

50 Simple Ideas for Better



Health & Happiness

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50 Simple Ideas for Better Health & Happiness

Following are 50 simple ideas that you can start today to improve the quality of your health and happiness. The idea is not to try to do all of these at once. Read through the list, try out a few recommendations at a time, and see how they make you feel.

Practice them until they become a new habit and then you won't even have to think about doing them. Kind of like brushing your teeth, taking a shower, or having your morning cup of coffee.

If you find forming new habits to be challenging find an accountability partner. This can be your spouse or a friend. If neither fits the bill then find new friends. I'm serious. This might sound harsh but you are the average of who you hang out with. If all of your friends have unhealthy habits and no interest in changing them you will either stay where you are or struggle to get ahead.

Make accountability fun. Challenge your partner. Having someone you care about alongside you makes it easier to stick with a new practice when times get tough because you won't want to disappoint them.

When you start something new it requires a lot of brain power and it's harder to stick with it. As you progress and get better it becomes more instinctual and requires less effort to maintain.

Achieving good health is about more than what you feed yourself every day. Eating fresh, healthy food, drinking good water, and breathing clean air are all important for good health but so is happiness and feeding your mind healthy thoughts.

With that being said this book has recommendations for not only improving your body through healthy eating but also for improving your brain. In addition to physical health there is also intellectual health. A lot of us want six pack abs but how many work toward a six pack of the brain?

In reading this book and following some of the advice you are better aligning yourself with lifelong health. Be patient. Change does not happen overnight. This ebook is meant to kick start your journey and hopefully pique your interest in some of the topics.

I have dedicated a page to each recommendation and am only able to scratch the surface on most of them. So if you come across something new to you that you really like then I hope you will explore it further.

Start with a few recommendations and once you start noticing positive results, I am sure you will want to keep going. Refer back to it often and try new things when you are ready.

We all have this one life. Do what you can to live to your fullest potential. I hit some major road bumps in my health a few years back. I used a number of these recommendations to help regain my health and there are some new ones I have used more recently. This book sums up what I found to be most helpful.

[“Don't fall prey to the narrative philosophy which says that life will work out. You must manage your life for it to work out” – Peter Drucker.](#) This quote from management guru, Peter Drucker applies to your health too. You must manage your health for it to work out.

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1. Laugh

Laughter connects you with people. It's almost impossible to maintain any kind of distance or any sense of social hierarchy when you're just howling with laughter.

Laughter is a force for democracy — *John Cleese*

We all know the saying, "Laughter Is The Best Medicine". This is one of the easiest things we can do for better health. And it's fun and feels good!

Here are just a few of laughter's many benefits:

- **Boosts immunity** – it improves the body's natural defense mechanism by increasing the amount of immunoglobulin and T cells in the body
- **Lowers Stress** – it reduces the stress hormone cortisol and increases production of serotonin and endorphins making you happier as well
- **Decreases pain** – studies show that watching comedy films helps both children and adults to tolerate pain more easily
- **Builds resilience** – the ability to laugh when times get tough, is the best way to reduce stress and anxiety
- **Increases oxytocin** – oxytocin is a hormone that helps bond individuals and groups together and is sometimes called the love hormone. Positive benefits include reduced stress, a greater sense of attachment, improved social skills, anti-inflammatory, and better sleep
- **Make you look younger** – laughter increases blood flow around your face and this helps make you look younger and healthier

What would happen if there was a requirement for everyone to watch something comedic at least once a week? I guarantee we'd have a lot less crime in this world. So stop taking yourself so seriously all the time would you? 😊

Take some time today to:

- Watch a funny movie or tv show
- Go to youtube and type in comedy (You can filter for Short (< 4 minutes) if you're in a rush)
- Go to a comedy club
- Read a funny book
- Hang with funny people
- Play a funny joke, just as long as everyone can laugh in the end ;)
- Play charades
- Google funny phone [autocorrects](#)
- Google pictures of Walmart shoppers (please don't take this as an endorsement for Walmart)

2. Meditate

The more man meditates upon good thoughts, the better will be his world and the world at large – *Confucius*

There's an old Zen saying that goes something like, "you should sit in meditation every day for twenty minutes, unless you're too busy. Then you should sit for an hour."

Whether looking for a way to improve all around health and wellbeing or looking to get an edge in your career, here are a few reasons you may want to give meditation a try:

- Improved Neuroplasticity – better focus, better learning, better thinking
- Decreased Blood Pressure & Hypertension
- Increased Immunity
- Better Sleep
- Reduced Anxiety
- Increased production of DHEA, an anti-aging hormone
- Emotional Balance
- Anti-inflammatory

If you're new to meditation then start with just 2-5 minutes a day and gradually increase up to 20 minutes or longer if you prefer. Just close your eyes, breathe deep through your nose, and try to clear your mind or repeat a mantra such as Om or I change my thoughts, I change my world. There are also a number of guided meditations you can try, you can download the Headspace app on your phone, or you can join a class.

And if you're still not convinced, consider joining the ranks of some very successful folks. [Ray Dalio](#), the billionaire founder of Bridgewater Associates -- the [world's largest hedge fund firm](#) said "[Meditation more than anything in my life was the biggest ingredient of whatever success I've had.](#)" Lots of other successful people meditate like Oprah, Arianna Huffington, Russell Simmons, Russell Brand, Rupert Murdoch, and Hugh Jackman, to name just a few. Arianna even offers meditation classes for her staff.

Don't be hard on yourself. I have some really good days of meditation and some not so good days but I'm slowly getting better. There are days when I crave my meditation and this happens more and more as I get better. And sometimes if I'm really busy I'll just do 5 minutes.

So give meditation a try. Close your eyes, quiet your mind, breathe deep, become one with the universe, feel your stress melt away, your mind expand, and use your new found calm, clearheaded state to be your very best!

3. Practice Gratitude

Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance – *Eckhart Tolle*

I discovered gratitude when I was going through a tough time in my life. I was listening to all sorts of podcasts on my dreary commute to work, mainly about success and health. I forget the podcast and who it was but they talked about the power of gratitude and I decided to give it a try. I noticed improvements in my overall level of happiness pretty quickly and it has stuck with me to this day.

Gratitude is an emotion that relates to our ability to feel and express thankfulness and appreciation for what we have.

Begin each day writing down 3 or more things that you are grateful for. Gratitude is scientifically proven to improve physical health, well-being, sleep, and reduce stress. Research shows that [recording experiences](#) for which one is grateful for only two consecutive weeks has sustained positive effects for up to six months.

Here's one of my favorite things that I'm grateful for that I write and say daily. "I am grateful for my loving and supportive family and friends". When I write this I think of a specific family member or friend who has been there for me in the past and this solidifies the emotion.

Since I started practicing gratitude I have realized how grateful I am for a number of things that I used to take for granted. Things like always having food on my plate, running water, hot water, and trash removal.

Practicing gratitude only takes a few minutes. Sometimes I'll do it before bed at night too and think about some things that happened during the day that I was grateful for. It can be hearing from an old friend, beautiful weather, a great meal, a nice walk, a hug from my girlfriend, or just that I was in a great mood all day. If you ever find yourself unable to sleep think of all the things you are grateful for. Try to get to 100.

Martin Seligman, the father of positive psychology, has shown us through his research that cultivating personal attributes strengthens us during times of adversity and emotional turmoil and leads to greater happiness and resilience. Of all the attributes one can develop, gratitude is most strongly associated with mental health. Being grateful also impacts the overall experience of happiness, and these effects tend to be long-lasting.

We can even learn to find gratitude in negative events in our life as described by [James Altucher in Choose Yourself](#). For example, if you are stuck in traffic, there is an abundance of cars. Think of the human achievement that those cars represent and turn despair on its head. Take each obstacle and turn it into a moment where you can reflect on the bounty that is in your life.

So...what are you grateful for today??

4. Read

If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads
– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

According to [statisticbrain](#), 42% of people never read another book after graduating college and 80% of families did not buy a book this year.

I've always loved to read and for many years all I read was fiction. It was a great pastime and very relaxing and was a great way to take my mind off of things and escape.

Then a year or so back I discovered [Tai Lopez](#), who is known for reading a book a day. He talked about most people being interested in six pack abs and not enough people being interested in a six pack of the brain. That really resonated with me and began my journey of loving to learn new things and expanding to non-fiction books.

Tai talks about the power of books giving you Bill Gates as your business mentor, Warren Buffett as your investment advisor, and the Dalai Lama as your spiritual leader. If not for books this would be impossible for most of us. Thanks to books we have the ability to learn anything we could ever want. We can lose our job, money, house, but our knowledge can never be taken from us.

The day you expand your mind is the day you wake up to the possibilities of doing big things with your life – Tai Lopez.

So what does this have to do with health?

For one you can decrease your chance of getting Alzheimer's disease. This [study](#) showed that educational and occupational attainments have been found to be protective against the development of Alzheimer's disease. In the meantime you will have improved focus and concentration and improved memory function by giving your brain a workout.

You can also be more successful. In Warren Buffett's animated series for children, Secret Millionaires Club, he tells kids, "[The more you learn, the more you'll earn.](#)" This applies to adults as well.

As I mentioned before reading can help you relax, it can help you fall asleep when reading before bed, and it's contagious. So if you want your kids to read more set a good example and pick up a book.

Reading also gives you access to tons of leading health professionals. There can be a lot of conflicting information so a good place to start if you're unsure is by reading book reviews on Amazon.

What will you learn about next?

5. Walk

All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking – Friedrich Nietzsche

Walking is the foundation for good health. We all know we need to do more of it yet most of us don't do it enough. Walking is a common denominator of the [Blue Zones](#), where people live to be 100 at rates 10 times greater than in the U.S.

Walking is also one of the easiest ways to keep your butt nice and firm. If that's not reason enough for you to walk then here are a few more...

Benefits of Walking 30 Minutes a Day:

Reduces stress	Enhances wellbeing	Natural antidepressant
Great time to think	Boosts immune function	Counteracts sitting all day
When done after eating it lowers triglyceride levels	Lowers blood pressure	Boosts creativity
Tolerated by people with arthritis and may improve it	Your dog will totally love you even more	Adds 7 years to your life



6. Drink Spring or Filtered Water

Thousands have lived without love, not one without water – *W.H. Auden*

Everyone knows that water is essential to life. Most people know that our body is made up of 67% water. What fewer of us know is that 99% of the molecules in our body are water. This is because water molecules are so small relative to the other molecules in our body such as proteins, which are huge in comparison.

Water is central to everything the body does and every function of the cell.

Sadly many of us are dehydrated. Do you have any of these signs of dehydration?

- **Dry skin** – not having enough water in your body leads to dry skins. So instead of slathering on the lotion, pound a couple waters
- **Always hungry** – did you know that your body can't tell the difference between thirst and hunger? If you feel hungry all the time you may just be dehydrated. So instead of reaching for a snickers bar, drink a large glass of water
- **Headache** – our brain is surrounded by cerebral spinal fluid which happens to be 99.9% water and our brain is 80% water. When we are dehydrated our brain shrinks and pulls away from the skull triggering pain receptors surrounding your brain to give you a headache. Blood flow and oxygen to the brain are also reduced when dehydrated
- **Bad Breath** – Our saliva has antibacterial properties and if we don't have enough water in our body we can't produce saliva and this can cause bad breath

Avoid tap water because it has possible contaminants such as arsenic, prescription drugs, and chlorine and fluoride. Some reasons to be weary of municipal tap water:

- **Chlorine** is added to kill bad bacteria, which is a good thing, however when we drink chlorinated water it also kills the good bacteria in our gut. When water is disinfected with chlorine, Disinfection Byproducts (DBPs) are created that are much more dangerous than chlorine itself
- **Fluoride** is added to supposedly prevent cavities however it happens to be toxic to humans. The fluoride added to our water is a byproduct of the phosphate fertilizer industry
- **Arsenic** is carcinogenic and it's showing up in more and more drinking water. The [Natural Resources Defense Council estimates](#) that as many as 56 million Americans living in 25 states drink water with arsenic at unsafe levels
- **Rx Drugs** that are thrown away or flushed down the toilet often find their way into the water supply. You never know what drug can show up in your tap so do yourself a favor and avoid

Instead of drinking from the tap invest in a quality water filter for you and your family and you can all stay happily hydrated. Another option is to purchase reverse osmosis water in reusable BPA free jugs from your grocery store.

Try to avoid drinking bottled water all the time to prevent exposure to bisphenol-A (BPA) and reduce the environment impact from all those water bottles.

7. Relax

The only time I waste is time I spend doing something that, in my gut, I know I shouldn't. If I choose to spend time playing video games or sleeping in, then it's time well spent, because I chose to do it. I did it for a reason - to relax, to decompress or to feel good, and that was what I wanted to do – *Simon Sinek*

Life can be so hectic these days. Some days are a blur of go go go. We are constantly bombarded with emails, the buzzing of our phones, and the meetings never end. Our minds get frazzled and our productivity starts to decline. All this stress raises our cortisol creating inflammation in our bodies.

A good friend of mine shared this story with me recently and it really resonated.

The Weight of Everyday Stresses

A psychologist walked around a room while teaching stress management to an audience. As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected they'd be asked the "half empty or half full" question. Instead, with a smile on her face, she inquired: "How heavy is this glass of water?"

Answers called out ranged from 8 oz. to 20 oz.

She replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, it's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, my arm will feel numb and paralyzed. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn't change, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

She continued, "The stresses and worries in life are like that glass of water. Think about them for a while and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer and they begin to hurt. And if you think about them all day long, you will feel paralyzed – incapable of doing anything."

Remember to put the glass down.

Can you relate to this? Try to put the glass down and forget about your worries for just a few minutes each day. Ten minutes is great and you can get away with 5 minutes if that's all you can spare. Take that time to do a quick meditation, some deep breathing, visualizing a place you love, some stretching and maybe a down dog pose, or take a stroll around your floor or better yet get outside for a stroll around your building.

When we relax we put our bodies in a healing state. We decrease stress, anxiety, and pain and we can think clearer.

8. Eat Veggies

And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together – *Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels*

This one's simple and we all know it. [Research](#), published in the Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health showed that **those who ate seven or more servings of vegetables and fruits per day had a 42% lower risk of dying from any cause.**

Notice I say "eat veggies" in the title and not fruits and veggies. Most people will tell you to eat your fruits and veggies. While you do get some benefits from fruit you get way more from veggies. Most fruits are lower in nutrients than veggies and most fruits are high in fructose. If you want to have an optimally working brain you'll want to minimize fructose, even from fruit.

Try to stick to a 10 to 1 ratio of vegetables to fruits. You can get away with more fruits in the summer when they are in season and if you live in a warm climate you can get away with even more. The best fruits to eat are berries, coconut, avocado, olives, lemons, and limes.

The good news is most vegetables are low in calories so you can eat all you want without worry of gaining weight. To get the most bang for your buck, eat these vegetables that have the highest nutrient levels of vitamins, polyphenols, and flavonoids:

- Asparagus, Avocado (actually a fruit), Beet greens, Bok choy, Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Cauliflower, Celery, Chicory, Chinese cabbage, Chives, Collard greens, Cucumbers, Escarole, Fennel, Green and red cabbage, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce (romaine, red leaf, green leaf), Mustard greens, Endive, Olives (also a fruit), Onions, Parsley, Peppers (red, green, yellow and hot), Tomatoes, Turnips, Sea vegetables, Spinach, and Zucchini

These veggies tend to be higher in carbs so limit to a few times a week for optimal:

- Beets, Carrots, Eggplant, Jicama, and Winter squashes and eat Potatoes minimally

Try to eat **Organic/Local** when possible. The main benefit of organic is in reducing your exposure to toxic pesticides and antibiotic resistant bacteria. Sometimes local trumps organic. For example, unless you live in places like Mexico, Florida, or California, chances are your food traveled hundreds if not thousands of miles, taking days or more than a week, to make it to your table. Most plants lose their nutrient value without exposure to the sun so what do you think happens when produce is transported for days in a dark truck? So buy local when you can, even if the produce is lightly sprayed.

The [dirty dozen](#) is produce highest in pesticides and is best to eat organic, and the [clean 15](#) are lowest in pesticides so you have more leeway.

9. Eat Healthy Fats

Increase your consumption of healthful fats like extra virgin olive oil, avocado, grass-fed beef, wild fish, coconut oil, nuts and seeds. At the same time, keep in mind that modified fats like hydrogenated or trans fats are the worst choices for brain health

– *Dr. David Perlmutter*

Fat does not make you fat // Carbs (sugar, processed grain) makes you fat

There's a lot of confusion about what makes us fat and there's a lot of confusion about cholesterol being bad for us. This all started in the 50s when scientist, Ancel Keys, claimed that saturated fat caused heart disease. What many have been saying for years was reported by Time magazine in 2014: "[Scientists were wrong about saturated fats. They don't cause heart disease after all.](#)" Time's article went on to expose the bad science supporting this flawed thinking.

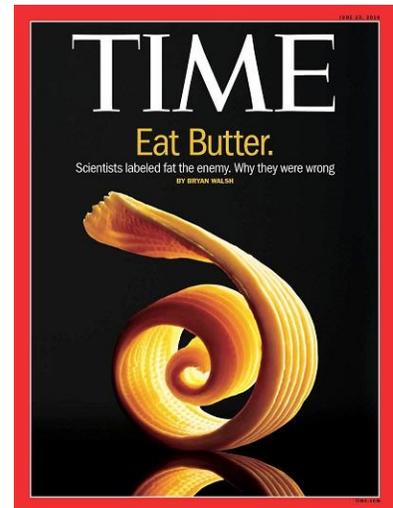
Americans got rid of saturate fats like butter and started using hydrogenated/trans fats (corn oil, soy oil, margarine), which are toxic to our brain. The food makers also took out real fat and replaced it with sugar, a lot of it from high fructose corn syrup, and heart disease and diabetes went through the roof.

Saturated fats serve important functions in our bodies such as building cell walls, mineral absorption, converting beta-carotene into vitamin A, and many others. Fat also contains more energy per gram than any other nutrient so it's a great energy source.

A [national study](#) from 2009 showed that nearly 75% of patients hospitalized for heart attacks had cholesterol levels that would indicate they were not at high risk for a cardiovascular event. The fact is, too little cholesterol increases cardiovascular disease and it's an essential component of cell membranes, it makes up 70% of the human brain, and is the major building block for every steroid hormone used by the brain and body.

Healthy Fats to consume – extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil, avocado oil, grass-fed butter, grass fed ghee, grass fed lard, avocado, almond milk, olives, nuts, seeds (flax, sunflower, pumpkin, sesame, chia, hemp)

Unhealthy Fats to avoid – hydrogenated/trans fats (corn oil, soy oil, margarine, shortening, vegetable spread) and these foods – french fries, fried chicken, and doughnuts - as well as cookies, pastries and crackers. All loaded with fake fats.



10. Eat Herbs

Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food – *Hippocrates*

Want to make your food healthier? Throw in some herbs and spices for great flavor with a bonus of adding a wide variety of antioxidants, minerals, and vitamins to help maximize the nutrient density of your meals. Adding herbs and spices are one of the best ways to upgrade your food.

Herbs and spices have some of the most potent antioxidant levels. For example on a per gram fresh weight basis, oregano has 4 times the antioxidant activity as blueberries.

Here are a few herbs and spices with great flavor and even better health benefits

- **Rosemary** – stimulates the immune system, improves digestion, increases circulation, boosts memory, anti-inflammatory, and is protective of eyesight
- **Oregano** – anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antibacterial, anti-fungal, and antioxidant
- **Basil** – anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, protects DNA, a great source of vitamin K, and supports cardiovascular health
- **Cilantro** – a great source of vitamin K, antioxidant, helps anxiety, lowers blood sugar, antifungal, and it binds to heavy metals helping the body to detox from them
- **Garlic** – one of the oldest remedies known to man. Anti-cancer, antibacterial, antiviral, kills h. pylori, kills the herpes virus, and supports cardiovascular health
- **Turmeric/Curcumin** – there are 1,500 published studies on benefits and it helps with 600 diseases, immune boosting, anti-inflammatory, found to be at least as effective as Prozac for depression, anti-cancer, and improves Alzheimer's disease. Consume with fat and black pepper for maximum absorption. Has been used in India for more than 5,000 years, which explains India having some of the lowest prevalence of Alzheimer's disease in the world
- **Honey** – this is a very complex food full of oligosaccharides which contain information to help populate our gut with beneficial bacteria. It also helps with pain, dermatitis, heals burns, is antibacterial, antifungal, protects against herpes, and Manuka honey kills MRSA. Try to get raw and ideally from someone local like at your farmer's market because 77% in standard grocery store has **zero** bee pollen
- **Cinnamon** – balances blood sugar, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial (protects against e. coli), immune boosting, supports digestion, helps prevent UTIs, and relieves menstrual pain
- **Cloves** – anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antioxidant (protects against environmental toxins), kills intestinal parasites, good for lungs, and may improve creativity and focus
- **Ginger** – anti-inflammatory, increases circulation, helps with nausea and indigestion, good for the gut, antioxidant, boosts immunity, encourages bile flow, and promotes cardiovascular health
- **Nutmeg** – antidepressant, helps with nausea, helps diarrhea, supports digestion, lowers blood pressure, increases circulation, and lowers LDL cholesterol
- **Peppermint** – good for digestion, helps IBS, inhibits the growth of bacteria and fungus, and relieves the symptoms of allergies and asthma

So go ahead, spice up your food. It will taste better and you'll be healthier for it!

11. Eat Seafood

Fish, to taste right, must swim three times - in water, in butter, and in wine
– *Polish proverb*

One of my favorite blogs is www.jackkruse.com. He's a neurosurgeon so he knows a thing or two about the human brain. Dr. Kruse strongly believes, and backs it up with extensive research, that we need a constant source of DHA and EPA to be present in **food and not supplement form** to support the metabolism and structure of the human brain.

DHA and EPA are both omega-3 fatty acids from seafood and are crucial nutritional factors lacking in a lot of our diets. In addition to being the major essential fatty acid constituent of the brain responsible for neural signaling, DHA is responsible for photoreception, our ability to see.

Omega-3 fortified foods seem to be popping up everywhere and are the latest "health" marketing scam to be aware of. Sorry but omega-3 fortified waffles aren't the same as eating seafood. Fortified omega-3s most often come from flaxseed, hempseed, or worse canola or soybean oil, most likely GMO sourced. Plant based omega-3s do not contain DHA or EPA and contain alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). Fish are great at converting ALA to DHA while us humans can only convert to a very limited degree.

DHA's essential role to human development is well document by [Dr. Michael Crawford](#), researcher at the Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition in London. His research shows that DHA has been the dominant fatty acid used in animal evolution for 600M years. He suggests that DHA was responsible for the existence of the nervous systems in the first place and that access to large quantities of seafood was what permitted the evolution of big brains in mankind's more recent ancestors. Dr. Crawford is another brain expert that recommends eating more fish.

In addition to DHA and EPA, seafood is one of the best sources of iodine, also critical for brain development. Seafood, especially shellfish, is a great source of Zinc, Selenium, Copper, Iron, and Vitamin B-12, all critical for an optimal brain. And salmon and sardines are one of the few food sources of vitamin D, critical for immunity and maintaining healthy weight and blood pressure.

The best seafood in terms of DHA and brain nutrient content (in order) is oysters, all other shellfish, then wild fish, preferably smaller to avoid higher mercury content. Sardines are one of the healthiest foods you can eat and are high in omega-3s, vitamin D, protein, Co Q-10, are low in mercury, and are sustainable and cheap.

Bottom Line: DHA is the number one nutrient in our brain and seafood is the best source of DHA. Seafood exceeds every other food in terms of nutrient density for building a human brain. So eat your fish! If you do supplement with fish oil, make sure it's high quality and store in the fridge to protect the DHA.

12. Limit Blue Light Exposure at Night

A man should look for what is, and not for what he thinks should be – Albert Einstein

This is a tough pill for many of us to swallow. When I first read this I didn't want to believe it. You mean being on my iPhone, computer, or watching tv at night is bad for me? You've got to be kidding me I thought. But the more I looked into this the more evidence I found showing the harmful effects of blue light.

Until the past hundred years or so the only light we saw at night was moonlight, candle light, fire light, and maybe some lightning. A hundred years is just a blip in the evolution of humans and not nearly enough time for us to adapt to this change. Today we are bombarded with blue light from our smart phones, tablets, PCs, TVs, and energy efficient light bulbs 24/7.

You need to look at your eye as a camera (to see) and a clock (to control our circadian rhythm or internal body clock). For any organism to function properly, it must control the timing of its biological functions. When your circadian rhythm is disrupted your sleeping, waking, hormonal, and digestive systems are thrown off. Circadian disruption has in turn been linked to a host of health problems, from cancer to diabetes, obesity and depression and specifically to [breast cancer in women](#) and [prostate cancer in men](#).

When your eye sees light at night, specifically blue light, it tells your body that it's daytime and melatonin production is suppressed. This is how blue light affects your sleep. Normally at night serotonin gets converted to melatonin and for this conversion to happen you need 4 hours of darkness and blue light stops this conversion.

[This study](#) emphasizes the risks of exposure to bright artificial light at night, and points to the possibility that preserving the integrity of the circadian melatonin signal could help prevent breast cancer.

And here's an excerpt from the U.S. government website on cancer about the role of [melatonin](#):
"Melatonin is involved in circadian rhythm regulation, sleep, hormonal expression of darkness, seasonal reproduction, retinal physiology, antioxidant free-radical scavenging, cardiovascular regulation, immune activity, cancer control, and lipid and glucose metabolism."

So melatonin is involved in a whole lot more than a good night's sleep. It has a number of neuro-protective effects and is protective against neurodegenerative disorders such as [Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease](#). Here are a few steps you can take to limit your blue light exposure and keep your circadian rhythm in check:

- Use [red lights](#) at night. Red light does not affect your circadian rhythm or suppress melatonin
- Get a little romantic and use candles at night
- Avoid looking at your phone, tablet, computer screen, tv, fluorescent, and led lights beginning two to three hours before bed
- If you work a night shift or use electronic devices at night, wear [blue-blocking glasses](#)
- Expose yourself to natural light during the day, which will boost your ability to sleep at night, as well as your mood and alertness during daylight

13. Grounding / Earthing

Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet, and the winds long to play with your hair – *Kahlil Gibran*

Ever notice how great you feel at the beach? Of course you feel better because you're relaxed and you're not at work but there's actually something more to it.

The earth is negatively charged and when we come in contact with it we receive electrons and it provides a reference point for all electrical activities of the body. When we accumulate too much positive charge we get inflammation. This may sound a little woo woo but there's a lot of documented science backing this up.

[Research](#) suggests that being disconnected from the earth may be a major contributor to physiological dysfunction and unwellness. Reconnection with the Earth's electrons has been found to promote intriguing physiological changes and subjective reports of well-being. Grounding refers to the discovery of benefits—including better sleep and reduced pain—from walking barefoot outside

Grounding/Earthing benefits include:

- **Reduce stress and improve sleep** – grounding increases parasympathetic nervous system activity and reduces sympathetic activity. The sympathetic nervous system controls the “flight or fight” response and amps up our cortisol. The parasympathetic nervous system controls the “rest and digest function” and restores the body to a state of calm
- **Anti-inflammatory** – contact with the earth stimulates the migration of charges to areas of acute or chronic inflammation and neutralize the positively charged free radicals that are the hallmark of chronic inflammation. Your body has the ability to conduct electrons from the earth to your feet and then to all parts of your body
- **Reset Your Circadian Rhythm** – the earth's diurnal electrical rhythms set the biological clocks for your hormones that regulate sleep and activity
- **Improved Circulation** – in order to keep your blood flowing efficiently, your blood cells need to move freely amongst each other. When your red blood cells are negatively charged, they repel each other and the greater their charge the greater they repel each other. The electrons you absorb from the earth increase the negative charge of your blood cells improving their flow
- **Reduce the Effects of Jetlag** – flying exposes you to high levels of EMFs from higher exposure to cosmic and solar radiation. These are energetic particles from space, mostly protons. In addition to cosmic radiation we are sometimes bombarded with wifi, now available on many flights. Because airplanes are naturally grounded, you can put your barefoot on the metal seat frame in front of you to ground when flying and then grounding when you get off the flight will help further mitigate your EMF exposure and reduce jetlag

So don't wait to go to the beach to ground. In addition to sand, walking barefoot on grass, concrete, or dirt achieves the same effect. You can also get [grounded footwear](#) or other [grounding products](#).

14. Play

A person's maturity consists in having found again the seriousness one had as a child, at play – *Frederic Nietzsche*

Watch a couple of kids playing and it's pretty obvious that there is little effort involved. They don't need instructions and they intuitively know what they enjoy and they do it. Somewhere along the way a lot of us forget to play. Maybe we were told it was unproductive or a big waste of time.

Luckily there are scientists in this world that have disproved such crazy notions. Dr. Stuart Brown, physician, psychiatrist, clinical researcher and founder of the [National Institute for Play](#) has concluded that play is no less important than oxygen. He defines Play as: **apparently purposeless activity, that's fun to do and is pleasurable**. It's one of the brain's best forms of exercises and opens it to new ideas.

Through his study of more than 8,000 people's play histories, from murderers to Nobel Prize winners, Brown reveals that play is an essential way humans learn to socialize. Work and play are mutually supportive and play increases efficiency and productivity (playful folks, he claims, are also healthier).

Play helps with social development and socialization, physical exercise, cognitive development, and learning social skills concerning fairness and cooperation. Play promotes true intellectual curiosity and has been shown to increase lifetime performance, just as adequate recess time leads to increased long term academic accomplishments for our children.

And we don't want to become one of those people. Play-less adults become stereotyped, inflexible, humorless, lose the capacity for optimism, and generally are quicker to react to stress with violence or depression than the adult whose play life persists.

Have fun and improve your health by finding the seriousness you had as a child at play:

- **Reminisce about your happiest and most memorable moments** – can you capture the emotion and visual memories of those moments and begin to connect again to what truly excites you in life? Generally, a person's purest emotional profile—temperament, talents, passions-- is reflected in positive play experiences from childhood. If you can understand your own emotional profile when it was in its purest form, you can begin to apply it to your adult life
- **Improve your relationships** – couples who play together, stay together. Close your eyes and think about what you used to do when you first met your partner. Probably a lot of fun things that were new and exciting for both of you. Still doing that now? If not plan a play date and do something fun and exciting together. Play is key to keeping your relationship strong and happy
- **Get the answers to important questions** – when we work too hard at something we often get fatigued, we get stuck, and our progress stalls. Learn to recognize when this happens. Give yourself a break from the problem at hand and do something fun that completely engages your mind. You might be amazed at the new insights you have!

In a world of major continuous change playful humans who roll with the punches and innovate through their play-inspired imaginations will better survive.

15. Detox – Home Cleaning Products

A Clean Place Is A Safe Place

There are 150 chemicals found in the home that are connected to allergies, birth defects, cancer and psychological disorders. What makes these so dangerous is that we can't see, smell or taste most of these, yet they can have a huge impact on our health.

From toilet bowl cleaners to laundry detergent, synthetic, chemical-based cleaners are an enormous source of health issues and environmental pollution. For example:

- **Tide** laundry detergent has high levels of 1,4-Dioxane, a carcinogen
- **Fabric softeners** are filled with synthetic fragrances that cause acute effects such as respiratory irritation, headaches and auto-immune reactions
- **Scented Soaps** – 95% of the chemicals used in fragrances are made from petroleum products. Many are known to cause cancer, birth defects, and damage to lungs, brain, and nerves

You have a few options if you want to avoid these toxic chemicals. One is to make your own cleaning products using a few basic ingredients: lemons, baking soda, white vinegar, borax, and cornstarch. Here's how you can use them on their own or you can combine for a variety of cleaning tasks:

- **Lemon** – a natural acid that is effective against most household bacteria
- **Baking Soda** – cleans and deodorizes
- **White Vinegar** – cuts grease, removes mildew, odors, some stains and removes wax build-up
- **Borax** – this is sodium borate. It cleans, deodorizes, disinfects, softens water, cleans wallpaper, and is good for cleaning painted walls and floors. It also kills many insects
- **Cornstarch** – can be used to clean windows, polish furniture, shampoo carpets and rugs

If DIY home cleaning products is not your thing, check out Eartheasy.com for a great selection of Non-toxic home cleaners.

For more reasons to rid your home of these toxic chemicals, check out this reference from the Environmental Working Group – [Cleaners Database Hall of Shame](#). What they have uncovered should alarm everyone, especially if you have small children crawling around your floors and touching everything.

“Green” and “Natural” are some of the most abused marketing terms and really don't mean a thing. For example one of the worst offenders here is Simple Green Concentrated All-Purpose Cleaner, labeled as non-toxic and biodegradable. Sounds pretty innocuous, right? It turns out it contains 2-butoxyethanol, a solvent that can be absorbed through the skin that damages red blood cells and irritates eyes.

I used my fair share of these products over the years before I knew better so do your homework if you want to avoid additional toxins in your home.

Another great resource is the [EWG guide to cleaners](#)

16. Detox – Personal Care Products

Some Things You Should D.I.Y.

Personal care products are manufactured with **10,500** unique chemical ingredients, some of which are known or suspected carcinogens, toxic to the reproductive system, or known to disrupt the endocrine (hormonal) system.

The scary thing is, no premarket safety testing is required for the industrial chemicals that go into our personal care products. Read this from the [Cosmetics Safety Q&A](#) on the FDA's website, **"...With the exception of color additives and a few prohibited ingredients, a cosmetic manufacturer may use almost any raw material as a cosmetic ingredient and market the product without an approval from FDA."**

Are you sure you want to trust the manufacturers of these products to look out for you? It was only recently that [Johnson & Johnson removed formaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane from their baby shampoo](#)

Start looking at your skin as a mouth. Your skin is your body's largest organ and whatever you put on your skin is absorbed into your body in a matter of minutes. According to the [CDC](#) more than 13 million workers in the US are potentially exposed to chemicals that can be absorbed through the skin. What about the everyday consumer applying their daily regimen of products?

Most of us wash our hair (though me not so much), wash with soap, brush our teeth, and apply deodorant daily with products containing several toxic ingredients which include:

- **Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS)** – found in shampoo, soap, and toothpaste and SLS causes these products to get all foamy. SLS is a surfactant (industrial strength detergent) that causes skin irritation and destroys the skin's good oils causing it to dry out
- **Parabens** – found in shampoo, conditioner, deodorants, antiperspirants, sunscreen, and makeup. These are preservatives that mimic estrogen. When absorbed through the skin parabens bind to the body's estrogen-receptors, where they can encourage breast cancer cell growth. A [2004 study](#) detected parabens in breast tumors
- **Propylene Glycol** - found in shampoo, cosmetic moisturizers, and used as a carrier for fragrance oils. This has been linked to contact dermatitis, kidney damage and liver abnormalities
- **Triclosan** – found in antibacterial soap, toothpaste, deodorant, and shampoo. It impairs muscle function and skeletal muscle contractility, may affect thyroid function, and may affect hormone regulation. It is also registered as a pesticide

This is a small sample of the chemicals found in our personal care products. Basically if you wouldn't eat it then don't put it on your skin because it ends up in your body all the same.

Either make your own products using things like coconut oil and essential oils or use the [Skin Deep database](#) on the Environment Working Group website for making safer buying decisions.

17. Breathe Deep

Breathe. Let go. And remind yourself that this very moment is the only one you know you have for sure – *Oprah Winfrey*

Proper breathing is one of the simplest ways to improve your health. We can live without food for 3 weeks or so. We can live without water for 5 days or so. But we can only go about 5 minutes without air.

Most of us think we know how to breathe automatically. When we pay attention we will often notice that we take shallow breaths. The fact is, the rhythm and the depth of your breath directly affects the state of your mind and the health of your body.

Here are just a few of the benefits of deep breathing:

- **Decrease Stress & Improve Digestion** – just the act of taking some deep breaths can reduce stress. Deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system (responsible for rest and digest). With less stress we create less inflammation in the body
- **Increase Awareness & Focus**– taking some deep breaths puts you in the present moment allowing you to connect with your intuition and have better focus
- **Reduce Tension** – deep breathing reduces tension in the neck and shoulders
- **Detoxify the body** – we release 70% of our toxins through proper breathing

Some deep breathing exercise for you to try:

- **Conscious Deep Breathing** – spend time each day consciously breathing. Breathe deeply into your abdomen, not just your chest. Breathe deep, slow, and rhythmic through your nose, not your mouth. Each breath should last three to four seconds breathing in and three to four seconds breathing out. Use your diaphragm for deep full breaths that fill your lungs. When you breathe deeply your diaphragm muscle pulls your lungs down, allowing them to fully expand and better circulate oxygen into your whole lung. Picture your lungs expanding with air as you breathe in.
- **4-7-8 Breathing** – I learned this method from Dr. Andrew Weil and have found it very helpful for staying calm and focused. To do 4-7-8 breathing:
 1. Sit up straight and place the tip of your tongue up against the back of your front teeth. Keep it there through the entire breathing process
 2. Breathe in silently through your nose to the count of four
 3. Hold your breath to the count of seven
 4. Exhale through your mouth to the count of eight, making an audible “woosh” sound
 5. That completes one full breath. Repeat the cycle for a total of four breaths

Make a conscious effort to focus on your breath for a part of each day and you can make it so that you regularly breathe deeper without having to think about it at all. The next time you are stuck in traffic or have an important presentation, try some deep breathing. You’ll be more chill and relaxed and will mentally be in a better place.

18. Eat Fermented Foods

All disease begins in the gut – Hippocrates

It's interesting that Hippocrates, the father of natural medicine, made this statement more than 3,000 years ago. We now have tons of research documenting the role a healthy gut has in good health. We also know that our gut is home to around 100 trillion bacteria that outnumber our cells by a factor of ten-to-one.

Most of us have heard of the [Human Genome Project](#), an international scientific research project with the goal of mapping all the genes of the human genome. This led to an extension of this project called the [Human Microbiome Project](#), a collection of all the microorganisms living in association with the human body to explore how changes in the microbiome are associated with health and conversely disease.

One of the best ways to feed our gut and keep it healthy is with fermented foods. Probiotics are another option however fermented foods are a superior source of probiotics. In fact, you can get 100 times the healthy bacteria from fermented foods that you can from taking a probiotic supplement.

In addition to providing healthy bacteria for your gut fermented foods aid in detoxification; heal and maintain the integrity of your gut lining; balance your body's pH; are natural antibiotics, antivirals, and antifungals; control inflammation; regulate immunity; and make nutrients from food easier to absorb.

Some great fermented foods are:

- **Sauerkraut** – make sure it has not been pasteurized. Look for one in the refrigerated section like [Bubbies](#)
- **Pickles** – same as sauerkraut. Avoid the mainstream brands that have been pasteurized. [Bubbies](#) is another good brand for these
- **Live-cultured yogurt** – beware of mainstream brands that are loaded with sugar, artificial colors and flavors, and emulsifiers. Stick with these recommendations from [The Cornucopia Institute](#)
- **Kefir** – just like yogurt watch out for cheap brands with sugar and fake stuff. I make my own using whole goat milk and [this starter](#) and it tastes amazing
- **Kombucha** – this is fermented black tea and there are tons of flavors available these days. See if you can find someone who makes it locally for the best quality. I have to admit the first time I had this I thought it was disgusting. Now I love it and it makes me feel great
- **Tempeh** – this is a meat substitute made from fermented soybeans. If you are a vegan/vegetarian this is a great source of B12. Make sure you buy organic
- [Kevita](#) – my favorite fermented drink, lots of flavors, now available in most grocery stores

Go easy on fermented foods when starting out. If you eat too much you can actually end up feeling worse. This is because an influx of good bacteria can kill bad bacteria, fungi, or viruses. When this happens they release toxins making your symptoms even worse. So start off slow and work your way up.

19. Volunteer for Those in Need

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much – Helen Keller

Help someone worse off than you. I guarantee this will make you feel better. And if you think you don't have enough time, then think again.

Cassie Mogilner, assistant professor of marketing at the Wharton School [wrote](#) in Harvard Business Review that, "[Spending time helping others leaves people feeling as if they have *more* time, not less](#)".

Her research tells us that when you give time away you feel less rushed. Just spending 10 minutes helping others can make you feel less time-constrained. Anything that entails spending time for the sake of someone else has the effect of people feeling as if they have more time. It can be volunteering at a soup kitchen or cooking dinner for a loved one or friend.

Here are a few more benefits of volunteering:

- **Provides a sense of purpose** – individuals find new meaning, feel more connected to their community, have an increased sense of accomplishment, and feel they are a part of something bigger than their selves
- **Gets you healthier and happier** – a Corporation for National & Community Service report noted: "[Research demonstrates that volunteering leads to better health... those who volunteer have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not volunteer.](#)" And the physical activity involved in certain forms of volunteering—such as environmental projects in parks, nature reserves, or beaches—can also be good for body
- **Has a positive effect on social psychological factors** – positive social psychological factors are correlated with lower risks of poor physical health. It can also improve a person's social networks which can protect from isolation in difficult periods, buffer stress, and reduce risk of disease
- **Increases self-confidence** – individuals get a healthy boost to their self-confidence, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Doing good for others and the community provides a natural sense of accomplishment. Volunteering can also give you a sense of pride and identity. And the better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive view of your life and future goals
- **Increased well-being** – one [study](#) showed that people who volunteered at least once a week had an increase in their well-being that was equivalent to the increase associated with moving from a \$20,000 annual salary to a \$75,000 annual salary

Not sure where to start? Check with your company's HR department, your local schools, or churches to see if they are aware of any opportunities to volunteer. You can also look on [LinkedIn for Volunteers](#), [Catchafire](#) or [VolunteerMatch](#) to find volunteer opportunities or ask around on Facebook and/or LinkedIn to get connected through your network.

20. Spend Time In Nature

If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere – Vincent Van Gogh

Have you ever noticed how clear headed you feel after a nice walk outdoors? There's something about getting fresh air and feeling the sun shine on you that is so relaxing. The sound of wind blowing through leaves, birds chirping, or the sound of running water all make us feel more alive.

The next time you are stressed out, feeling sluggish, need a creativity boost, or are starting to feel under the weather, spend some time in nature. It's one of the healthiest things you can do and there have been plenty of studies to back this up.

A few years back, more than 10,000 Canadians and more than 250 workplaces participated in the David Suzuki Foundation [30x30 Nature Challenge](#). This was a national program that challenged participants to spend 30 minutes a day in nature for 30 consecutive days.

Here's what the participants reported:

- Significant increases in sense of well-being and happiness
- More vitality and energy
- Reduced stress, negativity, and sleep disturbances
- Workplace participants felt more productive on the job

And you don't have to go deep into the woods for many of these benefits. Participants reported feeling happier, just by having lunch outside or walking through a park.

Another benefit of being in nature is increased immunity – this [study](#) showed that time visiting a forest, but not time spent in a city, increased natural killer (NK) cell activity and decrease stress hormones. NK cells provide rapid responses to viral-infected cells and respond to tumor formation.

Participants spent 2 hours a day for 3 days in different forests and had their blood and urine sampled. The samples showed increased NK activity and this lasted for more than 7 days after the forests trips.

Increases in NK activity and stress reduction were attributed to phytoncides, tiny particles that plants and trees release. Something as simple as spending time around trees, walking in forests, exercising on nature trails, and hiking outdoors can increase your immunity and decrease your stress levels.

Can't make it outside? Then you can hack nature. I wouldn't count on this all the time but if you are cooped up indoors due to bad weather or working on a tight deadline then get yourself some [hinoki cypress](#) oil for a source of phytoncides. This [study](#) showed that exposure to phytoncides through vaporization in a humidifier significantly increased NK activity and decreased stress hormone levels.

Make it a habit to spend more time in nature: you can exercise outside instead of going to the gym, eat your lunch outdoors, start a garden, go camping, or go for a hike in nature.

21. Intermittent Fasting

To lengthen thy life, lessen thy meals – Benjamin Franklin

Trying to lose stubborn belly fat? Intermittent fasting (IF) is one of the easiest ways to do this and is a great way to keep muscle mass on while getting lean. In addition to getting that body you've always wanted, you can increase lifespan, decrease inflammation, reduce oxidative stress, increase insulin sensitivity, and improve brain function.

Caloric restriction (CR) is the most scientifically validated method shown to reliably extend life span in multiple species, from microorganisms to mammals. However the problem with CR is that it's very hard to stick with. You need to decrease your caloric intake by 20-40% each day and for most of us (I'm guessing 99%) this is not sustainable. No one likes to be hangry all the time.

It turns out you can get the same benefits from IF. IF is not dieting per se and you don't need to limit your daily caloric intake. You are just condensing your eating into a 6 to 8 hour window each day.

What happens after you eat is your insulin and fatty acid levels increase and your body is relying on glucose as fuel and you essentially don't burn any fat. IF allows you to enter fat burning mode, which happens approximately 12 hours after eating and this is where you want to be. Your insulin levels drop and you don't have the contents of a recent meal for your body to consume, so your body relies on stored fat in your body as fuel.

When you eat 3 meals a day you never really hit the 12 hour mark so you don't achieve this fat burning state. With IF you can either skip breakfast (I know, I know...we've been told this is the most important meal but there's plenty of science refuting this) or skip dinner.

So for example, you can skip breakfast and eat between 1pm to 8pm or skip dinner and eat between 8am to 3pm for a 17 hour fast, giving you 5 hours in the fat burning zone. When I fast I usually skip breakfast and eat between 1pm to 8pm and sometimes I'll do between 2pm to 8pm to get an extra hour of fat burning in. I'll typically fast on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for 3 fasts each week and occasionally I'll push myself a little longer.

This recent [study](#) found that alternate day IF led to a number of health benefits in as little as 2 weeks including improvements in insulin resistance, asthma, seasonal allergies, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, cardiac arrhythmias, and menopause related hot flashes.

More benefits are shown in this [study](#), that during a 24-hour fasting period, GHG increased an average of 1,300 percent in women, and nearly 2,000 percent in men. And this [study](#) showed that "short-term fasting induces profound neuronal autophagy." Autophagy supports brain health and is the process by which cells recycle waste material, downregulate wasteful processes, and repair themselves.

The first few times I tried IF it was a little hard but it doesn't take long to get used to skipping a meal. Just drink plenty of water and if you stay busy it should be a relatively painless process. Experiment and see what works best for you.

22. Get Sunlight Daily

Keep your face to the sunshine and you will never see the shadow – Helen Keller

Revered for millennia...a deity of many ancient religions...and now demonized and blamed for rising rates of skin cancer, skin damage, lines, wrinkles, and sun spots.

What happened? How is it that the sun, responsible for all life on this planet, is now toxic to humans? It seems weird to me that we humans were once covered in hair, we lost it, and now the sun is toxic to us. Would mother nature really play such a cruel joke on us?

Photosynthesis supports most of the food chain on this planet and we humans use photosynthesis to make vitamin D for our bodies. Vitamin D also has a major role in the modulation of the immune system.

Low vitamin D has been associated with a host of diseases to include osteoporosis, cancer of all types, heart disease, obesity, mental illness, chronic pain, diabetes, and autoimmune diseases.

Higher levels of vitamin D are associated with longer telomere lengths and longer telomeres reduce our risk of cellular aging. Vitamin D is involved in the regulation of gene expression and the regulation of cell proliferation, cell differentiation, and apoptosis.

Here's a key point: Supplementing with vitamin D and getting it from the sun are not the same.

This [study](#) showed that ultraviolet radiation (UVR) significantly suppressed weight gain, glucose intolerance, insulin resistance, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and that many of the benefits of UVR were not reproduced by vitamin D supplementation. Research by Bicknell and Prescott found in 1953 that *"sunlight acting directly on the body should be the way in which Vitamin D is obtained."*

And we use the sun to make a lot more than just vitamin D. For example, when UVB hits our skin it creates vitamin D and when UVA hits our skin it creates nitric oxide (NO).

NO plays a number of roles in our bodies and it helps the heart by lowering blood pressure, it's a natural antioxidant that protects against free radicals, it stimulates the brain, kills bacteria, helps defend against tumor cells...and it helps men get erections and women achieve orgasm, so very important indeed.

Here's a great analogy used by neurosurgeon, Dr. Jack Kruse, when explaining the benefits of sun to his patients. *"If you plant a tree in great soil and give it plenty of water and sun, does it grow and thrive? Yes. If you plant a tree in great soil, water it, and cover it with a tarp, does it grow? No, it dies! If you cover various parts of your "tree" with "tarps" – clothes, sunscreen, and most importantly, eyes with UV blocking sunglasses or glasses or contact lenses, will you thrive? NO!"*

So get out and get some sun. Just be smart about it. If you live in the north and fly to the south, understand your skin is not adapted to that sun and you need to limit your exposure. If you will be in the sun for extended period of time use sun block over sunscreen. We need some sun in our eyes as well so spend time in the sun without any glasses or contacts.

23. Reduce Sugar

Eat less sugar, you're sweet enough already - [unkown](#)

I know. Sugar tastes great. I like sugar and there's nothing like a nice sweet desert to finish a great meal. But these days I rarely eat sugar. When I do I actually get a pretty good buzz. I get a huge dopamine rush and all is great in my world. At least for a few minutes and after that I can never catch that high again no matter how much tiramisu I stuff in my face.

Now that I rarely eat sugar I am much more sensitive to its effects. I always feel less energetic the next day and my brain is not operating at its normal level. But for years I had no clue. I ate it, it tasted great, and I wasn't aware of how it made me feel afterwards. I lived in a constant state of mediocrity.

And Americans are eating more sugar than ever these days. I'm talking all day, every day. According to the USDA the average American consumes 150 pounds of sugar a year and about 64 pounds of that is High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS), which does more harm than sugar. The next time you're in the grocery store, go to the baking aisle and pick up a 5 pound bag of sugar and put it in your cart. Now grab 29 more and put them in your cart and that's how much sugar the average American eats.

Following are ten reasons you should dial back your sugar habit:

1. **Sugar is making us fat** – 35% of Americans are obese and 69% are overweight. Sugar is 50% glucose and 50% fructose. When fructose enters your liver, 30% of it converts to fat
2. **Sugar is more addictive than cocaine** – at least for rats. According to this [study](#), given the choice between sugar and cocaine, rats will choose sugar. This is why it's so hard to kick the sugar habit. We are completely hooked
3. **Sugar is making us sick** – chronic fructose exposure promotes metabolic syndrome, which includes obesity, Type II Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, and Hypertension
4. **Sugar causes Leptin resistance** – leptin is the master hormone in our body and controls all other hormones. Leptin resistance causes inflammation leading to a number of health problems
5. **Sugar has ZERO nutritional value** – ZERO Vitamins; ZERO Minerals; ZERO Enzymes; ZERO Fiber. Sugar does give us a quick energy boost, as it is rapidly absorbed in the bloodstream
6. **Sugar causes fatty liver disease** – fatty liver disease causes inflammation, insulin resistance, high triglycerides, high LDL (bad cholesterol), low HDL (good cholesterol), and increased belly fat
7. **Sugar does the same thing to our liver as alcohol** – chronic fructose exposure causes nearly all the symptoms of chronic alcohol exposure. Fructose is a liver toxin and is basically alcohol without the buzz
8. **Sugar consumption causes erectile dysfunction** – when fructose enters the liver and gets metabolized it blocks production of Nitric Oxide, the chemical mediator of penile erection¹
9. **Sugar alters the balance of microbes that inhabit our gut** – excess sugar causes an overgrowth of bad bacteria, which leads to all sorts of modern day disease. When you have an excess of bad bacteria you extract more calories from your food that are stored as fat

So do yourself a favor and decrease your sugar consumption. You'll look better, feel better, and most likely live a lot longer.

24. Reduce Refined Carbs

The whiter the bread, the sooner you're dead – The Daily Mail (London circa 1924)

Typically when we think of white we think of cleansing and purifying. In the case of refined carbs this is quite the opposite. Modern day staples like white flour (bread, muffins, bagels, pizza dough, crackers), white rice, and pasta all have something in common besides being at the base of the USDA food pyramid. They are all refined carbohydrates. Refined carbs are the original fast food.

Our body uses two kinds of fuel. Glucose and Fat. Carbohydrates provide our main source of glucose. When found in nature carbohydrates contain vitamins, minerals, protein, fat, and fiber. They are complex, resist immediate breakdown, and provide a good source of fuel for the body.

When found in a box or bag at your grocery store they are refined. Carbohydrates have been drastically changed from their natural form into something processed that is rapidly digested. Any carbohydrate that digests quickly and raises blood sugar increases inflammation. Refined carbs are essentially [Sugar](#).

A whole grain is one you can see that may be cracked into a few pieces and you have to really chew it. The starches in a whole grain are highly compacted and surrounded by a fibrous husk. It takes enzymes a long time to break them down.

When a grain is pulverized into flour its surface area becomes infinite and it is immediately converted in to blood sugar by enzymes. Even if the flour contains bran it still breaks down this way and is not truly a whole grain. Whole wheat bread has essentially the same glycemic index as white bread.

Refined carbs are linked to a host of diseases affecting the heart, kidney, liver, and pancreas. They also contribute to ADD/ADHD, allergies, depression, obesity, and insulin resistance leading to diabetes.

And just like sugar, it's hard to kick the carb habit. This [study](#) by the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* examined the effects of high-glycemic foods on brain activity and found that fast-digesting carbohydrates can stimulate regions of the brain involved in cravings and addiction.

The study demonstrates what many people experience: After eating a high-glycemic meal, i.e. rapidly digesting carbohydrates, their blood sugar initially spiked, followed by a sharp crash a few hours later.

This destroys your productivity and has a big impact on brain function. I went through this pattern for years and never made the connections. This is a real challenge in a corporate setting when you have a lot of catered lunches that tend to be loaded with refined carbs like sandwiches, chips, and who can resist a nice chocolate chip cookie or brownie?

In short, to avoid refined carbs steer clear of anything that comes in a box or package. Get your carbohydrate requirements from eating a variety of fresh vegetables and some whole grains, depending on your tolerance. If you have to sit through a lot of meetings with catered lunches be prepared by having a stash of [Kind bars](#) or another healthy snack to help you avoid reaching for that cookie.

25. Improve Your Sleep

A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book – Irish Proverb

If you want good health, you need to have good sleep. Lack of sleep is a growing health concern and is to blame for a growing number of motor vehicle crashes, industrial disasters, and medical/occupation errors...not to mention a lot of crankiness.

There are mixed studies showing the optimal amount of sleep. Many of us need at least 8 hours a night and some people can get away with 6 hours a night. The important thing is that you wake up feeling rested and do not have times during the day when you are nodding off. This is where you need to pay attention to what your body is telling you.

When we don't get enough sleep, we have an increased risk for obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and Alzheimer's disease. Almost all mental illnesses have associated sleep problems. Sleep deprivation is found in almost every psychiatric condition, from bipolar disorder to anxiety disorders.

Why is sleep important? Poor sleep impacts our circadian rhythm which drives most of our biological activity at the cellular level.

When we sleep our body goes through a process called autophagy. This is our body's way of repairing itself. We also release human growth hormone (HGH). HGH decreases body fat and increases lean muscle mass. If we don't get good sleep we don't get a release of HGH and miss out on these benefits.

And sleeping pills are not the answer. This [study](#) looked at over 10,000 patients who took sleeping pills and over 23,000 patients who did not. It found that people taking sleeping pills died 4.6 times more often (on average) than patients who did not take sleeping pills. Other side effects of sleeping pills are impaired cognitive function and depression.

Rather than using sleeping pills, work on developing good sleep habits. Here are some tips to get a better night's sleep:

- Get direct morning sunlight in your eyes. UV light makes ocular melatonin which improves your sleep by allowing the pineal gland to release melatonin at night. Glass blocks UV rays so it won't work through a window or glasses
- Try to eat 3 hours before bedtime; limit alcohol at night
- Avoid [blue light](#) at least one hour before bedtime
- Try to get to bed by 10. Your body does most of its repair between 11pm – 1am
- Keep your room as dark and as cool as possible
- Practice meditation or relaxation techniques before bed
- Try herbal teas with valerian and/or passion flower (I like Yogi Bedtime). Or try a cup of hot water with 2 tbsp of ACV & 1 tbsp of raw honey

Do yourself a favor and make sure you're getting the rest you need. It's one of the most satisfying ways to improve your health.

26. Experiment

All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better
– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

When was the last time you conducted an experiment? Experiments are a great way to figure out what you should be doing. You can experiment with a new way of eating, new workout, or a new way of presenting information. If you feel you've been stuck in the same routine for too long then maybe it's time to break out of it and try something new.

We humans have a huge advantage when it comes to experimenting. Take this quote from evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins.

“Survival machines that can stimulate the future are one jump ahead of survival machines who can only learn on the basis of overt trial and error. The trouble with overt trial is that it takes times and energy. The trouble with overt error is that it is often fatal. Simulation is both safer and faster. The evolution of the capacity to simulate seems to have culminated in subjective consciousness”

Humans are survival machines and we can simulate outcomes in our minds. This means we don't have to conduct every single experiment. This saves us a lot of time and allows us to better focus our efforts.

I believe it was Warren Buffett who said, “We all learn from mistakes but it's a heck of a lot easier to learn from other people's mistakes.” With books and the internet, you can learn about other successful people's experiences and also learn from their mistakes. Simulate what others have done and shave years off your time to success.

Experiments on eating for example can be a key way of improving your health. When I was healing from Lyme disease I started experimenting with quite a few things. I had done a lot of research and found that people had had success with many types of diets.

I tried a macrobiotic diet for several months, which is a plant based diet consisting of a lot of whole grains and vegetables. I didn't have great results so I tried more of a high fat diet with lots of seafood and vegetables and that radically turned my health around.

We are all different and that is why it's so important to experiment. When trying a new diet give it at least a month or two and note how you feel. If you try a new workout, note any differences in energy or strength gains for example.

It's also important to look at the experiments you're currently doing and assess their benefit. Take eating fast food for example. Morgan Spurlock tried that experiment in [Super Size Me](#). After eating nothing but McDonald's food for 3 weeks straight, his doctor told him he could die if he didn't stop.

Trying new experiments is a great way to learn about you, can be a lot of fun, can lead to a great sense of accomplishment, and is great for personal growth.

27. Spend Time with Family & Friends

To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right – *Confucius*

Here's another recommendation that the people from the [Blue Zones](#) have in common. They all spend a lot of time with family and friends. Having strong social ties can make us smarter, happier, and more productive...even for introverts.

In his book [Social](#), renowned psychologist, Dr. Matt Lieberman argues that our need to reach out to and connect with others is a primary driver behind our behavior. We are wired to be social and are driven by deep motivations to stay connected with family and friends. We have the unique ability as a species to read other people's minds, figure out their hopes, fears, and motivations, allowing us to effectively coordinate our lives with one another.

It's also important to understand the strong influence of our social ties. We've all heard the saying, birds of a feather, flock together. If you have fat friends, you are 150% more likely to become fat as well. If you have friends who eat well and take care of themselves, then you are more likely to be healthy. So choose your friends wisely or find some new ones that emulate the way you want to be.

Increasing your social connections is one of the easiest ways to increase your well-being. This [study](#) found that the importance of having a good friend whom you see on most days, compared to not having such a friend, had the same impact on well-being as making up to an extra \$100,000! Pretty interesting.

And having a lot of friends on Facebook is not the same as spending actual time with friends and family. Lieberman notes some troublesome statistics regarding friendships. It seems that over the last half-century, there has been a steady decline in nearly all things social apart from social media. Fewer people are getting married, we volunteer less, we participate in fewer social groups, and we entertain people in our homes less than we used to.

In 1985 a survey was given that asked the question, "Over the last 6 months, who are the people with whom you discussed matters important to you?" Ten (10) % of respondents said they had zero confidants. The same survey was repeated in 2004 and this time 25% said they had zero confidants.

As a kid, it's really easy to make new friends. It can be more difficult for adults, especially if you move to a new area or your friends move away. Here are a few ideas for you to make some new friends:

- Join a [Meetup](#) group, gym, Toastmasters, or church group
- [Volunteer](#) – this in itself improves happiness and is a great way to meet like minded people
- **Walk your dog** – if you have a dog go to a public place. People always find it much easier to talk to people with pets

Don't let your busy life get in the way of your friendships. Make it a priority to spend time with good friends and family and you will be rewarded with increased happiness and well-being.

28. Pursue New Goals

The biggest adventure you can ever take is to live the life of your dreams
– Oprah Winfrey

Do you still have dreams? Most of us dreamt big as children and somewhere along the way we lost sight of what's important. The good news is, it's never too late to follow your dreams.

One of the best ways to get your dreams is by pursuing new goals. Pursuing goals is actually where we get a lot of satisfaction out of life. Setting and achieving goals for our health, career, and anything we are passionate about is a path to a better life.

In his book, [The Happiness Hypothesis, Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom](#), psychologist Jonathan Haidt tells us that the pleasure of getting what you want is often fleeting. You work towards something big, you achieve it, and you expect a huge elation. However, when you succeed you're lucky if you get an hour, and maybe you get a day of euphoria at best.

One of Haidt's psychologist buddies, [Dr. Richard Davidson](#), discovered that there are two types of positive affect. The first is "pre-goal attainment positive affect". This is the pleasurable feeling you get as you make progress towards a goal. The second is "post goal attainment positive affect", which you get upon achieving a goal.

The post goal attainment positive affect is a short-lived feeling of release. So when it comes to goal pursuit, it really is the journey that counts, not the destination. As Shakespeare said, "[Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.](#)"

The lesson here is to pursue goals that you actually enjoy. If you are not achieving them this is an indication you are going after the wrong thing. In some cases, such as losing weight, your goal may not feel fun. In this case you need to create incentives or rewards for yourself.

Big goals are not effective. Small goals are. Break them down into achievable goals that can be easily met. Let's say you are trying to lose 15 pounds. Don't make a goal of losing 15 pounds. Start off by not gaining any additional weight. Then set a goal to lose a pound or two and then keep going after those small goals until you achieve your bigger goal.

To stay motivated, create small rewards for every 2-3 pounds that you lose. As a reward you can watch 30 minutes of reality tv or read a pleasure book. Be specific and have details and make sure your reward generates excitement for you.

To recap: Pick a goal, break it down, and create your rewards. Here are some [ideas for rewards](#) to get you started. You can also create a vision board on pinterest. If your goal is to learn how to cook create a board of healthy, enticing recipes. If your goal is to lose weight, create a vision board of the bodies that you want to have.

Lastly, create accountability. You can post your goal on Facebook, prominently display it in your office, and/or get a coach. Remember, the fun is in the pursuit of your goals.

29. Practice Visualization

Formulate and stamp indelibly on your mind a mental picture of yourself as succeeding. Hold this picture tenaciously and never permit it to fade. Your mind will seek to develop this picture! – *Dr. Norman Vincent Peale*

How can you work on your golf swing, practice a presentation, put on muscle, and improve your chances of becoming a big Hollywood star, all from the comfort of your own home? With visualization.

Research has shown that mental practice is almost as effective as true physical practice and that doing both is more effective than doing either alone. This [study](#) had one group of participants perform mental contractions of little finger abduction, a group which did nothing, and another group that performed actual physical finger abduction exercises.

It turns out that those performing the exercise mentally improved by 35%, the group performing the actual physical exercises improved by 53%, and the control group showed no significant changes. In addition to increasing strength, visualization can improve motivation, concentration, and coordination.

It should come as no surprise that visualization is used by a number of professional athletes, movie stars, and highly successful people. Take for instance world champion golfer, Jack Nicklaus who said: “[I never hit a shot, not even in practice, without having a very sharp in-focus picture of it in my head.](#)”

Jim Carey used to drive up on Mulholland Drive and visualize directors telling him they liked his work and where he wanted his career to go. He [told Oprah](#) that he would be driving home after doing his visualization and that it really made him feel better. He would think, I do have these things and they're out there, I just don't have a hold of them yet.

How does visualization work?

According to research using brain imagery, visualization works because our brains, interpret imagery as equivalent to a real-life action. When we visualize something, the brain generates an impulse that tells our neurons to "perform" the movement. This creates a new neural pathway that primes our body to act in a way consistent to what we imagined. There's a strong link between our thoughts and behaviors and all of this occurs without actually performing the physical activity, yet it achieves a similar result.

To get started with visualization, choose something that you want to accomplish. Let's say you want to become a public speaker. Imagine yourself on a stage speaking to a large group. Imagine yourself looking sharp, being confident, articulate, and captivating the audience with your speech. You finish and there's a big round of applause. People shake your hand. You are the bomb.

Add as much detail as possible. If you need some help, write out your accomplishment with as much detail as possible and visualize all of it. Practice every morning when you wake up and every night before you go to sleep or during the day if you prefer.

Remember, visualization does not guarantee success. You still need to do the hard work and practice. But when combined with solid effort it is a powerful way to achieve your ideal life.

30. Wake Up Each Day A Little Wiser

Spend each day trying to be a little wiser than you were when you woke up. Day by day, and at the end of the day-if you live long enough-like most people, you will get out of life what you deserve – *Charlie Munger*

Bill Gates and Warren Buffet have both said that Charlie Munger is the smartest man they know. That's quite a compliment coming from 2 other billionaires. Charlie Munger is Warren Buffett's partner at Berkshire Hathaway and he has a lot that he can teach us about success. The man is doing something right. He's in his 90's and still sharp as ever.

Charlie has said he has seen people rise in life who are not the smartest, sometimes not even the most diligent, but they are learning machines. They go to bed every night a little wiser than they were when they got up. This is really helpful when you have a long run ahead of you. He has stated that, *"Nothing has served me better in my long life than continuous learning."*

One of Charlie's secrets is that he's good at lifelong learning. If you keep learning all the time you have a great advantage. Lifelong learning is one of the best ways to deserve what you want. He has said, *"In my whole life, I have known no wise people (over a broad subject matter area) who didn't read all the time – none, zero."*

Here are a few other lessons from Charlie Munger and Warren Buffett:

- **Know the edge of your competency** – When asked how he and Warren have done so much better than so many other investors, Charlie attributed it to knowing the edge of their competency better than other people do. It's not a competency if you don't know the edge of it. Warren says he'd rather deal with a guy with an IQ of 130 who thinks his IQ is 125 than deal with a guy with an IQ of 180 who thinks his IQ is 200
- **Practice the right approach** – If you want to be a good thinker, you must develop a mind that can jump boundaries. Charlie believes in a multi-discipline approach to give him a better idea of how, "It all fits together." He learns different ideas and makes them a part of his standard routine
- **Learn the big ideas** – don't just learn big ideas on the surface. Learn them in such a way that they are on a mental lattice work in your head and you automatically use them for the rest of your life. Big ideas are no good to you if you don't practice. If you don't practice you lose them
- **On opinions** – Charlie says he's not entitled to have an opinion unless he can state the arguments against his position better than the people who are in opposition. He thinks he is qualified to speak only when he's reached this state

Lifelong learning is one of the best returns on your investment of time. You can learn from the most successful people in history for a very low cost. Have a health issue? Pick up a book and learn about it. Take your health into your own hands. Be the master of your domain.

Start with anything you are passionate about. Become a master on that subject. Combine the best ideas on the subject to come up with something new. That's innovation. And that's deserving what you want.

31. Read Food Labels (and know the tricks of food industry)

It's discouraging to think how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit – *Noel Coward*

It's hard enough trying to eat healthy without all of the deception we are faced with by the food industry. We are continually bombarded with buzzwords like "natural", "whole grain", "gluten-free", and "no added growth hormones," making us think we are making better choices for our health.

Choosing foods without nutrition labels like vegetables, fruits, wild seafood, whole grains, and pastured/organic meat is the best strategy for avoiding big food marketing but if you do eat processed foods, learning to read food labels and knowing what to look for is your best defense against the deceptive practices of the food industry.

One thing you can do is just read the ingredients. Ask yourself, with a can of soup for example, if you were to make it a home, would you use similar ingredients? If you don't have the first clue where to even buy some or most of the ingredients that's a good indication that you should leave it on the shelf.

Another easy thing to look at is sugar content. Always check the serving size first because the information on the label is based on the serving size. Many packages contain more than 1 serving. If you buy a 16 oz bottle of apple juice and read that it has a sugar content of 24g but there are 1.5 servings per bottle that's actually 37g of sugar, which is over the recommended daily intake by nearly 50%.

Even if you do read the label, most are misleading, according to this [article](#) by the BBC. A consumer magazine looked at 570 nutrients in 70 products and found just 7% exactly matched the quantities on the labels. So levels of fat, salt, calories and carbs were **inaccurate in 93%** of products tested.

Here are just a few tricks to be aware of:

Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) – a lot of us try to steer clear of this one but the food industry is on to this. Other names that are MSG in disguise include: hydrolyzed vegetable protein; textured vegetable protein, yeast extract, calcium caseinate; sodium caseinate

No added growth hormones – we often see this on poultry or pork however the USDA does not allow hormones to be fed to either of these. The producers of these animals can however use antibiotics, which also speed growth. Some of these antibiotics end up in the meat you buy. A good reason to go organic and avoid antibiotics in your meat

Natural – there's actually no definition for natural. The FDA, which regulates fruits, vegetables, and most processed foods, doesn't have any official definition for the term. Essentially, a product can be as "natural" as the manufacturer would like you to believe and may contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and artificial sweeteners like high-fructose corn syrup

FD&C dyes – these are derived from coal tar, a human carcinogen

This only scratches the surface on reading food labels and there are a number of other harmful ingredients to look out for. Organic foods have become a \$16B industry and not all organic food is created equal. Junk food labeled organic is still junk food. Eat whole foods when you can and purchase them locally from a farmer's market when possible.

32. Sit Less

Sitting is the new smoking

Did you know that the average adult spends 50 to 70% of their day sitting? Having worked in corporate America in an office for more than 20 years, this was not a surprise to me.

The health of millions of Americans and others from around the world is being affected by too much sitting. Following are some startling statistics from a 2010 [American Cancer Society](#) study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology that followed more than 123K men and women from 1993-2006.

- Women who sat for six or more hours daily faced a 37% greater risk of death as compared to those who sat for three hours or less
- For men, the increased risk of death for those who sat at least six hours daily was 17%
- Those who did not exercise regularly and also sat for long periods faced even greater mortality rates – a startling 94% higher for women and 48% higher for men

I know for me personally and a lot of others, the biggest issue with long hours of sitting is back and shoulder pain. The American Medical Association (AMA) has also taken a stance against sitting all day and their [policy](#) now recommends organizations offer sitting alternatives, including standing desks.

For those of us not lucky enough to have a standing desk yet, it's important to take frequent breaks from sitting. Ideally you want at least 10 minutes of non-sitting for every hour of sitting. Here are a few ideas for you to work in throughout your work day:

- Get a short workout in by walking up and down a few flights of stairs
- Visit co-workers in person instead of using email or IM
- In the office, go for a few laps around your building, outside is even better
- When driving long distances, stop every two hours for a walk or mini-workout
- If you don't have time for the above, just standing up and sitting down every 20 minutes can be beneficial

You can also hack a standing desk by putting some reams of copy paper or books under your laptop or keyboard and monitors. Definitely not as swanky as a standing, treadmill desk but your back will totally thank you.

If you do get trapped in a zone and all of a sudden the next thing you know several hours have passed and now your butt is numb you can do some leg swings to loosen your hips and get some blood flowing in your butt again.

Begin with forward leg swings. Find something to hold for balance. Start off swinging one leg backwards and forwards as high and as far back as you comfortably can. Do 20 swings and then switch legs.

Next swing your leg side-to-side. Grab something and swing your right leg to the side as high as possible and then in front of you towards your left as far as you can go. Perform 20 swings and then switch legs.

33. Identify Your Life Purpose

There is no greater gift you can give or receive than to honor your calling. It's why you were born. And how you become most truly alive – *Oprah Winfrey*

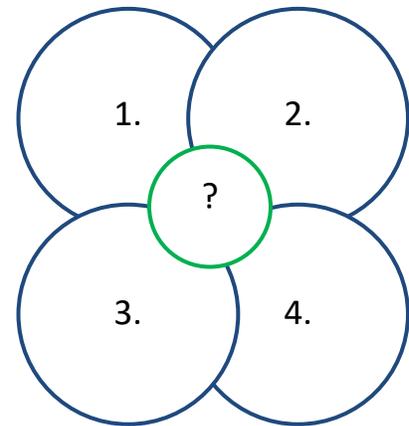
This is something else that the people living in the [Blue Zones](#) have in common. They know their life purpose. If you can articulate your life purpose in one sentence your life expectancy is 8 years longer.

In an NIH-funded study, [Dr. Robert Butler](#) looked at the correlation between having a sense of purpose and longevity. His 11-year study followed healthy people between the ages of 65 and 92. It showed that those who expressed having clear goals or purpose lived longer and lived better than those who did not.

Having a life purpose tells you why you wake up each morning. It is a key component of psychological well-being and involves finding meaning in what you do and who you are. Your life purpose is your guiding light. When you come across an opportunity you need to ask yourself if this is aligned to your life plan.

Not sure what your purpose is? Here's an exercise to point you in the right direction. Draw 4 circles, and answer these questions in each of them

1. What did you grow up around?
2. What have you had stranger feedback on? / What do people ask you for help in?
3. What have you been doing for the past 10 years?
4. What can you talk about effortlessly on a weekend night with your friends?



Where do these circles intersect?

Now create your one sentence life purpose. Ask yourself:

1. What do you want to do?
2. Who do you want to help?
3. What is the result/what value will you create?

Mine is, *"To help as many people as possible achieve optimal health."* Once you know your purpose it makes it much easier to know what to do. You'll know where to invest your time. You won't have to chase every opportunity that comes by if it is not aligned to your life purpose.

It took me a long time to discover my life purpose. I let most of my life happen by accident. My life is totally different now. My only regret is in waiting too long to figure this out.

If you don't know, go ahead and discover your life purpose. You'll have a roadmap for your major life decisions. You'll know what areas of your life to focus on and you'll live a life of reward and satisfaction.

34. Embrace the Difficult

In this age, which believes that there is a short cut to everything, the greatest lesson to be learned is that the most difficult way is, in the long run, the easiest – *Henry Miller*

We live in a world of instant gratification. It's pretty easy to hear about the latest internet millionaire or even billionaire and think that they just got lucky.

The truth is there's no such thing as an overnight success. We always hear about the success but we never hear about the years of hard work and dedication that got them there.

By the time he was 10, Warren Buffett had read every book in the Omaha Public Library with the word 'finance' in the title, some twice. He hasn't stopped reading and learning since and estimates he spends 80% of his day reading and thinking. Buffett didn't become a billionaire until nearly 50 years later.

Leonardo Da Vinci didn't get his first big break until he was 46 when he painted the last supper. But for the previous 16 years he did nothing but study, draw, and paint.

Steven King wrote every day for 9 years before selling his first novel, John Coltrane practiced the saxophone everyday for 17 years before getting his first big hit, Bill Gates started programming computers at age 12 and from age 20 to 30 he never took a single day off. The list goes on...

These are the stories behind great successes that you never hear about. The years and years of sacrifice and hard work.

In Robert Greene's book [Mastery](#), a study of great achievers, he talks about the Difficult Years, and calls them a largely self-directed apprenticeship that lasts some five to ten years and receives little attention because it does not contain stories of great achievement or discovery.

But here's the thing. Great things are supposed to be hard. The hard is what makes it great. Learn to embrace the hard in your life. True happiness comes from doing things that are hard.

Stop believing in 5 minutes abs. There's no such thing. Getting a great stomach takes hard work. Great abs are not about finding just the right exercise that will give you a six pack. It's really more about proper diet and building a strong core. That doesn't sound sexy but that's the way it is.

You need to understand that there are two forms of happiness. Memory happiness and moment happiness. Most people focus on being happy in the moment. Memory happiness is what you remember achieving in your life and this is a much stronger form of happiness. When you embrace the difficult you build memory happiness.

You embrace the difficult by taking on difficult tasks and eventually they become less and less difficult.

Never make a decision based on how difficult something is. Make a decision because of what you will get from doing it and you will live a happier, healthier, more successful life.

35. Have Plants in Your House

Plants give us oxygen for the lungs and for the soul – *Linda Solegato*

Plants are so nice and green and pretty. Adding a few plants to your home has physical and mental health benefits. Plants are alive and interact with your body and mind and can enhance the quality of your life. From cleaning the air, to promoting happiness and reducing stress, plants have much to offer.

We all know plants absorb carbon dioxide, keep the carbon, and give us back some oxygen but here are a few more benefits you may not be aware of.

We've talked about improving the air quality of your home by removing [toxic cleaning products](#) and [self care products](#). Adding a few plants can help remove additional toxins from indoor air, which can be as much as 12 times more polluted than outside air. According to [NASA research](#), plants remove up to 87% of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and carbon monoxide every 24 hours.

VOCs are nasty things like formaldehyde, benzene, and trichloroethylene, all of which can be found in common things like rugs, vinyl, plastic grocery bags, and paint. Plants help purify air by pulling contaminants into soil, where their roots convert VOCs into food. Pretty darn cool.

Plants deter sickness – studies at the Agricultural University of Norway document that using plants in interior spaces decreases the incidence of dry skin, colds, sore throats and dry coughs. This happens because plants release roughly 97% of the water they take in and if you place several plants together you can increase healthy humidity in a room.

Plants improve concentration – a number of studies with both students and workers reveals that studying or working in the presence of plants can have a pretty dramatic effect. Plants have a similar effect to being in nature, and being around them improves concentration, memory and productivity. According to a University of Michigan [study](#), being “under the influence of plants” can increase memory retention up to 20 percent.

Here are some plants recommended for your house along with some of their benefits:

Common Name	Benefit	Best Use
Spider Plant	Purifies air, removes formaldehyde	Living spaces
Gerbera daisy	Purifies air, removes benzene & trichloroethylene; releases oxygen at night	Bedrooms & living spaces
Philodendron	Purifies air, removes formaldehyde	Living spaces
Peace lily	Removes mold from air	Bathrooms or damp areas
Snake plant	Purifies air, removes formaldehyde & nitrogen oxide	Living spaces, kitchens, rooms with wood stoves

NASA recommends one potted plant per 100 square feet of indoor space.

Plants also reduce background noise so if you live in a city or have traffic close to your house, they can help reduce outside noise.

36. Smile

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy – *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Did you know that just by smiling you can put yourself in a better mood and decrease your stress? Not only that but it makes those around you feel better as well. Try it right now. Smile and see how you feel. Notice how you feel before and after. Next chance you get, walk around some place public with lots of people with a big smile on your face. How many people did you get to smile?

Smiling happens to be contagious. When we see someone smiling we feel compelled to smile as well as was shown in this [study](#). Seeing someone smiling activates parts of our brain that control facial movement, causing us to smile.

Don't have time for a run to get your *runner's high*? Then start smiling. Endorphins cause a *runner's high* and endorphins are released when we smile and these make us feel good and make us happier.

Need a creativity boost? This [article](#) in Prevention highlights research from the U of CA, San Francisco that shows that smiling makes us happier, enabling a more holistic approach to solving problems.

Having a bad hair day? This [study](#) showed that smiling increased attractiveness when compared to a non-smiling neutral expression. In addition to better looks, smiling is attributed to better sincerity, sociability, and competence. And a smile can make you look younger, by about 3 years on average.

Trying to meet new people? Smiling makes you more approachable. The next time you're at a networking event or trying to meet that someone special, put on a great smile to let others know you are interested in talking and interacting with them.

Smiling also makes you healthier and is an easy way to boost your immune system. This [study](#) evaluated the effects of artists performing for hospitalized children in an attempt to make them smile and found improvements in their immunity.

Smiling can improve cooperation among strangers. As noted by this [study](#), the key to successful cooperation is the ability to identify cooperative partners. The study found evidence that smiles can elicit cooperation among strangers.

The interesting thing is even fake smiles can make you and others feel better. Fake smiles use fewer muscles than a true happy smile, which use muscles all the way up to your eyes. One thing you can do to turn a fake smile into a real smile is to visualize happy memories that you've had, like a time laughing with friends or you can think about your child or a pet.

Smiling produces empathy. Ever get caught in an embarrassing situation and just smile it off? A good smile can break the ice and tends to buy us some leniency from those catching us with our hands in the cookie jar.

37. Learn to Cook

No one is born a great cook, one learns by doing – Julia Child

I never had any interest in cooking until a few years into being at college. I moved off campus after a year in the dorms with a meal plan. Living off campus and fending for myself, I was eating a lot of pizza, wings, and subs, and when I did cook it was ramen noodles or spaghetti and sauce from a jar.

I finally got to a point where I just got really sick of eating junky food all the time. I was lucky growing up in that my mother was an excellent cook and made home cooked meals almost every night. I finally decided I needed to learn how to cook when I wanted to impress a girl by making her dinner. I called my mother one day and asked her for some recipes to get started.

I learned a few things from that experience. Cooking is actually pretty easy and cooking is a sure way to a girl's heart, or anyone's heart for that matter. Let's just say I was kicking myself for not have learned how to cook sooner.

These were also the early days before the Food Network and the internet so I got a cookbook or two and learned from there and have been cooking ever since. I love going to great restaurants but it's hard to beat a good home cooked meal. I also find cooking to be very relaxing and therapeutic.

Sadly fewer of us are cooking our own meals. If you go back to 1900, 98% of meals were cooked at home. In 2010 that number dropped to 50% and 1 in 5 breakfasts were eaten at McDonalds. And a lot of the meals that are prepared at home are packaged and cooked in the microwave. Not so healthy.

And for the first time ever, [spending at restaurants and bars](#) has exceeded spending on groceries. Not surprisingly many who are not saving as much as they feel they should blame dining out as the main culprit. Dining out is now America's main form of socializing.

Learning to cook is one of the surest ways to improve your health.

You know exactly what is going in your food and it is more nutritious than eating out. And you don't have to be tempted with the bread basket or have the option of choosing a side of fries.

If you've never cooked then start off small. Some recipe sites to get you started are www.food.com, www.epicurious.com, www.cuisinicity.com, or [mine](#). Browse some recipes and find some that look appealing and not too difficult. You can also watch cooking shows or search recipes you like on youtube.

Another way to get started is through services that give you fresh, pre-measured, chopped ingredients and you just cook them. Some to try are www.hellofresh.com, www.blueapron.com, www.plated.com

Give cooking a try and you'll benefit in many ways. In addition to getting healthier and feeling and looking better, you may put a new spark in your relationship or win the heart of that someone special. Cooking with loved ones is a great way to bond and cooking for them is one of the best ways to show how much you care and how much they mean to you.

38. Invest In Yourself

Old men advise the young to save money. This is bad advice. Invest in yourself. I didn't save a penny before I reached forty years – *Henry Ford*

If you were to take any number of the most highly successful people in this world, strip them of their assets, and dump them on the street, I think it's safe to say they would all be back on top in a matter of weeks or months.

What gives them this ability? They have spent their lives investing in themselves.

Most people spend their money on things that rust, rot, and depreciate like fancy cars, expensive clothes, and TVs. Make sure you spend money on things that will improve the quality of your life and make you healthier and richer.

Start by [identifying your life purpose](#) and figure out where in your life you need to invest. You can also identify your strengths and build on them. If you need some help, check out the book [StrengthsFinder 2.0](#). It provides a code for an assessment that you can take to identify your top 5 strengths.

The assessment is designed by the Gallup Organization and is based on a survey of 1.7M professionals that identified 30 different themes describing how people think and act. They also provide 50 Ideas for Action (10 strategies for building on each of your top 5 themes).

Your education should not stop at college. Learning new skills keeps your resume fresh and can even help you discover new passions and interests in life. Look into professional development opportunities at your current job or take a class in something that you are interested in. It can be totally creative like sculpture, piano, or writing.

Online courses are another great way to invest in yourself. You can find courses on just about anything you can imagine for free on youtube, you can watch Ted Talks and you can even take some courses from prestigious universities such as MIT, Carnegie Mellon, Stanford, Yale, and Harvard for free!

[Read books](#). According to [statisticbrain](#), 42% of people never read another book after graduating college and 80% of families did not buy a book this year. You have the ability to be taught by nearly any great mind by reading books and you can learn practically anything if you take the time to do it.

Buy the very best quality food you can. This is an investment in your health and will pay for itself. People complain about the cost of organic food but it's a lot cheaper than being stuck in a hospital bed. You also can't take care of your family if you don't take care of yourself and get sick.

I'll leave you with a final quote: "Investing in yourself is the best thing you can do. Anything that improves your own talents; nobody can tax it or take it away from you. They can run up huge deficits and the dollar can become worth far less. You can have all kinds of things happen. But if you've got talent yourself, and you've maximized your talent, you've got a tremendous asset that can return ten-fold." –Warren Buffet

39. Create Balance in Your Life

Happiness is not a matter of intensity, but of balance, order, rhythm, and harmony
– *Thomas Merton*

A key to happiness is balance. This is illustrated in the ancient Chinese symbol of yin and yang. Yin and Yang are interdependent and cannot exist without each other. The levels of yin and yang are constantly changing and too much of one can weaken the other.

Creating balance in your life can be a constant juggling act. If you focus too much on your career your relationships and health can suffer. If you don't focus enough on career your finances may suffer.

You achieve balance in life by making good choices or decisions. Life is not always about making the easiest decisions. It's about making the best decisions to get the quality of life you want. If you are not skilled in making good decisions, you will not have the quality of life you desire.

And I'm not just talking about work-life balance. Work is a part of life for most of us. The concept of 9 – 5 or even 8 – 6 is long gone. Our professional lives often mix with our personal lives, now even more in our digital age, where we can access, or be accessed by our work, anytime, anywhere.

Having a balanced life is enjoying your work and your play. As Warren Buffett said, "[Find something you like to do, and you'll never work a day in your life.](#)" If you love what you do, getting a call at 9pm from a colleague or business partner is not such a big deal.

Whatever you do, you must get some sense of satisfaction from it. If all you can think about are your weekends, holidays, and your next vacation, then you're doing the wrong thing.

In addition to work, here are some other areas to look at for creating more balance in your life:

- **Mind** – grow your mind through learning and feeding it with the knowledge it craves. Develop a sense of [curiosity](#) and become a [lifelong learner](#)
- **Body** – this is your physical health and includes healthy eating and drinking, sleeping, exercise, and limiting exposure to toxic environments (toxins and people)
- **Relationships** – spending time with your life partner, family, friends, and colleagues. Developing good relationships are an integral part of a balanced life
- **Spirituality** – this is different for everyone. Discover what gives your life meaning. Spirituality can be going to church, practicing meditation, or spending time in nature

Mind, body, relationships, spirituality, and career all form a solid framework for living a great life. Take inventory of these areas of your life and figure out what you need to work on to have a life of better health and happiness.

Remember, the one constant in life is change. Some areas of your life will require more attention than others. Focus on making the best decisions you can. Good decisions bring you closer to creating balance in your life.

40. Focus on What Counts

Focus and simplicity. Simple can be harder than complex: You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it's worth it in the end because once you get there, you can move mountains – *Steve Jobs*

We live under a constant barrage of emails, texts, tweets, meetings, phone calls, facebook updates, and as many as 5,000 marketing promotions each day. These all add up to lower productivity and a lot of stress. It's a wonder we get anything done in today's world.

Here's a secret to a life of success and accomplishment from Curly the rancher in the movie City Slickers.

Curly: Do you know what the secret of life is?

[holds up one finger] This

Mitch: Your finger?

Curly: One thing. Just one thing. You stick to that and the rest don't mean s***

Mitch: But, what is the "one thing?"

Curly: That's what you have to find out

In Gary Keller and Jay Papasan's huge best seller, [The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results](#), they tell us how to get what matters most in our personal and professional lives.

Following are 6 lies that mislead and derail us from focusing on what counts:

1. **All matters equally** – in the real world of results, things are never equal. You need to understand where to focus your time. Don't waste time doing things that don't matter
2. **Multitasking** – many studies have been done and according to science you are less efficient when you multitask. Spend a majority of your day being focused on your signature one thing
3. **A Disciplined life** – you need to be focused on your signature strength and this makes it easy. If you have a hard time staying focused on something, you are probably not focused on a key strength of yours. Success is about doing the right thing, not about doing everything right
4. **Willpower** – will power is finite. You only have so much each day. Once you expend it is much harder to follow through on something. You need to be efficient. You have the most willpower in the morning so do what matters most first thing in your day
5. **Balanced life** – view work as involving a skill or knowledge that must be mastered. Divide your work life into two areas: what matters most and everything else. Your attention needs to be on what matter most and you'll have to be ok with what happens with the rest. When you're supposed to be working, work, and when you're supposed to be playing, play
6. **Big is Bad** – it takes about the same amount of energy to do big as to do small. Accept that big is about who you can become. Don't fear big. Fear mediocrity. Only living big will let you experience your true life and work potential

Ask yourself, "What is the ONE Thing I can do to improve my health, relationships, career, spirituality, etc." Understand what you need to do, believe it, and take action. A life lived on purpose is the most powerful of all.

41. Cultivate Creativity

Curiosity about life in all of its aspects, I think, is still the secret of great creative people – *Leo Burnett*

The link between creativity and better mental and physical health is well established by [research](#). The study looked at the impact of music, writing, dance, and the visual arts (painting, drawing, photography, pottery) on healing yourself. It demonstrated that being creative improves well-being through decreasing negative emotions and increasing positive ones, reduces stress and anxiety, and improves spontaneity, expression of grief, and positive identity.

A lot of people think they aren't creative but like most things you can improve creativity with a little practice. Maybe art is not your thing and you want to be more creative in your career.

I recently read James Altucher's book, [Choose Yourself](#), and learned about an exercise he uses to become an idea machine. But first a story on how anything can atrophy from lack of use.

In his book he talked about how Stephen King had an accident that prevented him from writing for several weeks. Stephen King said that when he started to write again he could feel the difference. His words just weren't connecting right.

So here's the point. If you want to be good at anything you need to stick with it. Even if you're Stephen King and have been writing for 60+ years!

To build your idea muscle, start by reading a few chapters from books on at least 4 different topics every day. Today I read a little from [Light in Shaping Life](#), by Roeland van Wijk, a blog on www.jackkruse.com, [The Happiness Hypothesis](#), by Jonathan Haidt, and James Altucher's book, [Choose Yourself](#) to reference this page.

Then write down 10 ideas every day. They can be about anything. Write ideas on cool inventions, businesses you would like to start, ideas to wow your lover, or a new dish that you would like to create. Push yourself and make your brain sweat. I haven't done this religiously but I do it a few days a week and it really does make my head hurt.

The idea is not to come up with a great idea per se but to come up with thousands of ideas over time. This is how you create your idea muscle and turn it into a machine. Once you've been doing this for a few months is when the real fun begins. Allow your ideas to mate with each other to create new ideas. This is where innovation comes from.

To become more creative in solving your own problems, spend 10-15 minutes every day, with no electronics, where you think on things related to things you have read, a problem you need to work through, or your business or career.

Start to practice thinking a few moves ahead. Let your mind wonder, but not too much, and work through a specific problem. Come up with solutions and implement them.

42. Only Do Things You Enjoy

We don't make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give
– *Winston Churchill*

I'm not just talking about your career here. Your career is a huge one and hopefully you're doing what you enjoy. But there are a lot of other things that we end up saying yes to when we really should be saying no, thereby creating additional stress in our lives.

Saying yes to something that you don't enjoy is a bad practice to get into. Do this too much and resentment builds, you don't do as good job as you should, and you have less energy for the things you actually do enjoy or should be doing for a better life.

How often do you say yes because you feel it's the right thing to do but not necessarily what you want to do? This usually leads to you getting caught up in your own mental drama about your decision. I get it. We all have responsibilities and bills to pay. There are some things that we have to do but you owe it to yourself to recognize what you generally don't want.

And sometimes we don't even realize we are doing things we don't like anymore because we have done them for so long. Saying yes to one thing often means saying no to something else.

I was caught up in this for years. I used to get drunk every weekend. Friday and Saturday night was spent drinking with friends into the wee hours of the night. It seemed fun at the time but I was hung over most weekends and never got a lot done.

Drinking on the weekends turned into a habit that I didn't even think about. I just did it and it really took a toll on my body and held me back from growing for more years than I care to admit. It ultimately ran down my body and caused me to get really sick.

All those years I was saying no to growing as a person. I was unhappy in my career but I lacked the energy and motivation to do anything about it since I was hung over on the weekends when I could have been working towards something new.

I've done the same things in relationships. How many times have you been stuck having lunch with a friend that brings you down? I've done it time and time again. It took me a while but I came to the realization that I no longer want to spend time with those who don't lift me up.

Sometimes we have family members that do this and this can be harder but in most instances we can choose to spend less time with these folks. Never let anyone steal your energy no matter who they are. Surround yourself with awesome people who make you feel great about yourself. Acknowledge them and show them the gratitude they deserve.

Find your own path. It doesn't have to look like everyone else's. It just has to make you happy and make you want to jump out of bed each day.

43. Avoid GMOs & Glyphosate

The GMO experiment carried out in real time and with our entire food and ecological system as its laboratory, is perhaps the greatest case of human hubris ever. It creates yet another systemic, ‘too big too fail’ enterprise — but one for which no bailouts will be possible when it fails – *Mark Spitznagel & Nassim Nicholas Taleb*

There’s a huge controversy in America as to whether or not GMO foods are safe and should be labeled. According to polls roughly 80% - 90% of Americans believe GMOs should be labeled. However every state that has had a vote on labeling GMOs, with the exception of Maine, Connecticut, and Vermont, has voted against labeling, so there’s a major disconnect.

Yes, the GMO proponents have much larger marketing budgets than those against. They scared a lot of people by telling them labeling would cause an increase in grocery costs. However, as of November 2015, 64 other nations label foods with GMOs and the cost of their food has not gone up. Many of the same brands that Americans buy everyday are labeled as GMOs in the countries that require it.

Of course the GMO makers use clever marketing and tell us [GMOs are safe](#) and are technically the same as non GMO food. Let’s say this is true. There is still the fact that the use of [glyphosate has exploded](#) year over year and as of 2012 it was approaching 300M pounds a year in the US. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in Roundup weed killer and the main herbicide used on GMO crops. It’s also used on non GMO crops such as wheat, barley, oats, flax, peas, and lentils to dry them out for easier harvesting.

[Glyphosate residues](#) cannot be removed from washing and are not broken down by cooking.

Of course Monsanto, the maker of Roundup, tells us glyphosate is safe however the cancer-research arm of the [WHO declared it is “probably carcinogenic”](#). This [research article](#) declared that Roundup is 125 times more toxic than glyphosate. And this [article](#) tells us glyphosate causes an overgrowth of pathogenic bacteria in animals and humans.

Current approved GMO foods are Corn, Soybeans, Canola, Cotton, Sugar Beets, Alfalfa, Hawaiian Papaya, Zucchini, and Yellow Crookneck Squash, with other foods in the pipeline.

And in 2015, the first ever genetically engineered (GE) animal, GE salmon, was approved by the FDA. That won’t be labeled either. Here’s a [guide](#) to the different grocery stores and chain restaurant’s positions on whether or not they will sell GE salmon.

These are other ingredients derived from GMO Crops: Amino Acids, Aspartame, Ascorbic Acid, Sodium Ascorbate, Vitamin C, Citric Acid, Ethanol, Flavorings (“natural” and “artificial”), High-Fructose Corn Syrup, Hydrolyzed Vegetable Protein, Lactic Acid, Maltodextrins, Molasses, Monosodium Glutamate, Sucrose, Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP), Xanthan Gum, Vitamins, and Yeast Products.

The list of [potential health issues](#) is too long to list here. To avoid GMO foods and glyphosate buy organic when possible for the foods mentioned. Also look for the [NON GMO project verified label](#).

44. Collect Great Quotes

So live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about their religion; respect others in their view, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people – *Chief Tecumseh*

What do quotes have to do with health? I'll answer that with an aphorism "Mens sana in corpore sano," a Latin saying that translates to, "A healthy mind in a healthy body."

When I need motivation or am feeling down I often turn to a collection of quotes that I've gathered over the years. Quotes give me an emotional boost when I need it and some really make me think.

It used to be kind of hard to get a good quote collection. I remember before the internet, reading a quote in a book and thinking how much I liked it but then I would forget it and it was lost. Now with the internet it's really easy to find any quote for just about any occasion.

I have my favorite quotes printed out and displayed on my desk. Sometimes when I'm working and need a quick break I'll read through them and get some new inspiration.

Start collecting great quotes that move and inspire you and memorize your favorites. Recite them to yourself when you need some motivation or share them with a friend when they need it. You might be amazed at the response you get.

Some quotes are so simple and concise and express an idea you already had, but didn't know how to express it quite well.

Another of my favorite quotes is, "Through every generation of the human race there has been a constant war, a war with fear. Those who have the courage to conquer it are made free and those who are conquered by it are made to suffer until they have the courage to defeat it, or death takes them" – *Alexander the Great*

Waging war on fear today is a lot easier than it was in Alexander's time. He was at real war most of his life. In only 13 years he conquered most of the known world of his day. Some of Alexander's early fears must have been going into fierce battle knowing he could face a gruesome death or torture.

My current war with fear is breaking out of my comfort zoning and doing what it takes to be an entrepreneur. My stakes are much lower than Alexander's. I use fear to drive me to do the work it takes to be successful. If I lose that war I'll have to go crawling back to my cubicle in corporate America. I keep that fear in the back of my head and use it for motivation and drive.

The war with fear is constant so what you fear now will change over time. Identify your fears and conquer them and you will be free. What's your fear and how is your war going against it?

45. Love Yourself

You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection – *Buddha*

How much do you love yourself? And not in a narcissistic way. Loving yourself is taking care of you physically and mentally. It's accepting your imperfections. It's forgiving past mistakes. It's feeling good about who you really are.

Love is one of the most powerful emotions. It represents human kindness, compassion, and deep affection. Love is pure, unselfish, and benevolent. Love is a vital component for the health of your heart, body, mind and soul. When you love yourself, you always do what is in your best interest.

When you love yourself, you allow yourself to be your very best. You are able to give your very best to those you love. Loving yourself improves self-esteem and this leads to better self-care, leading to better health and wellness. Your love radiates to others and they are drawn to you.

I recently read an amazingly simple and beautiful book by Kamal Ravikant called, [Love Yourself Like Your Life Depends On It](#). It's a really quick read and has been life changing for many.

Kamal was going through a rough patch in his life. He was ill and practically bedridden, his business was struggling, and then a good friend of his suddenly passed. Kamal hit a breaking point. He couldn't take his misery and pain anymore and he made a vow to love himself. Kamal vowed to treat himself as someone he truly loved, with his thoughts, actions, and choices.

At first he didn't know how to love himself. So he vowed to do whatever it took to love himself. Kamal just kept repeating to himself, "I love myself, I love myself, I love myself." Initially he didn't even believe it. But he kept repeating, "I love myself," and eventually it was on his mind more than it was not.

Anytime a negative thought popped into his head he would repeat the phrase. Kamal's life turned around within a month. He regained his health, was happy most of the time, and his business began to improve. He also noticed a number of changes in himself. He became more open and vulnerable, and he became more gentle with others, even when they weren't loving towards him.

Try it and commit to it. Frustrated with traffic driving to work, repeat the phrase. Can't stop thinking about an argument you had with a friend or lover, repeat the phrase. "I love myself, I love myself, I love myself." You may be in a very different place a month from now.

I'll finish with a quote from by Kamal: "If a painful memory arises, don't fight it or try to push it away - you're in quicksand. Struggle reinforces pain. Instead, go to love. Love for yourself. Feel it. If you have to fake it, fine. It'll become real eventually. Feel the love for yourself as the memory ebbs and flows. That will take the power away.

And, even more importantly, it will shift the wiring of the memory. Do it again and again. Love. Re-wire. Love. Re-wire. It's your mind. You can do whatever you want."

46. Humility

Real genius is nothing else but the supernatural virtue of humility in the domain of thought – *Simone Weil*

Do you know what it really means to be humble? I'm not talking about not being cocky. That's outward humility. I'm talking about inward humility.

Take Michael Jordan for example. He was known to be an extremely cocky basketball player. MJ did not have outward humility. But he had a ton of inward humility. He was always the first to show up at practice. His coaches attribute his success to his ability to listen and his ability to be coached. **He was able to implement everything his coaches told him to do.**

There are many stories of highly successful people exhibiting inward humility. In a story called, "The Heavy Log," a rider came across a group of soldiers trying to move a heavy log of wood without success. There was a corporal standing by watching his men struggle.

The rider was rather shocked and asked the corporal why he wasn't helping, to which he replied, "I'm the corporal. I give orders."

So the rider got off his horse and helped the soldiers move the heavy log and with his help they were able to get it moved. The rider told the corporal, "The next time your men need help, send for the commander-in-chief." The rider was George Washington.

[Bo Eason](#), former NFL football player turned professional speaker and performer tells it a slightly different way. I can't find the video but I heard him tell a story about Jerry Rice, one of the greatest football players of all time. Bo talked about being generous. Not as in giving to charity but in always giving your all and your very best.

Bo was in NFL tryouts with Jerry Rice. They were doing drills and receivers would run out about 15 yards and catch a pass from the quarterback. The players would catch the pass and jog the ball back to the QB.

Then came Jerry Rice. Jerry ran out, caught the pass, and sprinted full speed, nearly a hundred yards to the end zone. He did this every time. At the end of practice, Bo asked him what that was all about and Jerry told him, "Anytime these hands touch the football it ends up in the end zone." Jerry Rice, the best player at tryouts, gave more than anyone else.

When you are faced with a challenging situation, what is the reality of the outcome? Do you find a solution or give up? Are you able to implement what you learn and put it into practice? Always look for the opportunity to learn and improve your life in every area.

Don't base your self-worth on how you stack up to others. Instead, focus on yourself and how you can improve. In health, choose an area you want to improve, find someone who has done it or read a book and learn how you can do it too. You can apply this to every area of your life to get what you want.

47. Spirituality

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Spirituality is very personal and can be controversial, more so when it comes to religion. Religion is just one part of spirituality and there are a number of ways for you to practice spirituality. And a number of people refer to themselves as spiritual but not religious.

Spirituality is our connection to that which is sacred, the *transcendent*. The transcendent is that which is outside of the self, and yet also within the self. To some this is God, Allah, Brahman, Buddha, Tao, a Higher Power, or ultimate truth/reality.

It is also free of institutional structures and hierarchies. It's less about dogma and beliefs and more about attitudes, values, practices, and what motivates you and influences how you think and behave.

Spirituality has been a part of healthcare and healing since the beginning of recorded history. Only in recent times has spirituality been separated from healthcare however it is making a comeback. In the last few decades, more and more attention has been placed on the role of spirituality in health and healing.

For example, searching the word "spirituality" in the national Library of medicine database shows that only 62 articles were published on spirituality between 1970 and 1990, compared to 477 articles between 1990 and 2000, and we saw 4,400 articles on spirituality from 2000 to 2010, a 9 fold increase.

This [paper](#) looked at more than 3,000 studies on spirituality and religion and shows that people who are more spiritual have better mental health and adapt more quickly to health problems compared to those who are less spiritual. These benefits to mental health and well-being have physiological consequences that impact physical health, affect the risk of disease, and influence response to treatment.

Spirituality has been found to increase positive emotions such as well-being, happiness, hope, optimism, meaning and purpose, high self-esteem, and a sense of control over life. Positive psychological traits related to positive emotions include altruism, being kind or compassionate, forgiving, and grateful.

We have talked about a few ways to practice and incorporate spirituality in your life with [Meditate](#), [Gratitude](#), [Spend Time in Nature](#), [Love Yourself](#), and [Being Present](#). Hopefully after reading this you have some additional motivation to give these a try.

When it comes to spirituality, it's simply about positive emotions. Love, gratitude, awe, hope, forgiveness, and compassion are all emotions that bring us together. These emotions are all universal. Spirituality helps you feel like you matter, that you are important, and that you offer something to the world. It helps you understand that there is a larger picture.

Use spirituality to figure out what is really going on in your life and to live a life that is really going to matter to you.

48. Be Curious

I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious – Albert Einstein

Curiosity is another trait of highly successful people. Curious people possess improved cognitive abilities and there is a strong correlation between curiosity and IQ. And being curious has been shown to improve happiness, help overcome anxiety, improve short term memory, protect your brain, and strengthen your relationships.

This [study](#) showed that curiosity at an older age is associated with maintaining the health of the aging central nervous system and this [study](#) showed that higher levels of curiosity were associated with a decreased likelihood of diabetes and hypertension.

We all start out as curious. I'm sure you've talked to a little kid that can't stop asking *why* about every little thing. Curiosity is a basic element of our cognition, is a motivator for learning, and is crucial for healthy development.

Cultivating our innate sense of curiosity is one of the easiest and most overlooked ways to increase happiness. When we are curious, we genuinely want to learn about something and we enter a state of active interest. This in turn lays the groundwork for new experiences and greater opportunities for growth and happiness.

Embracing our inner child is an easy way to nurture and rekindle our sense of curiosity. We can use the power of curiosity to create new and enjoyable experiences in our lives. Curiosity gives us a sense of wonder and joy and allows us to play once again like we did as children

In case it has been a long time since you have fired up your curiosity, here are a few tips to reignite your inner child and learn to ask *why* again.

- **Ask questions** – when you meet someone new ask them all about themselves. Don't worry about trading information about you. Learn as much about them as possible. Not only will you know a lot about them, they will appreciate your interest in them and think you are really great
- **Beginner's mind** – think of when you learned to ride a bike. You kept crashing but you had a determination to figure it out. Use this mindset when learning something new
- **Explore your passion** – sign up for a class or read a new book on something you are passionate about and discover something new about your passion
- **Experience something new** – new experiences make life worth living. They stimulate your mind and emotions, breaking you free of a mundane and routine life

Create never ending curiosity in whatever your chosen field happens to be. You will become unstoppable and your knowledge will impress others. This will attract others into your life, creating new possibilities for yourself.

Become curious in all things and see how much more fun life can be.

49. Be Present

The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, worry about the future, or anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly – *Buddha*

The ability to keep your mind in the present allows you to make peace with being exactly where you are. It gives you a clearer way to deal with any moment and allows you to stay relaxed in challenging situations.

Being present is a highly aware state. With all of life's distractions it's easy to get pulled away from being present. When we experience anger, anxiety, sadness, have expectations, or daydream, we lose our awareness of being present.

Most of us have highly active minds. Our mind can be unpredictable and we never know what will pop up next. Even struggling to be present is a distraction that removes us from being present!

Deepak Chopra has a good analogy for the mind. Imagine a turbulent river. It's rough on the surface but the deeper you go, the calmer it is. Recognize that the river is made up of the same water at every level. This is also true of the mind.

When we are angry we are swimming in the strong currents of the mind and it is harder to experience the calm. The only way to access calm is by becoming familiar with the deeper levels of your mind.

James Altucher discusses being present in his book [Choose Yourself](#). He calls not being present, "time traveling." This is when we obsess on regrets in the past or anxieties in the future. The past and future don't exist. They are just memories and speculation and we don't have any control over either of these.

The trick is to surrender. When we surrender we give up all thoughts of the past, and all worries about the future. James tells us we surrender by trusting that you've done the right preparation. You've done all you can do, all that is within your power and control, and then you give up the results. Then the right thing will happen.

Learn to identify and label your thoughts as future or past. When you catch yourself dwelling on the past or worried about your future, say to yourself, "Ah, I'm time traveling," then STOP.

When we are present we can live life easier. A few of the benefits are:

- Less stress and more happiness
- Better understand your hang-ups (money, relationships, food, etc.) and learn to deal with them
- Stop physical discomfort or minor pain from affecting you
- More pleasure when eating food and you eat less of it

These are just a few examples of the many. Be aware of your thoughts and be in the present today.

50. Get Comfortable with Discomfort

Strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle
– *Napoleon Hill*

I heard a talk by Tai Lopez a little while back that really resonated with me called, "[Toughen Up](#)." In the talk he references a quote from the famous historian Will Durant, "[A nation is born stoic, and dies epicurean](#)."

Stoicism is an ancient Greek philosophy and stoics were known to endure great pain and hardship without complaint. They believed in putting off temporary pleasure to get what they want in life. Stoics believed in hard work and saving for the future.

Later came another Greek philosophy, the Epicureans, and they believed in pleasure as the highest good. They believed in getting all the pleasure now because you don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. Today this is known as YOLO – You Only Live Once.

Think about America. The Pilgrims were escaping British rule and underwent countless hardships for the hope of a better life. Life was tough but eventually a great nation was born. Look at the US now. Life is very cushy and most of us have every comfort imaginable. People have tons of debt and more than half the country is overweight and sick. The modern world and its luxuries have made us soft.

The interesting thing is despite having all of modern day's comforts we are more depressed than ever. The [economic burden of depression was \\$83B in 2000](#), mostly due to lost work productivity. In his book, [The Happiness Hypothesis](#), psychologist Jonathan Haidt talks about the, "adversity hypothesis," which tells us that people need adversity to reach their highest levels of strength, fulfillment, and personal development.

To reach our highest level in any area of our life, we need to deal with a little discomfort.

Life requires movement and action. Physically and mentally. Literally and figuratively. Comfort is like a vacation. OK in small doses, but not as a lifetime aspiration. Today's healthcare system advocates pills over lifestyle adaptation.

This is an illusion. Taking pills provides short term comfort but eventually there will be a price to pay. You need to look at taking pills like running up credit card debt. It's ok to do in the short term but when we do it chronically we get to a point where we can never pay it off.

Put yourself through the discomfort of eating vegetables, even if you don't currently like them. You'll get use to them and maybe even love them. Put yourself through the discomfort of cutting out sugar. It will be hard for the first few weeks but you'll have more energy and will start to lose some weight. Same with exercise, learning anything new, or accomplishing a big goal.

The more times you go through the process of discomfort the easier it is. You will benefit more and more and you will learn to permanently change your life for the better.

Thanks for taking some time to read my ebook. I hope you got some value out of it and have created some great new habits. For more of my writing and recipes join me at..

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Yours in health,
Nathan