



The world would be a far better place if no one ever had to be on the wrong end of *The Dead Fish Handshake*. This limp and wimpy effort—which leaves the recipient doubting the character of the perpetrator of this half-assed gesture—should be banished from the earth forever.

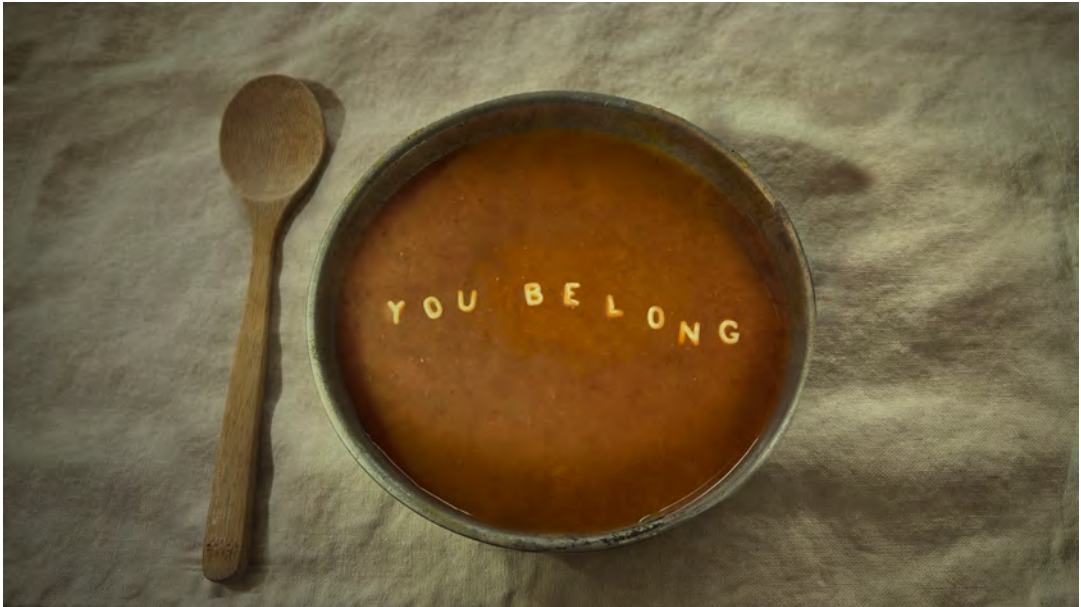
I've taken it upon myself to embark on a one-man crusade to rid the planet of this squishy scourge, *one handshake at a time*.

Sixty seconds is all it takes to demonstrate the low risk, high reward encounter through teaching the guilty party how to deliver a quality grip and shake (while throwing in direct eye contact to seal the deal) that's guaranteed to elevate the quality of every personal and professional greeting for the rest of their life.

For whatever part shyness or laziness may play in a bad handshake, I believe the cause of this slithery salutation is the untold number of people who were simply never taught how to shake hands. They may have been schooled in how to brush their teeth, make their bed, and clear their plate, but somehow this most basic of human interactions slipped and squirmed through the cracks of their formative years.

And don't think for a fucking second that even the hippest fist-bump or most excellent high-five is a worthy substitute for a simple, solid shake.

SOUP WITH BONO



In 1987 I was working in Dublin, Ireland, directing a music video for U2's *With or Without You*. One night while prepping the shoot, Bono asked me if I was hungry.

Next thing I knew I was being chauffeured in a convertible along the rugged Irish coast by one of the greatest front men in rock and roll history behind the wheel. As the streetlights blurred overhead, Bono held up a cassette tape and asked if I wanted to check out some tracks from the yet-to-be-released record, *The Joshua Tree*. How many fans get to be a crowd of one to hear their favorite band's latest album for the first time as the lead singer belts out the tunes?

As we motored north beneath the night sky, I closed my eyes and listened to the pounding waves on my left, and on my right, Bono singing along to his own future number-one album.

As we pulled up to Bono's place, before us loomed a lookout tower built in the 1800's that resembled the rook on a chessboard. Inside, as Bono poured us cold beer and hot soup, I caught sight of some stunning photographs on the stone walls. Bono shared that between recording and

touring, he and his wife, Ali, did charity work, and the photographs were their way of remembering the people they met and places they saw. I can't share the subject of the photographs, as they did this without telling a soul.

Here was a gazillionaire rock icon using his down time to help others without seeking press or praise in return. I was witnessing the early callings of what would become a one-man mission to save the world.

On the cab ride back to my hotel, as I looked out over Dublin Bay, I wondered, *How did I get here?* To be invited into Bono's home to share a meal—while also becoming enlightened to a fellow human's unselfish actions to help those less fortunate—was an awakening that went far beyond directing a music video. I was honored to witness the goals that one person could accomplish when they have *a global plan* for their life. Never in my wildest dreams as a kid drawing in my bedroom and making photographs in my garage could I have imagined such a mind-blowing adventure.

Earning Bono and the band's trust to help spread the message of their music to millions of fans through my skills and efforts empowered me with the confidence to envision what was possible in *my global plan*.

As a 27-year-old professional artist arriving at this moment of validation, I realized that if I was determined to fulfill my true potential, *there was no going back* to any past doubt or fear that could detour me from following my yet-to-be-devised plan.

Over the next 40 years, my decision *to never go back* in the quest to fulfill *my global plan* has now been proven time and again as I've ventured out into the world to capture photo essays in Haiti, Nicaragua, and Belfast; in Texas prisons, New York City food banks, and a Los Angeles AIDS hospice. I've had gallery shows in America, Italy and Japan, and have shown my films in London, Bermuda, and the Czech Republic. My books have been sold all over the world and my music videos have been viewed billions of times.

Along with my global plan of bringing awareness to others, I've had a hell of a lot of fun playing tennis with Peter Gabriel, swimming with Iggy Pop, smoking a cigar with Lou Reed, watching TV with Sting, cruising a shopping mall with David Byrne, and holding Ice-T's gun. I also got drunk with David Lee Roth, got stoned with David Lee Roth, and got stopped by armed border guards with David Lee Roth. I've been kissed by Bette Midler (on the cheek for a job well done), hugged by Tracy Chapman (for a job well done), been in Cher's bedroom (for a meeting), and in Joni Mitchell's hot tub (to film her performing). I've had breakfast with Alice in Chains, lunch with New Kids On the Block, and dinner with Metallica. And Tom Waits made me pizza.

Reflecting after four decades on that 27 year-old kid hanging out with Bono, I've come to believe I always knew the answer to the question, *How did I get here?*

I deserve to be here.

THE ANGER AND GRACE OF AGING

While entering my seventh decade, the recent event I'm about to share popped up out of nowhere to inform me that I'm now in a *sweet spot* of balancing on a peak of productivity and prosperity between the ascent of life and the descent to death. Keeping centered on the fulcrum of this existential teeter totter amongst the giggles and wailings of life's playground dares me to reveal musings on the inevitable passing of time that brings both the dreaded reckoning of my demise, and the deepest reverence for my creation.

TIME FOR A TRIM

While working on a short documentary about making a music video, I was shooting a sequence on how to get prepared to show up on a film set. Part of my ritual before heading to the shoot is getting a haircut. Lisa, who has been responsible for every haircut since before we were married, was giving me a trim under the shade of our oak trees.

Filming Lisa snipping and clipping, I talked to the camera about strapping on my game face in meeting the demands of the day. The deal for my free haircut is that I set up the chair, scissors, and comb. Lisa comes out, does the deed, and leaves. My job is clean-up.

As I whisked and chatted about the importance of feeling good and looking good on the job, my focus drifted from the challenges of the shoot day in front of me, to the graying tufts in front of me. As I continued sweeping up my fallen hair, fallen oak leaves were also being swept into the dustpan.

Watching the leaves piling up in the dustpan like the years piling up, it hit me that I too, was in the autumn of my earthly existence.

Although I still had all the ambition and purpose of my twenties, what I *did not* have in my sixties was the youthful expectation of a half-century to fulfill that ambition and purpose. This inescapable fact that time *will run out* can give rise to an anger that at first, seems like it has nowhere to go so it might as well just hang around for whatever numbers of days one has left. To be stuck on the sad path to mental decline and physical decrepitude, it's crucial to call upon moments of reflection that can temper the anguish of aging.

Sweeping up the last wisps of hair and leaves, I was filled with a mix of melancholy and gratitude. Melancholy that I had less and less time with every passing day, yet a far deeper gratitude for all the days I had been given.

My gratitude also confirmed the fact that despite all the mistakes I've made in my life, wasting time was *never* one of them. I'll be the first to admit that I've fucked-up more times than I can count, but I'll also be at the front of the line to claim I was *never* a fuck-up when it came to my determination to spend my days full of purpose, challenge, joy, and getting shit done. Even my worst moments have been repurposed into the insight and determination to learn from my failures and fears.

What started out as just another haircut, offered me a profound and *pivotal* moment—not only of reflection, but *redirection*. During the couple of minutes I'd spent filming a simple chore that unexpectedly brought up the feeling of entering the autumn of life, I also could sense the entire conceptual mission of my documentary changing direction from a short instructional video on filmmaking to a feature-length cinematic meditation on my creative journey through work and life.

One can spend untold hours of mental contemplations and physical contortions seeking the spiritual tools to manifest an enlightened appreciation for one's opportunity to exist. I think it's pretty cool that such profound information and inspiration came from a haircut.

THE LAST LESSON

One should be sharing the knowledge of their life's journey up until their dying day, and in fact, their very death should be the final lesson they teach.

- When a person who was skilled, purposeful, generous, loving, and optimistic passes away, they leave behind a legacy of accomplishment, inspiration, discipline, wisdom, and respect that can be studied, utilized, and evolved by the next generation to enhance their lives and careers.
- When someone of great value and talent passes away, seek knowledge from their life's work, not only as a quality human being, but also as a sometimes fucked-up and frail work-in-progress who was determined to pursue their aspirations by accepting their flaws and transcending their fears.
- To feel the grief and anger that comes with the loss of someone special, they're teaching us through processing the anguish of their parting how to cope with life's pain and to keep moving forward.
- For those who have been loved and who are now lost, although their earthly presence is gone forever, it must never be forgotten that their knowledge, awareness, and inspiration can be reborn by living on in those whom they've touched.

To accept the reality of your own death through the sense of loss that comes from the death of another can be a profound lesson in learning how to make sure you're staying true to your life's purpose.

It's pretty simple—the longer you live, the more you'll have failed, and the more opportunities you'll have had to learn from your mistakes to ultimately succeed, which creates greater opportunities to pass on the lasting lessons so others can succeed.