

ENJOY

THIS

MOMENT

by **DANIEL** **WEBB**

Enjoy This Moment

By Daniel Webb

Version: DRAFT v14

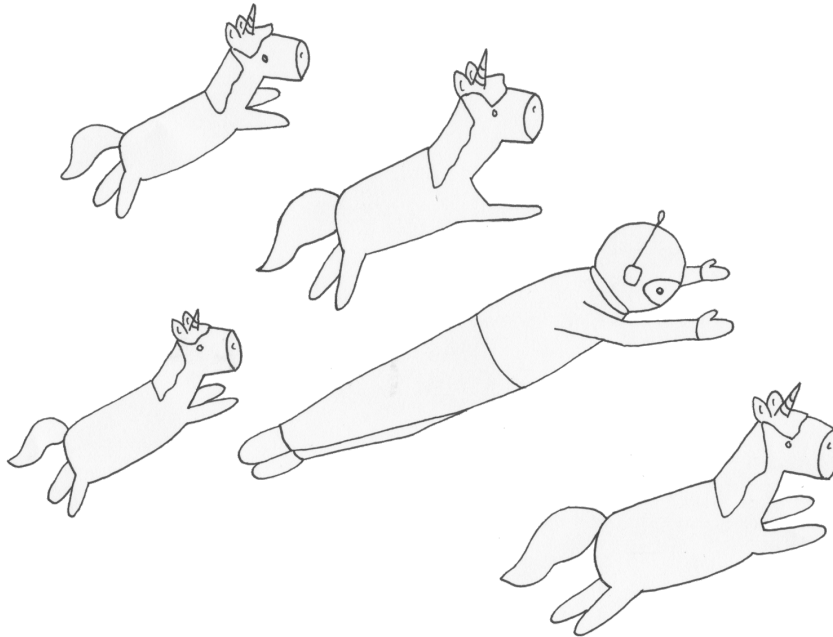
This version published: 2nd December 2018

Words: 25,035

Pages: 90

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Preface



A herd of tiny, shiny unicorns laugh and sing as they fly in formation through a giant sparkling rainbow of candy floss and sherbet.

You join with them in your golden hi-tech flying suit, enjoying the thrilling sensation of speed as you dive down deep through the red, orange and yellow bands. Taste the rainbow. Enjoy this moment.

We hired a tiny motor boat with a blue sunshade and pottered down the coast, going where the mood took us, stopping at one deserted cove after another, dropping anchor as close to shore as we dared. Diving into the deep, clear waters to cool off from the heat of the sun, we glided amongst the curious fish, swimming to shore to claim it as if we were the first adventurers to ever set foot on the blindingly white pebbles. My wife, our teenage daughters and me. Enjoy this moment.

We return home to find the float has fallen off the stopcock, causing the cold water tank in the loft to overflow and flood the landing, the kitchen, the

living room. We mop the floors, set sodden books on radiators, jump on towels to transfer the water from the carpets and tape electric sockets shut in an attempt to prevent electrocution. Neighbours had investigated a noise in the middle of the night and prevented more serious damage. Other friends produce plumbing gear and advice. Slowly the disaster area is converted back into our family home. Enjoy this moment.

I sit and type these words, my goal to write a book, my experience of such a thing non-existent. I have no idea how this project will pan out, I feel unsure, ill-equipped and big-headed to even try. I can feel my fear of failing holding me back from the keyboard. Enjoy this moment.

Our lives are a continuous string of moments, from the moment of birth to the moment of death. We categorise them, plan them, reminisce on them, and sometimes actually live in them. However we choose to spend them, they keep coming, like links in a bicycle chain, moment to moment to moment. They are the greatest gift we are given, and we are only given a limited quantity. We cannot choose how many we have or when the next one arrives. We have no choice over the quantity or rate.

In mathematical terms our lives could be expressed in the simple equation:

Our Life = quantity of moments x quality of moments

Quantity is largely out of our control, so it makes sense to focus on quality.

The goal of this book is to convince you that our single aim in life is simply to enjoy each and every one of those moments. To convince you that the answer to "What's it all about?" is "Enjoy this moment."

Introduction

Hello there.

I'm Daniel, the writer of all these words, and I have found that people who read this book can be neatly split into two types: Those who like to have an idea in their mind of what the author looks like, sounds like, is like. And those who would be advised to skip this introduction and go straight to the next chapter.

Still reading? Lovely. So please allow me to introduce myself. I'm a 50 year old Englishman, born and raised in Kent, the 'Garden of England', just South East of London. I'm married to the love of my life and childhood sweetheart and we have been blessed with the two greatest teenage daughters to ever set foot on this earth. I run a successful family business with my two brothers, I have enjoyed excellent health and count myself lucky to be surrounded by a large loving group of family and friends in the healthiest, most prosperous era the world has ever known. And yet...

And yet, almost every day of my life, for as far back as I can remember, I have woken up down.

Think about that for a moment. Here is someone who has everything life has to offer, and who's still not happy.

Go on, say it. I know I would. "What an ungrateful, privileged *****! Do you have any idea how lucky you are?"

It has crossed my mind, yes. In the lucky dip of life I'm very aware that I've been handed the golden ticket out of pretty much every sawdust barrel I've rummaged in. Middle Class English Male - Collect £200 and go straight to Easy street.

But here's the thing. Not one of those privileges has successfully protected me from feeling down. My life may well be easier than average, but I discovered that my feelings do not care one jot. I have found that my emotional state is completely unimpressed by my lucky privileges.

Let me assure you that I have not taken this situation lying down. I have spent my life battling against this dark foe. At first I did everything I thought I was supposed to. I was a good boy, I studied hard and got the qualifications. I worked hard and saved. I found love and built a home. I struggled and I strained and my feelings remained unmoved.

For far too long I tried chemical assistance, chasing happiness through a haze until it suddenly dawned on me that even if I found it, I would likely not recognise it, and even if I did, I wouldn't remember it in the morning.

There's always a low ebb in every story, and this one comes, rather unoriginally, right in the mid-life crisis zone, just after I turned 40. Unable to find any successful way of lifting my spirits, my gloom was negatively affecting all of my relationships, particularly my marriage. I realised I'd run out of ideas.

My desperation was so powerful that it finally overrode the mistrust of education that school had so successfully instilled in me, and I started looking for some guru who could solve my problem and lead me out of the wilderness that I found myself lost in. What I discovered was a revelation. I was not on my own, not by any stretch of the imagination. It was obvious that there had never been any need to struggle alone all this time, that this world is full of people experiencing similar problems, prepared to share their experience and advice.

I dove into this ocean of knowledge, reading indiscriminately at first - books full of advice about parenting, communication, anger management, relationships, manliness, feminism, positivity, religion, mindfulness, time management and happiness - especially happiness. I learnt something from every book, and from many of them, I learnt a great deal. So much knowledge, in fact, that I realised I couldn't hold onto it all. I found that I would come across wisdom that made my eyes well up with joy at the clarity it brought to my reality, and then well up with frustration the next day as I realised I could not remember it. I've always struggled to remember things, but this was a whole new level of anguish, like repeatedly climbing out of the mire, only to fall back in again and again.

To combat this evaporation, I searched for common themes, and gradually I discerned a universal thread that ran through all the books. My mathematical mind continuously sought to simplify the ideas down to the simplest possible expression, and I combined, connected and re-framed all the advice I soaked up until I'd boiled the essence down to the three words that make up the title of this book. Even my puny memory could hold that sentence, even during moments of high stress.

It is no exaggeration to say that those three words have changed my life, and the benefits have radiated out from me to envelop my family, my friends, my work and everyone I come into contact with. The transformation is so profound that I feel compelled to add my experiences to the great library of information that has so helped me, in the hope that it may help others in their search for their best life.

Let me be clear, I still wake up down more often than not. Unfortunately that has not changed, and I am coming to terms with the reality that it probably never will. But what has changed is that now every morning I realise I can choose to enjoy each moment as it arrives, whether I'm up or down or whichever direction my feelings may take me.

What follows is those precious three words, and then loads more words as a bonus. I hope you enjoy them, and that they help you as much as they have helped me.

The One Commandment

(Or 1 simple trick to living your best life)

“Enjoy this moment”

If I can only share one thing with you it would be those three words. If you have read them, I consider any obligation you may feel to me or to this book complete. If it suits you, you can now put this book back down and continue with your life. If you are curious to dig deeper, then I have written lots more words, handily packaged up in this book. But those three words are the essence.



Even this can be too much to remember sometimes - for example when life isn't just giving you lemons but firing them at you from a high velocity, rapid-fire lemon machine gun. For those moments, I consider it a wild success if I can remember this simplified version:

“Enjoy”

When all else is failing, I find that one word will suffice.

It's working for me now. I read the word, hear it in my head. It sounds like a whisper from a universal wisdom, much much larger than me. It sounds like a plea from my ancestors, that chain of parents that goes all the way back in time, generation after generation, back through the 20th century, the Industrial Revolution, the Elizabethan age, the Middle Ages, the Iron Age, the Stone Age, an unbroken chain of successful circles of life back through evolution to the creatures that crawled out of the primeval swamp, gasping for breath on a volcanic wasteland. Imagine, for a moment, donning VR goggles and living the life of a primeval swamp dweller. Crawling on your slimy body amongst the putrid vegetation, dodging the burning lava, fighting for bugs to keep your tiny metabolism alive for a few moments more. Imagine how proud you would feel of your distant descendants in the modern day, to know all the effort had been worth it. “Enjoy,” they would say, “Enjoy our gift of life to you.”

It grounds me, brings me back to the present, resets my priorities and gives me clear direction. It is my map, my compass, my to-do list, my mantra.

I have it written on post-it notes stuck to the dash of my car. I have it embedded in a fancy font on my computer desktop when I minimise all windows. I have it as the top item in every to-do list I create. It is the vision of our company¹. I even named my album Enjoy². And of course I have written this book. I do everything I can think of to remind me because the honest truth is that I still forget as often as not. I've simplified it down to one word so I know it is not the complexity of the message that is the issue. The problem is what is known as the panic vortex, and it goes a little something like this...

¹ Our Company, Cobwebb Communications, has the vision of becoming “The most enjoyable software company in the world”.

² The Album: Enjoy by Errorplane
<https://store.cdbaby.com/cd/errorplane>

Enjoy this moment. You're over the Great Barrier Reef with your friends, scuba diving. It's a beautiful day, the sea is calm, and you're all well-prepared and in good spirits. You roll and glide through the silky water like an eagle riding the thermals, skimming the coral strewn floor teeming with ocean life. You sneeze. Snot ejects from your nose at the velocity of a speeding car and plasters the unbreakable glass of your mask with a streaky green slime, seriously impacting the beauty of the scene. Bother. You reach up to clear your view, sticking your gloved finger between your cheek and the rubber, breaking the seal and allowing the water to flood in. Inevitable, but not a big problem. You have practised fitting a mask underwater and know how to use the air from your regulator to force out the water. The salty water gets behind your contact lenses and stings your eyes, making everything blurry and indistinct, while you work to clear the mucus with your fingers. Shadows play across your vision, uncertain size and location, nothing is clearly defined. You try to discern one from the other but the salt water is ironically making you cry useless tears and your view is getting less 20/20, more 0/0. You hurriedly fit the mask back to your face and gratefully perform the procedure, blowing air out of your nose into the mask, dispelling the water. But vision does not return. Your eyes are red raw from the salt and the crying, and your phlegm clearing has only served to spread an impenetrable, opaque layer over the entire glass. You start crying again, then you feel something touch your calf. WTF! Your regulator slips from your mouth as you scream out a silent scream. You whirr round reaching blindly out. Sideways? Or is it up? You have no idea any more. You are completely disorientated, blind and out of oxygen. Welcome to the panic vortex. Are you remembering to enjoy this moment?

The subtle knife of the panic vortex is the intersection of two trends. Rational thought decreases as stress increases. At the exact moment when you could use a calm inner voice, you hear the gibbering screams of our primate forebears. 'The Chimp Paradox' by Professor Steve Peters³ goes into the reason for this in great detail, and we'll talk about it in more detail later, but for now just know that if you find it frustratingly difficult to enjoy this moment,

³ The Chimp Paradox - Professor Steve Peters

you are not alone. There's an easily panicked chimp in your head throwing bananas at every danger he sees. You can pacify him and you can train him, but he's with you for life. So be gentle on yourself when you realise you have strayed from the path. Rather, pat yourself on the back for recognising the situation so soon, breathe and start to enjoy this moment once more.

Be Whys

There was a game I enjoyed playing when I was 7 or 8. You may well have played it too. First, I would seek out a 'wise elder' - my dad was an excellent opponent, but I found it worked on most everyone.

The game begins with an opening serve. I would ask my victim an innocuous question, "Why is the sky blue?", "Why do I have to go to sleep?" Or "Why do I have to eat my greens?" - you know, the important stuff. The subject doesn't seem to matter, the essential thing is to get the ball in play, as it were, and tempt a reply from my opponent, so the easier the question, the better.

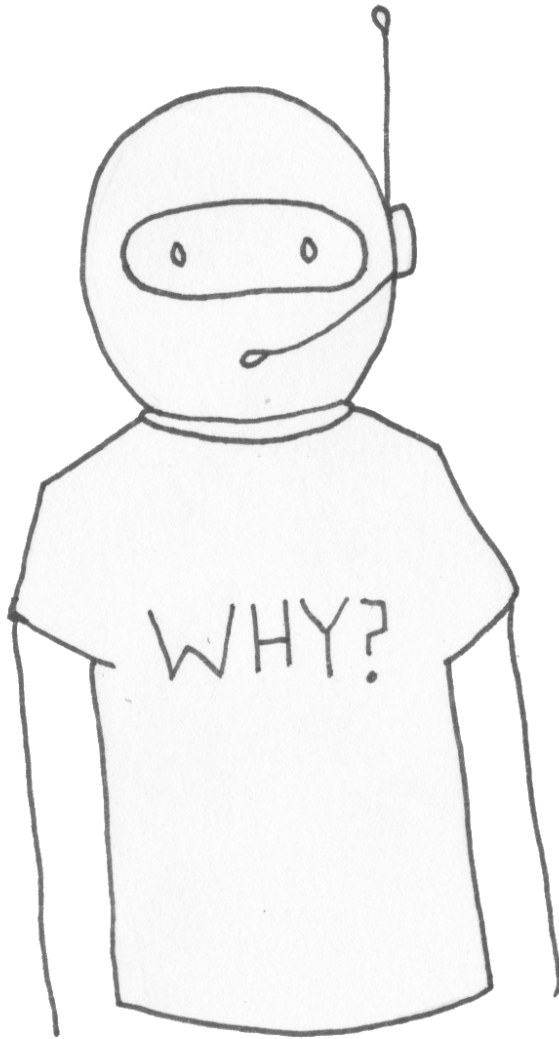
"Because they will make you nice and strong." A nice simple answer, clear and concise return, knowledge imparted, advice given, topic closed, they would think. Especially if they had not played the game before, or even better, didn't even know that they were playing a game. But they had just teed the ball up perfectly for me to deliver my trademark (in fact my only) stroke.

"But why will they make me nice and strong?", gasps of admiration from the audience, quite possibly a dawning realisation from my opponent of the fix they are in.

"Because they contain vitamins and minerals your body needs to develop." It's a good answer, I might even acknowledge the quality with a imperceptible nod, but it is not enough. It is never enough. In this game there can be only one winner. I pause a beat, to allow a glimmer of hope to spark in my victim's eyes, before extinguishing it mercilessly.

"But why does my body need vitamins and minerals to develop?" I love the way I make this game look so easy, essentially effortless. I am using their own answers to defeat them. As this game goes on, I am only getting stronger. It is around this point, unless I have picked a truly worthy adversary, the light goes out, the shoulders slump, the realisation is complete. Surrender is the only viable option.

"I don't know, go ask your mother." Game, set and match.



I've come across this exact same game, reworked into a more productive package, in a technique called the "five whys". It is useful in a self-help or business environment. Pick any problem that is of concern and do not stop asking why until you have gone at least five levels deep. The aim is to ensure that you address the root cause of the problem rather than wasting time on dealing with surface symptoms.

"What do you want to do with your life?"

"I want to be rich."

"Why do you want to be rich?"

"Because then I will be able to buy all the things I want."

"Why do you want to buy all these things?"

“Because that will make me happy.”

“Why do you think owning things will make you happy?”

“Because that’s what the adverts say.”

“Why do the adverts say that?”

“Because they want to sell their stuff.”

Using the 5 whys to uncover the source of your motivations.

This book is about the big question. “Why are we here?” or “What’s it all about?” It’s a question that un-originally troubled me all through my teenage years - it’s the ground zero of teenage angst. At some point, the unbridled joy and play of childhood gave way to an opening up of horizons, a dawning realisation of the colossal scale of the stage on which we play - life, the universe, and everything. This naturally led me onto a search for meaning, an understanding of my place in the order of things. Somewhat ironically, this search was not very productive.

“Why am I here?”

“Because Mummy and Daddy loved each other very much and that love made you.”

“Ewww. Please never talk of this again but why was I made?”

“Well I guess it is a natural drive for all living things to want to keep their DNA alive. Death is inevitable, so reproduction is the answer.”

“But that sounds pathetically self-serving. We reproduce so we can reproduce? Is that it? Seriously?”

“I don’t know. Go ask your father.”

I’m fairly confident that I am not the only teenager who has struggled with this question. I’ve watched my quota of movies and TV shows, read more than my fair share of books, and my better half would argue that I listen to enough ‘depressing’ music for everyone in Britain. Our place in the world seems to be a popular conundrum, with a number of interpretations and answers available. Here are the popular ones:

Religion

I am not knowledgeable about, and have no faith in, any religion. My advice? If it is your answer, and it causes no harm to others, then I am delighted for you. Enjoy.

Love

Because, after all, “Love is all you need”, right? If the greatest pop band that will ever be say so, it must be true. But take a listen to Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris sing “Love Hurts” and you’ll hear a darker definition. My understanding is that love can be many, many things, but great care must be taken if it is to be used as the foundation of a life because it has a dual meaning.

Confusingly we use the word love as both a verb and an adjective. I love you - verb. I feel love - adjective. Other languages use more than one word. In Hebrew, for example, hesed means a choice, a commitment to love someone. This dual meaning can be the cause of much confusion and heartache. ‘I don’t love you anymore’ means ‘I choose to stop providing love to you’. Whereas ‘I’m not in love with you’ means ‘I don’t feel love when I think of you’.

Love as a verb, as a commitment, is a fine foundation for a life. It is under your control, and is therefore as stable as you choose.

Love as a feeling is a butterfly, a pure and gentle thing. It lifts us up where we belong. It depends on the tone of her voice. It breaks your heart and it makes it soar. My advice? Use it to decorate your life by all means, but it is not a reliable foundation material.

Drugs

Ok, this is not very frequently put forward as the answer, more of a popular avoidance strategy. I can heartily attest to its veracity. I chose this solution for high on 25 years, totally avoiding the question as I rode the highs and lows of a chemical distraction. Got no closer to an answer though. My advice? Skip.

Happy Vs Enjoy

The Search for Happiness

You know what really annoys me? All those self-help books on how to be happy. They make me so angry. If I see another yellow smiley face on the front cover of another book promising to explain how to be happy for the rest of your life I swear I will turn that smiley upside down. Don't try and stop me.

One of the major motivations for writing this book was my frustration with the 'cult of happy'. Right now there seems to be an obsessive worldwide search for happiness taking place. It's as if at some point in the past, someone has misplaced happy and now we all are scrabbling around trying to remember where we left it. In the key drawer? No. Back of the sofa? Nope. Glastonbury, Goa, God? No, No, No.

Let me give you the executive summary up front:

Call off the search, happiness is not lost.

Now the detail...

The Pure Happiness Fallacy

Linguistically, the word 'happy' is an adjective, which is to say that it is a word that describes a noun. We are nouns. So happy is a word that can be used to describe us.

"I am happy."

Other adjectives that can be used to describe us include tall, funny, boring, smelly, beautiful, patient, French, wealthy, wet and bald. Some of those are descriptions we would like attributed to us, some not so much.

But more specifically happy is in a subset of adjectives that describe how we are feeling: happy, sad, calm, angry, nervous, shy, excited, ecstatic. Tags that we use to define our mood at any particular moment. Take a moment now to tag yourself. How are you feeling? Look inwards and jot down what you come up with.

Do you find it easy to describe how you're feeling? It seems to come really easily for some, as if there's a direct line from the feeling part of our brain to the descriptive part and straight out of the mouth. It does not come easily to me. I thought the problem was the accessing part - the classic male who is not in touch with his feelings. But that's not it. I know how I feel. My issue is that I'm often not confident that how I feel is acceptable. So I have developed a filter before my mouth that removes all but the most benign feelings. Unfortunately, when none of my feelings are benign, the filter removes them all and I have none left to express, leaving me speechless. Looking like I don't know how I'm feeling.

I've read enough great self-help books⁴ on this subject to know that removing, or at least getting better control of, that filter is key to my personal growth, so in that spirit here goes...

I'm feeling slightly chilly, enthusiastic, nervous and a little bit smug, self-important and confident combined because my dream to write this book is actually being realised right before my eyes as I type this.

The last three feelings would normally have been filtered out, I'm worried that you now hate me, but you know, I do feel better for saying it so I'll choose to live with your judgement.

Anyway, enough about me. Let's get back to you and your feelings. Have you written something? Take your time, I'm not going anywhere... Good. Now note how many feelings you tagged. More than one, right? And are they all compatible or do they conflict?

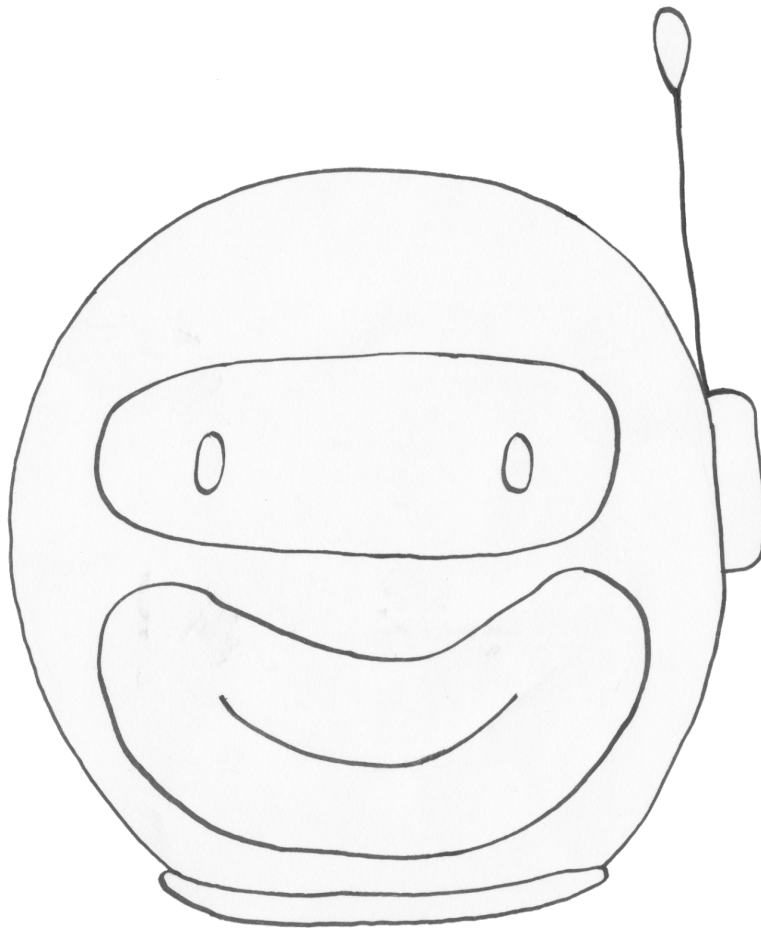
⁴ A great book on this specific topic is 'Insanely Gifted: Turn your Demons into Rocket Fuel' by Jamie Catto

Generally, we live in a soup of emotions, a complex multitude of feelings, ebbing and flowing in strength. Occasionally one emotion will override all the others - generally a self-preservation one like fear or anger that demands your full attention because of perceived danger - but this should be the exception, not the norm, and is not a sustainable state of mind. Or even desirable. Imagine actually being permanently happy. Walking around with a rictus grin on your face like the joker, It'd be like being a ventriloquist's dummy, feeling the same about every event in your life:

"Your house has flooded." "Brilliant!"

"I'm afraid the results do not look good." "Cock a doodle doo!"

"My father has just died." "Happy days!"



Remember King Midas? He wanted gold so much, he wished that everything he touched would turn into it. It wasn't long after he got his wish that he came to realise what a curse it actually was. Everything he touched did indeed turn to gold, but he couldn't eat his golden food, he couldn't stroke his

golden dog. His heart broke when he touched his beloved daughter and she too became a hugely valuable but inanimate golden statue.

This cautionary tale should warn us that aiming for happiness as your sole emotion is not a good plan. Like gold, there's no doubting that happiness is great, but it is best experienced in a well-balanced diet of all emotions. And that's really good news because..

The other emotions are great too.

This focus on happiness has another negative impact on our lives in the way that it denigrates all our other emotions in comparison. As we saw earlier, we can identify a bunch of feelings at any one time, a subset of the huge range that we will feel during our lifetimes. It's one of the great joys of being human, the variety and colour they bring to every moment of our lives. The exact same event can be a completely different experience depending on the different feelings we have at the time. I've been to the same cinema to see the same film on two different occasions and had two completely different experiences because of how I was feeling when I walked in. It's like going to the beach on a sunny day, then returning to that beach during a storm. Same location, totally different experience.

Rather than expecting one feeling to deliver all the answers, we should instead learn to cherish all the feelings we experience, for they each have their own special charms. Sure a beach on a sunny day is a wondrous thing, but a beach during a storm is a pretty amazing place too, or a rainy Sunday afternoon, snuggled in front of the fire. Or snow. Variety really is the spice of life.

But even if you were to insist that your heart's desire was a mono-diet of happiness under an endless summer sky, there is one other crucial attribute of feelings that is lying in wait to thwart you.

Out of our Control

As Dr Gordon Livingston MD points out in his excellent book 'Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart':

"We do not control how we feel."⁵

This is possibly the most compelling reason to stop trying to be happy - because it's a complete waste of time and energy. If we are not in control of how we feel, we cannot make ourselves happy. The wording is important here. We can *be happy*, at any moment in time, but we cannot *make ourselves happy*. Feelings do not perform to order. They are cats, not dogs. In business speak, happy is not actionable.

Now you may now be thinking 'I'm a proactive type of person. I like to make stuff. If I can't make happy, what should I be doing?' Glad you asked...

You should be enjoying this moment

Did you guess the answer?

The great thing about enjoying this moment is that it is actionable. You can make enjoying. You're in control.

This is because enjoy is a verb - a doing word, as we were taught in school. Like run, eat, laugh. Verbs are things we can do, we are in control and this is crucially important when it comes to choosing a solid foundation for basing your life upon. Choosing to enjoy your life is choosing to put your life in your own hands, it is choosing to take ownership and to be your own boss in this moment and every moment from here on in, until the end of time. The end of your time. Your final passing. Your trip to the other side. Your final resting. The last great journey. Your death. At this moment there is no cure for death,

⁵ Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart - Gordon Livingston MD (Chapter 6 - Feelings follow behaviour)

it is the inevitable full stop at the end of all of our stories, we have no control over it, but we do have control over all the precious moments we have before then.

Some of those moments will undoubtedly be happy, some sad. There will be successes and setbacks, highs and lows, excitement and boredom. But each and every one of them can be enjoyable if you choose.

Define Enjoy

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Enjoy as:

Enjoy:

Take delight or pleasure in.

That sounds about right, but I think this means we now need to define delight and pleasure.

Delight:

Great pleasure.

Ummm, how about pleasure then?

Pleasure:

A feeling of happy satisfaction and enjoyment.

Oh dear, that's not super helpful. Enjoy means delight and pleasure. Delight means pleasure and pleasure means enjoyment. Circular reference detected. Maybe the definition of satisfaction holds the key:

Satisfaction:

Fulfilment of one's wishes, expectations or needs.

That is actually quite good. If I wish it would rain, and it rains, well I would enjoy that. And if I expected a compliment and I received one, I would enjoy that too. And if I needed a hug, and someone gave me a hug. I would enjoy that hug.

Conversely I could spend my days not enjoying myself if I wished I was a little bit taller, or if I expected respect from my 3 year old child, or if I just needed a break that never came.

But then again, it's not guaranteed. I can imagine wishing it would rain but not enjoying getting wet when it does. Be careful what you wish for! Or I may expect that buying another pair of shoes will make me happy but find only emptiness. Or I may think I need your approval again and again to prop up my ego, but still feel needy.

I would like to suggest a different definition:

Enjoyment:

A measurement scale of feelings.

"Are you enjoying yourself?"

"Did you enjoy the movie?"

"I'm going to let my hair down and enjoy tonight."



Enjoyment is our own internal yardstick that we use to judge our feelings. Each of ours is different, and changes all the time, but we are all supremely talented at using it. Observe yourself as I ask you now:

"Are you enjoying this book?"

You look inwards, into the soup of feelings in your mind. You note the ones that catch your eye. You weigh them, measure them, sort, count and order them. Then you make a judgement on whether this particular combination reaches the enjoyable threshold. Enjoyment is a spectrum, there are an infinite number of levels from despair all the way up to rapture, but there is a mark in that infinite scale, above which enjoyable is, and below which it is not. It is different for everyone and for everyone it moves constantly, but we all instinctively know where it is at any given time for any given situation. So in a

fraction of a second you record and you measure and you judge and you return your answer.

“Yes, I am enjoying this book.” (Obvs)

You do all of that instinctively, effortlessly, again and again, thousands of times a day. You are remarkable, aren't you?

If you look closely at what is going on here, you can break it down into two distinct parts, the part that goes on inside of you and the part that is outside. Rather cutely, I like to call these injoy and outjoy. Let's use the example of reading this book to explore them both.

Injoy

The universe is the name of the container that holds every physical thing we know about. It is the largest of the large, 91 billion light years from side to side. You are a (quite small) part of the universe and your skin marks the outer boundary of what is considered to be you. Injoy is the part of enjoyable that exists inside your skin boundary, and outjoy is all the rest.



Now although only a vanishingly small part of the whole universe exists within your skin boundary, a disproportionately large percentage of your enjoyment of this book is situated there. Your ability to read is going to play a big role in how much enjoyment you can get out of this book. Your knowledge and life experiences will influence how valuable the message in this book is to you. Despite the warnings in the adverts, you'll be using the past performance of the words in this book to indicate future results. Your current satisfaction with your situation and comfort levels will be having an affect. Reading this whilst hurtling to your certain doom on the back of a poisonous, pissed off porcupine, would 'push the needle' one way or another, I would imagine, depending on your predisposition for pain, comfort and certain doom. Less dramatically, your current feelings, emotions and mood will all be affecting the experience.

So, the injoy is infinitesimally small when compared to the outjoy, but plays a hugely important role in your enjoyment, which makes it very important. Apart from size, the other main difference is that you are the boss of your

injoy, it is your domain to do with as you see fit. You may not be in complete control of what is going on in there yet, but you can choose to improve that. You can choose to tend to your injoy however you see fit, because it's all yours! Good news, with a bit of responsibility thrown in for balance.

Outjoy

So what's left? Well this book for starters, the quality of which, I hope, contributes to your overall enjoyability index. But I think it important for us both to acknowledge that there are probably thousands of other books in the universe that you could be enjoying just as much, if not more so (gulp), at this moment. If you are the subject, this book is the object of your attention right now, ideally. Then there is the environment you are in - the porcupine from earlier or, more conventionally, the chair, room, light, weather and temperature. This can all be boiled down to the stimuli reaching your five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.

As you read, your focus is continuously compromised by reports coming in from your senses, as your body works to keep you safe. Concentration is increased the greater your focus or the lesser the stimuli, but the monitoring never ceases. This is how it should be too - You'll want to know about it if a porcupine is pelting towards you, planning to puncture you with its quills and propel you off the cliff. More normally it's someone in the row behind you in the cinema eating the noisiest sweets in the world and ruining a piece of cinematic art that has taken hundreds of dedicated craftspeople thousands of hours to lovingly produce for your viewing pleasure.

We have a surprisingly high level of control over the outjoy too. For example, we could politely explain to the noisy eater how it is affecting our enjoyment and ask if they could dial it back, or save it for the noisy scenes. We could move seats. We could leave the cinema, explain to the manager and exchange the tickets for another time. We could even choose to enjoy the experience, acknowledging that audience noise is part and parcel of watching a movie in a public space.

I was once kept awake for hours by a dripping sound outside my bedroom window. Seconds would pass between drips, I would wonder if it had stopped, but then it dripped again. I got so wound up. Eventually I resolved to do something about it, or get over it. I opened the window and searched until I located the drip coming from an overflowing gutter, tantalisingly out of reach. I considered climbing out the window and reaching up to clear the blockage. It was wet, cold and dark. Discretion got the better of my valour. I remember distinctly choosing to accept the drip into my life. I went back to bed and found the sound had magically become a comfort rather than an annoyance. It soothed me to sleep.

In the example of this book, if you find yourself not enjoying it (gulp gulp) you can speed up, skim read, skip chapters or even put it down and choose another. You can affect the stimuli, putting on a jumper if you feel cold, or adjusting your seating. Like the drip, you can accept the stimuli and befriend it, or reject it.

A unique attribute of outjoy is that it is a shared space. It's the place where you, me, your friends, family, neighbours and everyone else interact. Your actions can affect the outjoy potential of someone else. You could be the noisy muncher in the cinema, or the person who asks them to quieten down. You can choose to help someone who is lost, or deliberately send them the wrong way.

When you think about it, your outjoy actually encompasses everyone else's injoy, and your injoy is included in everyone else's outjoy. There seems to be a potential for symbiosis at play here, which should motivate everyone to respect everyone else's right to enjoy their lives. It would be mutually beneficial if we all made life as enjoyable as possible for each other. The name for this is collective altruism, concern for the enjoyment of others without expectation of reward. An enjoyment of other people's enjoyment.

Altruism

Altruism can be defined as an individual performing an action that requires effort but benefits a third party, without expectation of reward or compensation. It is a word that was invented in the 19th century as the opposite of egoism which is the philosophy of always acting in your own self-interest.

It is an important pillar of many religions. Christianity has love thy neighbour, Islam has the notion of preferring others to oneself. Judaism defines altruism as the goal of creation. Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism all stress the importance of altruism. It is easy to see why. Altruism is the grease that keeps the cogs of society turning. It is the flexibility in the system, the give in the give and take that is so essential in allowing the imperfect world we live in to run smoothly.

There is an ongoing debate as to whether it is possible to perform a truly altruistic act. There is always the possibility of being intrinsically rewarded through 'feeling good' about being altruistic for example. If I give some money to charity, is it because it makes me feel good about myself? Or the altruism may be rewarded through indirect reciprocity. When I let people in ahead of me in traffic, is it because I know I will need letting in myself at a later date? Even the Dalai Lama identified the reward as a reason for altruism when he said "The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater our own sense of well-being becomes."

I think that we can clear up this confusion if we allow indirect reward, and consider practical altruism as performing an action without expectation of direct reward or compensation. That is certainly still a very desirable behaviour pattern. We can get on with enjoying helping others to enjoy their moments by enhancing the outjoy for all, without guilt that our motivations are selfish.

It would seem that the more altruistic a society is, the more enjoyable it would be to live in, but although there have been many attempts to explicitly

create altruistic societies, their failures are far more noticeable than their successes. Hippy communes and communism come to mind. It is difficult to identify what went wrong in each instance, or even if it is possible for a purely altruistic society to live alongside the more common egoistic capitalist societies. For most of us, the altruism must come from within, from each person that chooses to make the outjoy a little better for all. This is a popular attitude, there are many, many people who enjoy the enjoyment of others. But not all people, which leads us to a difficult dilemma.

A moral dilemma

There is a philosophical question here: “What if my actions to increase my enjoyment reduce the outjoy of others?”

There was a fascinating incident on the TV show “I’m a Celebrity” where Amir Khan persuaded fellow contestant Iain Lee that they should eat all the strawberries and cream rather than return to the camp and share them with all the other contestants who had helped to win them. I was incensed at the injustice.

There is a darker question: “What if I enjoy reducing the outjoy of others?” What if Amir and Iain had come back and told the camp what had occurred, enjoying the disappointment the others would have felt at missing out on delicious strawberries when they all felt so hungry?

I would like to do further research in this area, because I feel it is a loophole in the one commandment that needs to be cleared up. I toyed with adding some small print to the commandment, something like

“Enjoy this moment” (As long as you are not reducing the potential enjoyment of others.)

But I hate kludges like that, ruining the purity of the thought. I would rather keep the whole concept pure, and hope that there is some part of “enjoy this moment” that avoids both attitudes and redirects such energy towards the more altruistic behaviour of increasing the amount of outjoy for everyone.

The reason I feel further research is necessary is because my own personality would not be able to eat all the strawberries and enjoy it. I would be more like Iain who was racked with guilt and soon had to confess and seek

forgiveness from the camp. Or see the group enjoyment of sharing the strawberries as more enjoyable than eating them all myself.

I often find truth in the saying: “You can’t be rich while your neighbour is poor”, it proves itself true time and time again, even though it may be desperately woolly. There is something about enjoyment in that sentiment. I personally find it more enjoyable if those around me are enjoying themselves.

More research would be needed to understand the mindset of Amir, to identify and catalogue any other different mindsets and their effect on each other. For right to the end, Amir showed no sign of guilt or remorse, and although I found I enjoyed the obvious enjoyment he got from the whole situation, I do not understand it.

However, something I do understand all too well is the phenomenon sometimes known as ‘The tragedy of the commons’ whereby I act in ways contrary to the good of humanity. I do it almost every day, probably in many different ways, without thinking. For example, I drive a car. It’s so convenient. I live in the countryside and driving to work takes 15 enjoyable minutes. To cycle would take three times as long and heaven knows how much more effort. So in the best interests of comfort I drive. And the worryingly thin band of atmosphere around our planet that we all rely on for survival gets a little more polluted. I wouldn’t dream of putting a hose pipe pipe in the exhaust output from my car and polluting the atmosphere inside my car! That would be suicide! But out into the atmosphere, sure. It’s crazy when I stop to think about it, but the tragedy is that it’s in my best interests to carry on driving because a) it makes my life easier, b) just me stopping won’t make any noticeable difference to atmospheric pollution levels and c) getting out of the car and cycling in that atmosphere is probably worse for my health! At least I’ve got filters in my car.

I’ve singled out cars as an easy target, but there are many other examples where ‘one more won’t make a difference’ or ‘everyone else is doing it’. I’m lazy and buy all my shopping from supermarkets and online megasites. They have the best prices too, until they’ve cornered the market and put all the competition out of business. Then I’ll be sorry. But I can’t convince myself that switching is going to stop their relentless domination, and I’ll be out of pocket too.

It looks like the car problem will be solved by technology delivering electric cars as a viable alternative, but some commons tragedies need concerted group pressure, the sort of thing government is designed for. However governments operate in their own 'commons' - For example, the British government is unlikely to reign in the British fishermen without neighbouring governments cutting back too.

I'd love to find an answer to this negative, outjoy-reducing pattern. It's so annoying! It's a great opportunity to grab a Nobel prize too, so get your thinking caps on and send me your ideas⁶. I promise to share the credit!

⁶I'm serious! See the conclusion for contact details.

Define Moment

Moment:

A very brief period of time.

How Long is a Moment?

I was supposed to be meeting my brother and his family on the beach, but there was no mobile phone reception and I couldn't find them anywhere. On the upside, I was on a beach and the sun was beating down, so I picked a direction and set off along the shoreline, past the groups of holiday makers with their buckets and spades. The beach became emptier and emptier until it was clear I wouldn't find them here. Remembering to enjoy this moment, I accepted this fact and chose to spread out my towel and sit for a while. It was beautiful: A rare British summer's day showed off the bay at its sparkling best. Gulls drifted elegantly above and the waves slapped gently against the shore. I breathed in deeply and felt my body relax into the moment. I felt so privileged, this was a gift I did not want to waste. After approximately 10 seconds, my inner voice broke the peace:

"I wonder how long I should sit here for?"

This is a question I find myself asking, effectively "Is this moment finished?" The definition of moment does not specify a time in milliseconds, and rightfully so, because moments are not a fixed measure of time, they are not like the seconds, minutes and hours of a clock. Instead they mark the passage of time according to what is happening in your reality.

Sometimes you can synchronise with others and share a moment, and that is a great feeling, but in general we all operate on different moment clocks, if there was such a thing, which there isn't.

The key point is that it is your moment, and you alone will know when it is over. It can't be divined by analysing past moments, or by comparing to other moments. In fact that is another no no:

Do not Compare Moments

So I remind myself to let the moment be, and breathe deeply again, sinking back into the moment. Almost immediately I hear my inner voice again:

“Would it be more enjoyable with headphones on?”

“Or I could read a book?”

“Or read a book with headphones on?”

“Maybe I should sunbathe?”

“Maybe I should walk to the other end of the beach - they may be waiting for me there.”

“Is it too hot? Have I been out too long? Should I go in the shade?”

“Or do I fancy a swim?”

Sometimes, I am so intent on making the most effective use of my time, I can spend any given moment comparing it to all the other possible moments I imagine I could be having, and completely miss the moment itself.

The solution is to recognise that each moment is unique and incomparable. Enjoy this moment, just sitting on the beach, breathing. It will never come again, this moment, so treasure it appropriately. Then enjoy the next moment with headphones on, or reading a book, or swimming.

This is a vital skill to develop - it's often called mindfulness, or being in the moment.

Own This Moment

I spent more than twenty years of my life, my entire 20s and 30s, in ill-fitting shoes. Every pair I owned was a little too narrow, or a little too short, or often both. They were difficult to get on, I had to squeeze into them, opening the laces as much as possible to give my feet some room. It wasn't just my existing roster of shoes that were the problem, all the new shoes I bought had exactly the same problem. I would browse the store, find a style I liked and select an 8, or an 8 and a half if they did them in half sizes, take them home and cram my poor feet in. This may sound inexplicable to you, to be honest I'm struggling to make sense of it now, but I never once questioned whether I was actually a size 8 1/2 or not. I'd been an 8 1/2 all my adult life, 8 1/2 was the size of my feet. If I wanted shoes, they'd better have 8 1/2 in them. Or 8 at a squeeze if they didn't have half sizes.

That day in my 40s when I finally acknowledged what my good wife and mistreated feet had been trying to tell me for years and tried on a pair of 9s, I swear the clouds parted and a beam of golden sunshine struck me. It was a textbook revelation. They were so comfortable, there was so much room. My feet spread out like butter in a hot pan. Sighs of relief came from each one of my grateful toes.

As is common, I must admit I did overcompensate at first; there's a pair of 11s in the back of my wardrobe that will only ever be needed if I am required to walk on water or perform as a clown, but now the initial euphoria has died down, I live with the daily enjoyment of comfortable shoes, and a constant reminder to take ownership of every aspect of my life.

The decision that eventually led to better fitting shoes was finally accepting the gift of life that had been given to me, taking ownership of each and every moment from that moment on.

Life may be the greatest gift, but that doesn't mean we have to accept it. Many never do, alarmed at the responsibility, denying ownership. Our business coach calls it living above or below the point of power, and uses the

acronym OAR / BED to describe the common behaviours that are exhibited on both sides:

- O - Ownership
- A - Accountability
- R - Responsibility
-
- B - Blame
- E - Excuses
- D - Denial

Think about where your own behaviours commonly lie. We all usually drink from both troughs at different times and in different scenarios, but I have found my life improves without fail every time I select an OAR response over a BED.

I believe we have a good name for someone who has taken ownership of their life - we call them an adult. Unfortunately this is also the legal name for someone who is 18 or older, but in my experience there is no firm correlation between someone's age and whether they have truly taken ownership of their life. It may be that 18 is the average age, but I doubt it, especially nowadays, especially in males. Progress has made life easier in many ways, it has enabled childhood to last much longer than at any time in history. I celebrate that. No-one wants their child to have to grow up too fast. The average lifespan is hugely elongated these days too, so it is only right that childhood as a proportion should be longer. The issue is, as is so often the case, expectation. When you look at a fully grown 30 something man, with his stubble and his expensive clothes, his disposable income and his responsible job, it is easy to mistake him for an adult. And that mistake can be very painful. A better test is their attitude to play, in its many forms - sports games, computer games, conquering both in the bedroom and the boardroom, playing in a band, addiction and partying, vicarious participation via fandom - The bigger the role play has in their lives, the more you should visualise them in shorts running round the playground. This will help both you and them to set the correct levels of expectation.

Now before I come across too Scrooge-like, let me assert that play is wonderful, play is fun, play is a necessary component of a rounded life. Play is enjoyable! The Oxford English Dictionary says so:

Play:

Engage in activity for enjoyment or recreation, rather than a serious or practical purpose.

I think that definition is ok, but I believe there is enjoyment to be had in every activity. My definition of play would be:

Play:

Engage in activity for pleasure.

Whereas my definition of work would be:

Work:

Engage in activity to create.

Let me be clear, this does not exclude play from being creative, or work from being pleasurable. But it clearly identifies the goal of the activity. If you are playing and you create, then that's great, but optional. If you do not get any pleasure, however, then it's not been successful play. Similarly, if you are working and you get pleasure from your work, then great, but there needs to be output - a creation - for the work to be a success. It may be a subtle differentiation, but it has a huge impact on behaviours.

I think it also worth pointing out the difference between work and employment because they are sometimes used interchangeably. Sheena Easton sang 'He works from 9 to 5', but she would have been more correct to state 'He is employed from 9 to 5'. Whether he gets any work done during that time is dictated by many factors.

One final note about adulthood before we move on. In my experience, females become adults earlier than males. Childbirth is still only experienced by females and is such a momentous event that it often catalyses a transformation to Adulthood. Unfortunately the male partner does not have the same level of stimulus and can be left behind, like Peter Pan, the ultimate story about refusing to accept the gift of life. In fact, just read or watch that story, and I'll stop labouring the point right now.

Voluntary Living

I like to call this acceptance of the gift of life voluntary living, because it reminds me that I have consciously chosen the life I lead. No one is making me do anything - that's really important to me. This is autonomy, and it is identified by Daniel Pink in his excellent book 'Drive: The Surprising Truth about what Motivates us'⁷, as one of the three key ingredients to motivation. I have to say I agree, my motivation has been consistently full on since I chose voluntary living. I think the crucial aspect is the recognition and acceptance of choice.

There is a quote, attributed to the inspirational neurologist, psychologist and holocaust survivor Viktor E. Frankl, that puts it perfectly:

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

I cannot stress how important that space is. That space is the final frontier, it is where whatever you are searching for lies.

⁷ Drive: The Surprising Truth about what Motivates us - Daniel Pink

Reactive or Proactive Mindset

At my work we develop and support software. If one of our customers has a problem, they call us and we will troubleshoot and fix it with the minimum disruption to their business. We take pride in our responsiveness, and our customers value this ability to 'phone a friend' when trouble strikes. When my Dad started the business, he would stop whatever he was doing and answer the call as quickly as possible, deal with whatever situation arose, and then pick up whatever he'd been doing before and carry on.

As we grew, we simply scaled this technique. Whoever could answer the phone first would have whatever they were working on interrupted whilst they dealt with the call. What we found, however, was that this had several problems. Anyone could find their work interrupted at any time, making it difficult to stick to schedules reliably. It takes time to get your head around a lot of the work we do, so each call would add a random amount of 'context switching' overhead to any given task. But the most insidious effect was the continuous low level element of the unknown that it added to the workday of every member of the team.

These issues were uncovered when we finally reviewed how we worked. We implemented a role of 'Incident Manager' and made a rota to ensure someone was responsible for the role every day. For this person, responding to customer issues is the number one priority. There are days with no customer issues, and the incident manager is free to use that time as they see fit. They know, however, that if the call comes in from a customer, they will drop everything to respond.

This simple adjustment has improved our response times as there is no confusion over who should respond. It means that everyone else in the team can now plan their day with a high level of confidence that they will be able to carry out that plan. We have effectively switched everyone from working reactively to proactively, apart from the Incident Manager, but even they are being reactive proactively.

It has made the business a more enjoyable place to work. I recognise a marked reduction in my anxiety levels, and a marked increase in my productivity.

It seems so obvious now when we look back, but to be honest we grew large enough to make the change several years before we finally did. The problem was that although we knew there was a problem, inertia meant that we carried on doing things the way we always had. In a classic chicken and egg situation, we required a proactive mindset to create a proactive workplace. How is it possible to pull off that trick? Knowledge is the key, and you are still reading, so read on, dear seeker of knowledge, and let me unlock the door...

What does your Ideal Version of Today look like?

The good news is that developing a proactive mindset requires nothing outside of you. You don't need any special tools, you don't need spare cash. You can begin anytime, in a moment. How about now? This moment?

Think about today (or tomorrow if it's late). Think about how you would like it to pan out. Imagine how you would design the day if you were master of your own destiny, or how you would script it if you were the director of your life movie. What would it contain? Be as vivid and detailed as you care to, and don't hold back, dance like no one is watching.

Beautiful.

Now for the potentially harsh reality check. Hold up your ideal version of today up against your expectation of what today will be like. If they are identical, I take my hat off to you. Congratulations, you are living your best life. Enjoy today, and repeat the exercise tomorrow.

I can't see either version but I'm going to guess that there are differences. They may be small differences: you may have imagined drinking Earl Grey tea with your fry up, but predict it'll be builder's tea, for example, or you may have imagined working in an environment where your boss appreciated and respected you but predict he'll be a shouty bully just like every day for the last five years. The differences may be huge: Your ideal version of today does not feature your job at all, instead you see yourself diving for pearls in the Indian Ocean, or snuggled under the duvet with snacks and a Netflix box set rather than looking after the kids.

Visualise yourself in a boat on a river. The river splits up ahead and there is a signpost. The sign pointing straight on, towards your expected day reads 'REACTIVE', and the sign pointing off to the side, towards your ideal day reads 'PROACTIVE'. If you sit back in the boat and let the river take you, it is very likely that you will end up at your expected day. If you ever want to end

up at your ideal day, you are going to have to get the oars out and get proactive.

Identify something you can change in your expected day that would make it more like your ideal day, get proactive and make it happen. It may take a moment, it may take a lifetime, but by starting to make a change you have affected your future, you've got the oars out, you have become master of your destiny.

You set a reminder and buy a box of Earl Grey on the way home. Enjoy your breakfasts.

You decide you are not prepared to put up with your boss's boorish behaviour. You make a formal complaint to his boss.

You read up on the pearl diving tradition, book a holiday to Sri Lanka to see if it truly is the life for you, and practise holding your breath.

You negotiate one precious day a week of childcare and recharge your exhausted mind and body.

This is a trick that has made a huge difference to my quality of life. The changes in my days have been dramatic when viewed over a long timeframe, but have required relatively small adjustments. I have found that the hardest part for me is identifying the problem, as I have let the problem develop precisely because I have a natural blind spot in that area. Visualising my ideal day and then comparing it to my expected day lets me 'zoom out' and see problematic behaviour patterns more clearly.

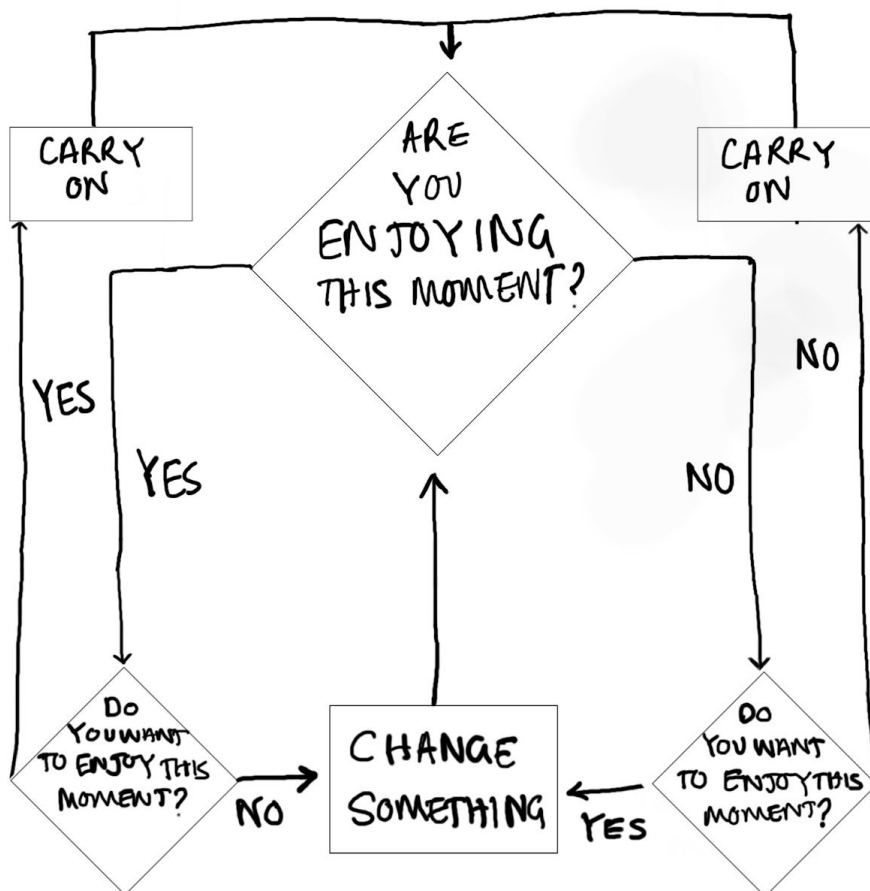
I have changed the text on my wake up alarm to read "What does your ideal day look like?" and spend the snooze time spotting differences between the two potential days. It is also a great reminder that I have chosen to be the master of my own destiny. I am the scriptwriter. This is very empowering in itself and puts me in a positive, proactive frame of mind for the day.

Just becoming more aware of the proportion of proactive and reactive activities you undertake is a great way to start. Peter F Drucker, the management consultants' management consultant, estimated in his seminal 1966 article 'How to Manage your Time' ⁸ that executives spend less than 25%

⁸ Peter F Drucker - How to Manage your Time

of their time on proactive activities, and argues that increasing that percentage has the greatest impact on achievement and performance. He advocates blocking out sections of time to focus on specific areas of the business, ring-fencing them and guarding them at all costs against intrusion by reactive incursions.

Don't get me wrong, life still happens. I still have to react, to roll with the punches, to think on my feet. In all parts of my life, I try to be proactive and plan, but being proactive does not mean rigidly sticking to your plan no matter what. Being proactive means being flexible and agile, continually evaluating the current situation and adapting. Here's a simple flowchart you should check on a continuous basis to keep you on track.



(Note that in the bottom left and right decision blocks it is entirely your choice whether or not you want to enjoy this moment, although I must admit to struggling to think of reasons not to. Any suggestions⁹?

⁹My contact details are at the end of the book. I really would love to hear from you.

How to Maximise the Chance of Enjoyable

So, you've chosen the enjoyable life, congratulations, you deserve some treats. How about some tools you can use to make it easier to enjoy this moment? Firstly, for your delight and delectation, I have ways to help you enjoy the moments you encounter, to get the most out of the situations you find yourself in. And then as a counterpoint I have ways to help you make the situations you find yourself in more enjoyable, to improve the enjoyability of the moment.

Or as Matt Johnson of the band 'The The' puts it in the song 'Lonely Planet'

"If you can't change the world, change yourself. And if you can't change yourself, then change the world."

Let's start with you..

Maximising Injoy

As we noted earlier, there is a insignificantly small, but uniquely important region in this universe that is yours and yours alone to command. It's border is your skin and it contains the entirety of you, the wonder that is your body and the jewel that is your mind. What goes on outside your skin may be subject to nature, and the whims and desires of others, but within you, you're the boss. What you say goes. You are the ultimate dictator, with no chance of being overthrown. You are the boss of you.

Let's look at some of the ways you can use that power to make it more likely that you will enjoy any given moment.

Manage your Expectations

"I just drank a cup of tea and I thought it was horrible but turns out it was coffee and it was actually pretty nice."

Matty Healy

As Matty so eloquently expresses, expectations are almost certainly the number one destroyer of enjoyment so let's tackle them head on, because in your domain you're the boss. Let's start with the definition:

Expectation:

An assumption that something will happen.

And you know what happens when you assume? - you make an ASS of U and ME. Trite? Maybe. True? Frequently.

The problem arises when we convert an expectation into a fact. A factspection if you will. So for example, every day I expect it will take me 30 minutes to drive to work. Yesterday it was 25 minutes, last week I averaged 31 minutes. I have a whole history of trips to base this expectation on. I come to rely on this expectation, it congeals in my mind and becomes a factspection. I build on top of it and plan my day around it. I arrange meetings and calls and

workload. Then one day I find myself at 8.50am, sitting in a traffic jam, only halfway to the office. I kept my end of the bargain and left home promptly at 8.30am, but it is becoming very clear to me that I am not going to make it to the office on time. This is not fair. I feel let down. I feel very, very angry, but I don't really know who has let me down or where to direct my anger, so it probably goes at my fellow drivers, who are also suffering, or the workmen digging up the road, or the government, while the expectation gets off scot-free.

Our brains do an incredible job of taking wildly disparate stimuli from each of our 5 senses and amalgamating them into one cohesive representation of the world, so that we can make sense of the environment we inhabit, interact with it, exist within it. It's a Herculean task that the most powerful computers known to man are nowhere near matching, and it's one that is repeated every moment we are awake. To make the representation as useful as possible, a technique called Level of Detail is used. It's the same technique used in computer games whereby the nearest objects are rendered in the greatest detail, while distant objects are progressively more rudimentary. It makes sense - we are most likely to be interested in our immediate surroundings - we can deal with the rest when it gets closer. Unfortunately this technique does rely heavily on expectations. Distant objects are not expected to be as important as near ones for example, which can cause us to over stress the importance of current events while simultaneously denigrate long range planning.

Our field of vision covers only about one third of the total area around us. Your brain expects that there is not a truck, a tiger or a thief behind you right now. Have you checked recently? Nothing worrying there? Good! Expectation proved correct again.

Our hand can hold our phone without dropping it. That car will see me and not pull out. There will be orange squash in the orange squash bottle. I remember that last expectation biting me hard one hot camping trip when my dad chose an old orange squash bottle to hold our supply of orange paraffin. I was several swallows in before I identified that particular factspectation. We laugh about it now (well, truth be told my family laughed about it then) but I remember being incensed at the time at the stupidity of someone choosing a

drinking vessel and filling it with toxic chemicals THAT LOOK LIKE THE ORIGINAL CONTENTS OF THE VESSEL. But though it may pain me to admit it, that act is only an accessory to the root problem of my factspectation. I'd like to report that I was fine (I was, although I was careful breathing around naked flames for a while), and that I learnt my lesson, but I can remember other incidents since where I've assumed an orange carton would contain non mouldy juice, and a milk carton would contain unlumpy milk. Both of those times, however, I owned the situation. And that's the crucial step - building on top of, and acting on expectations is an essential part of life. The key is to label them clearly, and not get them mixed up with facts.

I expect everyone in our family to treat each other with respect, but I have to also acknowledge it is only my expectation, it may not be everyone else's. And it's not a rule or a law or a fact, I cannot enforce it. And it is only my judgement. Three very good reasons why the only recourse I have, whenever I feel that it has not been met, is to reiterate the expectation. No consequences, no emotional manipulation, just a reiteration of the expectation. It may not seem like much, you'd be surprised at how effective it is - I know I was.

Enjoy the Journey

Have you ever had a dream that came true? Or set yourself a challenge and achieved it? It can be surprisingly deflating, once the initial euphoria wears off, and the brass band go home. This is usually because of the expectations that we've attached to the goal.

"When I'm a millionaire, then I will be happy."

"When I win the race, I will be revered."

"When I get that promotion, I will feel fulfilled."

If the goal is achieved and the expectation is not met then success can actually trigger a slump as we work through the stages of grief: Shock, Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance. But even if the expectation is met, the realisation of a goal is an ending which can leave a hole in your life. The time you've been dedicating is now very free and very empty. The part of your brain you've been using to think about the challenge is freed up. All the

knowledge you've built up is now overkill. You probably need to find a new challenge to fill the void and this cycle of achievement and emptiness will one day seem like a mouse wheel - round and round, with no end. Well, that's not strictly true: There is always death. It seems strange to think of death as a goal, but that's exactly what it is. It's the ultimate goal of every single life. The final destination. The last milestone. Writing that down makes me feel a bit like I do when standing too close to the edge of a drop that would kill me. Staring at death is spectacularly uncomfortable, and with good reason. Our DNA is screaming 'SURVIVE', and a natural strategy we use to avoid death is to quite literally avoid it. That obviously means avoiding situations where the risk of achieving it are high, but an unfortunate side effect is that we avoid thinking about it too, avoid talking about it.

The good news is that death is a goal we're all going to successfully achieve. The bad news is that there is no evidence that it won't be a huge disappointment, just like so many other of our achievements.

But the more good news is that there is another way of looking at life, rather than as the wait before achieving the goal of death, and that is by focusing on the journey rather than the destination. It's the journey, after all, that takes up the most time. If the goal is the nib, then the journey is the pencil. If the goal is the finish line, the journey is the track. You get the idea. The journey is actually the main event, not a necessary evil. Make the journey your friend, my friend, and you will have unlocked another door to an enjoyable life. Once you've recognised the potential of the journey, and chosen to enjoy it, actually enjoying it is just a matter of organisation and mindfulness. Use the technique of enjoyable productivity set out later on in this book to organise your time and effort so that you are productive. Use that precious resource of attention to focus on the task at hand, revel in it, treat it as practice and enjoy the moment.

Enjoy the Lows

I'm feeling good as I write this. We're in the middle of an unusually sunny British summer, the family is all well and together. The external environment is making it easy for me to enjoy these moments, and my internal mindset is

good too, I'm well equipped with Ownership, Accountability and Responsibility, I feel like I have Autonomy, Mastery and Purpose. I find it difficult to imagine life being any other way but I know that life isn't always like this. This is a sort of blindness I have. When it is sunny I think it has always been sunny and always will be. But I know from experience that as soon as the weather turns to rainy I will believe it has always been rainy and always will be. The same with moods, which means I have to be extra careful when I am feeling down, because I will exacerbate the situation by telling myself that it's always like this, life sucks, it's all pointless, sending myself down further in a panic vortex of negativity.

I find that breaking this feedback loop is as simple as remembering to enjoy the moment. 'Enjoy this moment?' My panicking chimp mind squeals. 'Are you joking? Have you been paying even the slightest attention to the trouble we're in?' The technique that works for me is to create a diversion. 'What's that sound?' I ask the chimp who immediately starts listening for what it assumes is a threat. There's always sound when you stop and listen. For me now there's doves and other higher pitched birdsong, the rustle of leaves, a car pulling up on gravel, something that sounds like a comedy duck in the distance. Becoming mindful and focusing attention on the external details like this breaks through the vortex and reconnects me to the moment. Within that moment I can remind myself of the single requirement of enjoying it. Ideally a perspective shift takes place whereby all the facts remain the same, but their importance is reassessed. I've experienced shifts from deepest despair to enjoyable acceptance in less time than it has taken to read this sentence. That's one of the amazing things about life, it really is just a matter of perspective and we are capable of changing perspective in a moment. It's like a film where the hero recognises he is in a dream and instantly returns to reality.

Now I am not going to pretend this is going to be easy because it isn't. Recognising one of these descents while you are experiencing it is one of the hardest skills to master, so don't give yourself a hard time when you don't pull it off, but it is a skill well worth practising and celebrating any time that you do manage to do it.

Developing the ability to enjoy the lows also dramatically increases the number of moments you can enjoy, because you can be pretty confident your life is going to give you lemons. Beyoncé knows it. She was going through a particularly hard time in her life. You know the type - billionaire rap star hubby problems. She took the bunch of lows she was given and turned them into a kick-ass album, full of biting truths. She even named it *Lemonade* to ram home the point.

And that reminds me. The lows are enjoyable, we all know it. That's what weepy movies are so successful. Enjoying feeling down. I love me some mooney old band whining about their problems, that's my jam! I enjoy the feeling of depths being plumbed, of hearts being wrung, of dreams being crushed. I distinctly remember being dumped as a teenager and going somewhere private so I could really enjoy wallowing in the self-pity, maybe even unleash some hot salty tears. Emotions of all colours and strengths are enjoyable, they are confirmation we are alive, which is by far the best state yet known to humanity.

Enjoy What you Do

To spice things up, I have a quote within a quote for you now:

“First, Will what is necessary, then Love what you will”¹⁰

“There's a profound insight there that I've tried to live by, long before I read the quote. Life asks many things of us that we don't want to do. Some of them are distractions, but some of them are necessary. It's so easy to be full of resentment toward things that we feel are keeping us from our joy. Finding joy in what needs doing is magical. Learning to love the things that are necessary—like daily chores—is the secret of happiness.”¹¹

I love both these quotes and the concept behind them. It's seductively simple. First choose what to do based on your needs, then enjoy doing it. You

¹⁰ *When Nietzsche Wept* - Irvin Yalom

¹¹ *The Secret of Happiness and Living a Good Life* - Tim O'Reilly

get what you need while enjoying the moment into the bargain. Winner winner, food for dinner.

I'm going to leave this advice to stand on its own in all of its simple purity. I've found a lot of initial resistance to the idea, but have yet to find a counter-argument that stands up, so I strongly recommend you give it a go.

Lighten Up

I have a tendency to intensity. I enjoy intensity, it feels like I'm harnessing all my powers and crushing it. But I have to be careful not to overcook it, because then it can stop being enjoyable both for me and for anyone in my vicinity. "With great power comes great responsibility", as Peter Parker's uncle said. (That saying works the other way around too - with great responsibility comes great power). Practice has allowed me to manage myself better, but there are still times when I could do with someone slapping me across the face with a giant rubber chicken squawking 'LIGHTEN UP' in a comedy voice. Hopefully it would trigger a re-evaluation of priorities and a perspective shift back to enjoying the moment. Seriousness is never an excuse not to enjoy the moment. Nothing is.

"My dog doesn't worry about the meaning of life."

Charlotte Joko Beck¹²

Start Here

Injoy is definitely the first area to focus on because, as they say in the airline safety talk, "Please first put on your own oxygen mask". It is essential that you look after yourself first. This may sound selfish, but it really isn't. Selfishness is defined as being excessively concerned with oneself. We are talking about taking care of yourself, and this is more than just a good idea, this is your duty to you and the life you have been given.

¹² Everyday Zen: Love and Work - Charlotte Joko Beck

Believing that you must put others before you is a mindset that leads to feeling unappreciated, frustrated, disillusioned, even depressed. This is pathological altruism. As Marshall B Rosenberg said:

“Depression is the reward we get for being ‘good’.”¹³

To care for other people, you need to be in good shape yourself. Like an athlete needs to take care of her body to compete, we need to take care of our injoy to best be able to enjoy the moment. It makes us stronger and the stronger we are, the more we can help to cultivate an enjoyable outjoy for everyone. Let's look at some of the ways to maximise outjoy.

¹³ Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life - Marshall B. Rosenberg

Maximising Outjoy

I don't know about you but I am not a natural morning person. Most times that I wake up there is a dark cloud hanging over my head, a feeling of unease has settled on me during the night. Something is wrong, it warns me. Today is not going to be a good day.

This dark cloud is usually exacerbated by the fact that we live in the UK where the environment seems to suffer from a similar morning mood. The blues is not a good literal description, most days the greys would be more accurate. Grey oppressive cloud covering any glimpse of blue sky. The sun too seems to struggle to get out of bed under these uninspiring conditions, hiding under the covers until long after I have had to get up. It is into these damp, cold, dark, grey mornings that I have to somehow drag my sad, worried, low, resisting mind and its containing body. It may come as no surprise to you that I often find I struggle to enjoy these moments.

Of the four of us in our house, I'd say only my wife wakes with any *joie de vivre*, but even she struggles when the weather is particularly grim. Our two daughters, well they're both teenagers which I believe has been scientifically proven to be the most challenging period of your life to wake up in. They are also most likely getting up to go to school which is something they have no choice in, and we've seen how important autonomy is to motivation.

What I'm saying is that mornings in the Webb household are a highly volatile, powder-keg situation, worthy of a high vis warning sign and a 500 yard exclusion zone.

Or at least they were for most of our lives together but I can honestly say that we've mostly solved mornings now, and this during a period that has included the huge pressures of A-Level and GCSE exams. We're all still dealing with our own baggage, and occasionally one of us has a meltdown, but it is now the exception, not the norm, and is usually met with love and support rather than triggering a chain reaction. This improvement in our lives is one of my main motivations to getting all this down on paper, in the somewhat smug but well intentioned hope that others may benefit from our experiences.

First thing we did was get older! Babies and toddlers, and young children are hard, hard work. To paraphrase Kyle Reese:

“They can’t be bargained with. They can’t be reasoned with. They don’t feel pity, or remorse or fear. And they absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead.”¹⁴

OK, the last bit may be slightly over-dramatic, he was talking about the Terminator after all, but this was the quote that most often came to mind during our early family life. If you are part of a young family, hang in there, weather the storm. Teenagers may have issues (dramatic understatement), but at least they are running the same operating system as adults, even if it’s new to them, often buggy and a work in progress. By comparison, babies are bare metal with only minimal communication port access, and toddler OS seems to be mostly incompatible and frequently incomprehensible.

On a more practical level, I personally worked on enjoying the moment, becoming less a part of the problem and more a part of the solution. I never aspired to be ‘the rock’ in our relationship and I don’t mean the hugely successful, hugely built, all round nice guy Dwayne ‘the rock’ Johnson, although I’m sure it would be very cool to be him. No, I’m referring to the steady, dependable role that dramatic, exciting, glamorous partners often refer to in their award acceptance speeches. But it turns out that’s who I am, and we all know how crucial it is to be the authentic you. My life improves the more authentically I behave, and if that means accepting the role of ‘the rock’ then that’s what I’ll do. Turns out the role is much more enjoyable than I expected. It means when I can’t find the words, I can ascribe it to my ‘strong, silent type’ rather than berating myself for not being a dashing star. It’s not a full time role, either. I can utilise other parts of my personality in other situations. Seeing the benefit that this stability brings to my family and my environment is a huge reward too, especially as we get older when it seems natural and right to increasingly become supporting actors, making way on the stage for the next generation to shine.

¹⁴ From the 1984 movie “The Terminator”

Observation

To improve my rock-like support capability during the tricky morning moments, I firstly became more mindful. I made an effort to observe how I was feeling and behaving, what I was thinking during this time. This is not easy, let me tell you. The moments that you're trying to observe, the ones that are causing the most grief, are exactly the same moments when your frame of mind is least prepared for dispassionate observation. Or put the other way, by the time you are calm enough to observe what is happening, by definition the drama is already over. Like Schrodinger's cat, it is only there when you are not looking at it.

What I can say is that it is a skill you can develop and that it does get easier with practice. I started by keeping a simple log book and writing down an entry after each event when I felt my behaviour had not been enjoyable either to me or my family. I noted the time, the behaviour and crucially what I believed the trigger was. Just this act alone was enough to reveal a treasure trove of triggers that I could then work on avoiding or learning to cope with. Over time I found that I could review my behaviour earlier and earlier, eventually catching myself observing my behaviour actually during the moment. I'm essentially re-classifying the feelings I usually get during these moments as signals that there is something to be learnt, rather than threat alerts. If I feel the anger or panic rising up in me, I have now trained a part of my mind to think 'this is interesting, I wonder what's triggering this behaviour' - In classic SWOT analysis terms, I have converted a threat into an opportunity to learn and grow.

This was how I discovered my propensity to overestimate the severity of the situation first thing in the morning. Catastrophising is a great word for it. After another textbook morning meltdown, I dutifully wrote down the time and behaviour and then used the 5 whys technique to uncover the root trigger. I dug down through the surface symptoms such as 'I hate being kept waiting' down through 'no one respects me' and 'I'm just unlovable' to the root trigger. 'I woke up like this' I realised, just like Beyoncé sings, although I'm not sure this is what she has in mind. "I just feel like I got out of the wrong side of bed

this morning". Looking back through my log I find other instances of exactly the same trigger, albeit often hiding behind more surface triggers. Bingo. Trigger identified. In my experience, identifying the trigger is by far the hardest and time consuming part of the whole process - 80% or so my maths brain says. Devising and implementing a solution is often trivial in comparison.

In this particular case I have slowly learnt that the best solution is to not pay too much attention to these first feelings, to get on with my morning and wait for my emotions to warm up and catch up to the reality of my situation, which is almost always more positive than I first feel. That is so easy to do - basically do nothing, don't try any tricky emotional activity first thing in the morning, save it for later. Appreciate that if things look bad, it's likely the look, not the things that is messed up. Hold off judging anything. The court only sits after lunch. Be like Viktor E. Frankl and choose your response to the stimulus.

The other thing I do is preparation. Anything I can do to help myself during this boot-up process is beneficial. I have found that a very successful way to help me enjoy these difficult moments is to prepare during the easier moments of my life.

Preparation

It's like Joseph's Egyptian masters stockpiling corn during the good years, in preparation for the upcoming famine. Except I stockpile socks...

(I must warn you, this may stray too far into nerd territory for some. Hold your nerve, it's just my example. You do you.)

I get out of bed first in our house, especially during the cold winters when the ice is on the inside of the window panes in stark contrast to the cosiness under the duvet. Even though I'm a rock, it's a struggle. Because of the cold frosting my extremities, I naturally try to get dressed as quickly as possible, often in the dark so as to not blind or strike fear into my slowly awakening wife. It's these moments the mischievous fairies choose to bury my boxer shorts and separate my socks, randomly turning one or all inside out for good

measure. It turns out that searching through the drawer and hopping on one foot in the dark trying to get an inside out sock on a cold foot do not improve my mood. After recognising the benefit of minimising mood reducers during this crucial part of the day, I sought solutions and came to the inspired realisation that if I made sure all my socks were the right way round and paired when I put them in the drawer, it put the mischievous fairies off their game and they left them that way. As a lap of honour I wrapped each pair of socks in a pair of boxer shorts and placed them at the front of my drawer. With this one simple piece of preparation, getting dressed has transformed from a potential minefield of negativity to a small but not insignificant firework burst of smug satisfaction as I gracefully pluck a baton of underwear from my drawer and fluidly attire myself with the minimum of drama and the maximum of speed. In my mind it is such poetry in motion that I have even thought about turning on the light so that my wife may enjoy the show, but then I remember my first lesson to not trust my early morning feelings, and a personal performance it remains.

“Enjoy the little things. One day you may realise that they are the big things.”

Robert Brault

Practice

There are two common meanings of the word practice:

Practice:

1. Repeated exercise to acquire or maintain proficiency.

Eg: Practice makes perfect

2. The habitual way of doing something.

Eg: Common practice

I would like to combine both meanings into one here and express the need to ‘Always be practising’. In this current instance, it means always checking the socks are the right way round, pairing them and wrapping them up when

you put them away. Every week. For the rest of your life. Recognising the propensity to wake up like a bear with a sore head and keeping an eye out for unenjoyable behaviour every day, without fail, for the rest of your life. Because if you reach into the drawer and there are no ready rolls, your expectations are going to take a big hit. And if you lose it for no reason on the morning run, your status as a Rock is going to get chipped.

Doing something the same way, at the same time, every day forever definitely sounds like a recipe for monotony and boredom, and neither of those sound very enjoyable. Hopefully by now we've all signed up for the 'Enjoyable Life' TM. How can we make the monotonous enjoyable?

I find that viewing the activity as practice is the saviour. Practice provides meaning to even the 10,000th time you do something because it gives purpose, the purpose of improving. For example, imagine being Roger Federer, the great tennis player. How many tennis balls has he hit in his lifetime? 50 million maybe? And counting. Surely he'd be sick to the back teeth of it by now? And yet he seems to be as motivated to hit the next one as he ever has been because he still sees himself as a student of the game of tennis, still learning, still improving. Imagine that! 50 million repetitions and still hungry to learn. Now I'm pretty sure whatever we're working on we haven't done 50 million times yet, and I'm also pretty sure we're not as proficient at it as Roger is at hitting a tennis ball. So there is plenty of scope in whatever the activity is for improvement, so let's get practising! But how? Well, there are 4 ingredients to successful practice.

A Desire to Improve

It's really simplest to have the attitude that you would like to improve in every tiny aspect of your life. That covers every situation. However, failing that a specific desire to improve the specific activity will suffice.

Mindfulness

You must focus your attention on the task, observe the tiny details of what it entails and how you perform. Attention is the answer to many of life's challenges and one of your most valuable resources. Use it wisely.

Critical Judgement

What worked and what could be done better? Which parts do you find difficult and why? It is essential that you judge your performance without dipping below the point of power into BED (Blame, Excuses and Denial) and make adjustments where necessary. This ingredient is the difference between:

Practice makes perfect

And

Practice makes permanent

A Willingness to Explore

Finally play! Try new ways. Fail. So many breakthroughs have been made by mistake. Post-it notes were a failed experiment to find a stronger glue. Failure is in dire need of a makeover. It has such a bad reputation when in fact it is a glorious and essential milestone on the way to each and every success. Failure is not the opposite of success, giving up is. Failure is learning, failure is practice - Truth be told, It's also very enjoyable if the ego can be bypassed.

And the final gift of practice is that if you do ever perfect the activity, when there is simply nothing you can do better and you can do it backwards in your sleep with your eyes closed, then it transforms into a habit like breathing or walking, and you no longer have to even think about it anymore.

Manipulating the Outjoy

Manipulating the Outjoy is a powerful feeling. We first learn that we can have an effect on the outjoy when we cry and milk is forthcoming. From that moment on we are constantly fascinated with exploring our powers. A big part of growing up is learning to control these powers and controlling the urges within us to manipulate in response to our feelings.

Here are a couple of red flags to watch out for:

Using Anger to Control

Anger is frequently an outjoy control technique. If you can recognise this, you can go a long way to being in charge of anger, both yours and other people's.

Think of a time when you got angry. When you get angry at someone else, you are attempting to control their behaviour, using their fear response to drive the change you desire.

When someone gets angry at me, my standard response is to become fearful and either belligerent or submissive. However, when I remember that the anger is just a control technique, I can remain calm and focus on the underlying request of the person which is more helpful to us both.

Getting angry at yourself is for exactly the same reason, trying to change your own behaviour. If you can accept that, then it becomes possible to try changing your behaviour in a more caring way, without the fireworks. Now when things go wrong, I try to be kind to myself, accept that life is not a smooth road, and learn from the lesson without getting Mr Angry out of his cage. Same result, more enjoyment.

Using Love to Control

This is a more insidious control technique than anger, because love has such a good PR presence, but the power of love can be used to manipulate the outjoy just as effectively as anger. We use two techniques to encourage compliance: love withdrawal and positive reinforcement.

Firstly, love can be withdrawn with the understanding that it will be only be returned when the correct behaviour is demonstrated. This technique can be as subtle as a slight cooling of affection in response to a unwanted behaviour, or as overt as saying "I don't love you when you act that way". 'Time out' and walking out are love withdrawal techniques as they can isolate the one deemed to be in the wrong.

The second technique is positive reinforcement, or rewards, the technique of giving love when the correct behaviour is displayed. I know this technique is hugely popular and seemingly benign, but think about it. The message that is

being transmitted is that your love for someone is dependent on the things they do, or the behaviour they display.

This is a crucially important area to understand, especially if you are a parent looking to raise well-adjusted children. I urge you to read the Book 'Unconditional Parenting'¹⁵ which makes a hugely compelling case for removing both kinds of conditional love from our relationships if we are really serious about giving our children the best upbringing we can.

By recognising how anger and love can be misused in an attempt to manipulate the Outjoy I hope you will be able to recognise the techniques when they are used on you, and also that you will recognise if you have developed them as habits, and begin to break them, because none of these techniques are enjoyable to either party, no matter the short-term gain.

I have a couple of more positive techniques you can use to try and increase the outjoy for others, as long as you remember that you are not able to make someone enjoy. You can take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

Transposing

This is a technique from 'The Inner Game of Work'¹⁶ and asks you to try and see the world from the other person's point of view. As Emo Philips said:

"Never judge someone until you've walked a mile in his shoes. That way, when you do judge him, you're a mile away and you have his shoes."

But seriously, the world can look very different from someone else's perspective, and if you want to create a healthier outjoy for them it would be good idea to try and understand it. So visualise yourself transported into their shoes, and ask yourself these three questions:

What am I thinking?

What am I feeling?

¹⁵ Unconditional Parenting - Alfie Kohn

¹⁶ The Inner Game of Work - W. Timothy Gallwey

What do I want?

I am not sure if this requires a special level of empathy or not, but I am frequently surprised by the clarity of understanding that this can give me into the other persons world. It can feel like a magic teleport, and I come back feeling like I know how to make the outjoy a little better for them.

Of course I can easily get it completely wrong, which can lead to comic gold, or crushing disappointment. So I would strongly recommend always trying this other technique first, something I like to call:

Ask Them

‘Questions are the answers¹⁷’ is another great book that covers this technique in detail, and also pulls off the trick that only great books manage of putting all the wisdom into the title too!

Now it may not seem like much of a technique to you, but it is criminally underused and frequently leads to startling results. I think there’s almost certainly a ‘how to attract the partner of your dreams’ book in this one simple piece of advice. If you do try it out expect to become the toast of the town.

1. The first part is the question:

“Tell me, what do you want?”

2. The second part is listening to the answer.

3. The final part is to try and manipulate the outjoy for that person so that they get what they want.

That’s it! Simple! Of course, there are all sorts of obstacles that may get in your way. They may not know what they want, they may not want to tell you, you may not understand, you may not be able to help them achieve it, they may not actually want what they thought they wanted once they’ve got it. But mostly life is a lot simpler than that. You ask, they tell, you help, they enjoy. It’s a winning formula. I strongly urge you to give it a go.

¹⁷ Questions are the Answers - Allan Pease

Enjoyable Work

“The secret is, I think, always so to contrive that work is pleasant”

Virginia Woolf

Hands up everyone who enjoys their holidays?

Now, hands up everyone who enjoys their work?

Not so many hands.

It's a sad fact of modern life that we usually find work less enjoyable than holidays, especially as we work approximately two thirds of the days of the year.

I would love to be able to explain how to enjoy your job, but that would be very presumptuous of me as I have no idea what your job entails, and I have very limited work experience, having been at the same company my entire working life.

What I can do is state my belief that it is possible to enjoy work as much as leisure and that this should be the goal for everyone of us. “Enjoy this moment” includes all the moments, including those spent at work.

‘Eat, Pray, Love’ author Elizabeth Gilbert remembers making a conscious choice to enjoy her work, rejecting the more common persona of tortured artist.

“I believe that enjoying your work with all your heart is the only truly subversive position to take as a creative person these days. It's such a gangster move.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear - Elizabeth Gilbert

I'm going to come right out and admit it. I enjoy my work. I also believe you can enjoy yours too. In fact I am on a mission to get everyone enjoying their work. This mission has already begun. We have made enjoyable the single guiding principle of our company, making it the first thing we consider whenever we have a decision to make. Other businesses are guided by profit, and will choose the path that leads to the greatest profit whenever they come to a fork in the road. This is great for financial performance, but we believe profit is a short term and one dimensional metric. Undoubtedly every business has to continuously balance the books or it will perish, but focusing obsessively on profit and growth is rarely in the best interests of the majority of the people involved - The staff, the customers, the partners and the suppliers.

We have around a dozen Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) - measurements that tell us how we are doing. Bank balance is an important one, for example, as is number of orders and throughput. But the number one KPI is enjoyment - the enjoyment of our team, our customers, our partners and our suppliers. It's a tricky thing to measure, but we do our best, and just by focusing our attention on enjoyment we keep it front and centre in our minds. It's working out great for us so far, business is booming and our customer list and team are both growing, meaning more people are getting to focus on enjoying their work.

Whatever your position in business, I urge you to join us in focusing on enjoyable in your work. If you are a sole trader or business leader, consider running trials - single projects where the focus is on maximising enjoyment. Ask "What would be the most enjoyable thing to do" rather than "What would be the most profitable", see how your team and your customers respond. Get in touch with us with your findings, or to discuss the fine detail, I'm confident you will be impressed with the results.

In his book 'The Inner Game of Work'¹⁹, W. Timothy Gallwey describes a failing sales team that decided to make enjoyment a priority. Switching from focusing on revenue targets to enjoyment targets, the team went from last to

¹⁹ The Inner Game of Work - W. Timothy Gallwey

first place in the sales performance tables, surprising everyone especially themselves. They had spent 30% less time on paperwork and 30% less time preparing presentations but seen revenues grow by 40% thanks to improved customer relationships.

But what if you are an employee, not an employer? It's only right to acknowledge that I'm an employer, so please take that into account, but I believe employees hold the real key to any significant change in work enjoyment. The bosses can write all the enjoyable mission statements in the world, but without the buy-in of everyone on the team, they will just remain fine words. There are far more employees than employers too, you could all sit on us and squash us into submission for starters! Not that you need permission to make work enjoyable. Injoy is in your hands. You can start a guerrilla enjoyment movement of one right now and bring change from within.

Wherever you feature in the business hierarchy, these are the things that I have found that are required to make work enjoyable:

Motivation

Which comes first, the enjoyable work or the motivation? Like the chicken and the egg, it's a virtuous circle - the more enjoyable the work, the greater the motivation and the greater the motivation, the more enjoyable the work. However, in his exceptional book 'Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us', Daniel Pink identifies three key requirements for motivation that we can identify and then nourish in our workplace.

1. Autonomy - The feeling that you are in control of your destiny.
2. Mastery - Goals that stretch you to keep learning.
3. Purpose - Being part of something bigger.

Camaraderie

This is a particular weak area for me, being a boss and also having a lone-wolf work style. But in implementing enjoyable at work, I have surprised

myself at the amount of enjoyment I gain from working on projects within a team. In his book 'Chasing the Scream'²⁰, Johann Hari argues that humans are driven by the desire to build connections with others. I can relate to that and have found that the camaraderie at work is an excellent potential trove of connections.

Productivity

I love to be productive. There's a fire of creative desire in me that is always burning. I have learnt to 'chill out', snuggle down and enjoy a trashy movie, or some good company, but even there I know my subliminal brain is using the time to sift through the mountain of data I send it's way, reorganising, filing, making connections. I've got a hunch you do too, because I've seen you down at the beach on your holiday, bucket and spade in hand, building sand castles that you know won't survive the next high tide. I've seen you, game controller in hand, straining to perfect the art of jumping on turtles, or firing pixels at pixels, knowing there is no purpose to it. I've seen you practising your instrument, singing in rock choirs, developing a talent you never expect to repay you in any way. Us humans, we love to produce stuff, to create. It's a force that is hard to contain within us, and I believe we should all find an outlet for it at work as well as at play.

What I have witnessed is that it is through effectively organising work that the easiest and quickest gains in work enjoyment can be made. This next chapter describes a four step system that will dramatically improve your ability to enjoy your work.

²⁰ Chasing the Scream: The opposite of addiction is connection - Johann Hari

Enjoyable Productivity

I love being productive, being busy, killing it! It gives me a real buzz to turn a dream into a reality, to power through a mountain of tasks, to produce. I've always been this way, but over the years I have refined my technique so that I make the most effective use of my time and energy. I share this knowledge with you now in the hope that you can take a shortcut to being highly effective. It's only natural to be headstrong when you're young, but trust me, the sooner you develop your planning and reviewing chops, the greater your powers will be, the less frustration you will encounter and the more enjoyable your productivity.

I am not claiming this as all original, I have seen echoes of it in work methodologies, self-help books and inspirational quotes. These serve to strengthen my belief that this technique is sound and useful. At the end of this chapter I have gathered together the similar methods that I have come across.

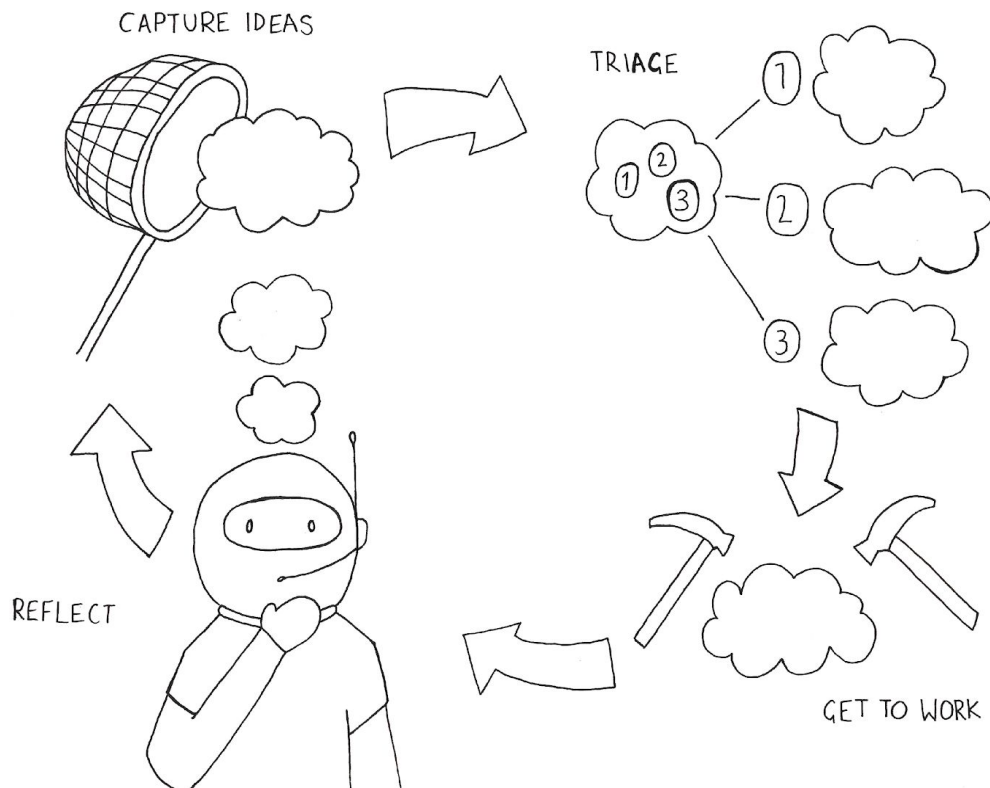
Each stage of the process requires a different mindset which is why it is so important to separate them out into distinct stages. A key skill required is the delay of gratification. It is so enticing to get to work on an idea as soon as it pops into your head, but this process requires you to store that idea instead, so that the current activity is not disrupted

The Stanford marshmallow experiment offered children the choice between a small reward now (a marshmallow), or a bigger reward if they could wait 15 minutes (2 marshmallows). Researchers found that children who were able to wait for the bigger reward had better life outcomes a decade or more later.

I believe that the ability to delay gratification can be developed over time, and that you can use enjoyable productivity to develop that ability with the significant rewards of reduced frustration, improved productivity, enjoyment and possibly even more marshmallows...

Enjoyable Productivity Summary

Here's a summary of the four steps of the Enjoyable Productivity program:



Step 1: Capture Ideas

Have a method of capturing ideas that come to you, as soon as you have them.

Step 2: Triage

A process of reviewing, categorising and prioritising all the ideas you have.

Step 3: Get to Work

The art of getting stuff done.

Step 4: Reflect

A time to review your performance, and look for ways to improve.

Step 1: Capture Ideas

Paul McCartney has said that the song 'Yesterday' came perfectly formed to him in a dream. It's a beautiful song, one that seems like it has been around since the beginning of time, drifting across the universe, waiting for someone to discover it, fortuitously floating through Sir Paul's mind in the dead of night. I have no idea if this is how ideas work, it's certainly a mystical process. Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Eat, Pray Love* certainly imagines them this way. In her book, 'Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear' she describes how she visualises ideas as disembodied spirits coexisting alongside us, just waiting for a compatible soul to recognise them and welcome them in.

"Ideas spend eternity swirling around us, searching for available and willing human partners."²¹

I have heard a number of stories of brilliant songs coming to people in their dreams, only for them to vanish in the morning; it's happened to me, on more than one occasion. It's so frustrating, worse than one of those ear worms that sometimes creeps into your head, a melody which you can't place. At least with the earworm you may one day hear the original on the radio and find release. Once a dream song is forgotten, it ain't never coming back.

So for me, the tale of 'Yesterday' appearing in a dream is less interesting than what Sir Paul did about it, which was write it down. That is the difference between a nice dream, and a timeless pop classic. Don't be fooled, it's not as easy as it sounds. Let's examine what had to occur...

Be prepared

First off, Sir Paul had prepared. Like many successful creatives, he always has a notepad and pencil to hand, even when sleeping. Always. Because you never know when an idea will turn up. Ideas are like cats, remember? You are

²¹ Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear - Elizabeth Gilbert

not the boss of ideas. They'll come when they're ready, make sure you are ready too. It's much easier now, with smartphones. Mine is never far from my side, There's a notepad app for capturing text, an audio recorder app for capturing sound and a camera for visuals. It's always in my pocket or next to my bed, ready to capture the next idea when it comes.

Being prepared also means being alert to the possibility of an idea arriving. Most of the time we are so busy with our day to day lives that we wouldn't hear a good idea arriving if it announced itself with a megaphone, let alone the usual whisper. It can take time to start identifying the sound of an idea arriving, and practice will improve your ear. Keep listening.

Don't delay

Secondly, Sir Paul acted there and then. He didn't wait until morning, and you shouldn't either. Ideas do not hang about. I can completely forget an idea in a couple of minutes, and it is one of the most frustrating feelings. Be like Sir Paul, act immediately.

Record

Thirdly, I assume Sir Paul made the effort to record the idea as completely as possible. He somehow described the song idea in a way that made sense to him when he re-read the note in the morning. Maybe chords, the melody or the lyrics, I'm not sure, but what he didn't do is wake up the next morning, read his scribbled notes and have no clue what they meant. Most of my ideas are simpler than complete songs, and can be captured in few words, but even I have more than my fair share of notes that still leave me absolutely baffled, especially when autocorrect is involved. Is there anything quite so frustrating as finding a note to yourself that defies meaning. "French Ghost Burger" for example. Don't let it happen to you. Be like Sir Paul, describe your idea as comprehensively as you can.

It may feel strange, the first few times you capture an idea. Don't be put off. As your idea bank grows, so will your confidence, and it will become clearer what you can do with them all. Soon you'll have pages and pages of ideas captured and it will be time to move onto step 2...

Step 2: Triage

A fly flew into my ear one night, just as I was getting ready for bed. It was an awful sensation, knowing something else was living inside my skull. I tried everything to get it out, all to no avail until eventually I succumbed to the final solution and went to the Accident and Emergency department of the nearest hospital. Even though it was now the middle of the night when all sane people are cosily tucked up in bed, the A&E department was doing a roaring trade, catering for the frail, the luckless and the reckless. After checking in with the receptionist I was quickly seen into a private room, labelled 'Triage Nurse'. 'I am obviously a high priority case', I thought to myself, 'I've jumped ahead of everyone else in the waiting room because of the seriousness of my predicament'. This proved not to be the case, however. After a few probing questions and a quick examination of the ear in question, I was returned back to the waiting room, where I had plenty of time to observe and admire the role of the Triage Nurse, one of the key processes that staff at medical facilities have developed to cope with the continuous onslaught of injured patients, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with good humour and compassion.

Everyone who checks into Accident and Emergency is seen by the Triage Nurse as quickly as possible. The Triage Nurse rarely provides any treatment, they must stay available so that they are ready to evaluate the next patient with the minimum of delay. In a good many medical situations, every second counts, so it is important that these cases are identified as early as possible and prioritised. The Triage Nurse, therefore, evaluates each case, and decides which department they need to be seen by, and where in the queue they should go. This is a skilful and delicate task. Should the old lady with the bruised head be seen before the builder who can't stand up? Should the drunk teenager with vomit down his party shirt be seen before the family with two screaming babies and a toddler with his head stuck in a potty? Turns out they should all be seen before a grown man with what turns out to be a phantom fly in his ear.

I want you to imagine that your creative ideas are like patients in a waiting room, and you are the Triage Nurse, just like in real life, except your facility is

only operational when you are ready to work. When you are doing all the other things that make up your full and varied life, like playing, sleeping, eating and all the other non work activities, your ideas waiting room is chilled to absolute zero. You can chuck your creative ideas in there, they won't degrade, they'll wait. But before you start work, you must, must, must, triage first. This is so important. It is so easy to be all fired up with the passion for productivity that you grab the first idea that comes into your head and start working on that. Hours later you realise all the other urgent and important things you should have got done, but by now it's too late, and your energy has been used up. Don't let this happen to you. Triage first.

Take each new idea that has been submitted to your waiting room and examine it briefly but effectively. Tidy it up, if necessary. Decide on it's urgency and it's importance, and insert it in your to-do queue in the appropriate place. Repeat this process for each new idea.

Once you have prioritised every new idea, go back through your to-do list from the top until you can't be bothered to continue, making any adjustments in priority that you see fit.

You now have completed the triage phase, and are ready to get to work. This stage usually takes anything from 5 minutes to half an hour, depending on how many new ideas you've had since you last worked. If you work an 8 hour day, that is possibly 6.25% of your day used up, but believe me it will make the rest of your work time so much more productive and enjoyable. You can work with confidence that you are working on the right task. When you finish one task, you can start the next without having to context switch back into triage mode to work out what the next task should be.

Important vs Urgent

US President Dwight D Eisenhower once said "I have two kinds of problem: the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent."

From this came 'The Eisenhower Box', a useful tool to help you triage your ideas. If you search online for 'Important vs urgent', you'll find a lot of great

articles going into detail on this tool, but here's a brief overview of the four quadrants:

Urgent and Important

Priority: High

Consider: Could the urgency have been reduced with better planning?

Important and Not Urgent

Priority: Medium

Consider: Accomplish these types of tasks to achieve your goals.

Not Important and Urgent

Priority: Medium

Consider: You may have to do these tasks, probably to help others achieve their goals, but not want to. Could you have said no?

Not Important and Not Urgent

Priority: Low

Consider: Do you need this?

Triage Refinements

Multiple To-do Queues

Just like the Triage Nurse has multiple departments to manage, you can have multiple to-do queues. For example, I have one for work and one for home. If it sounds a bit intense bringing this kind of planning to bear on your home life then trust me, it can make it a whole lot sweeter. I'm the odd job guy in our house, the classic Mr DIY. I love the responsibility, it suits my desire to be productive. But not when I'm chilling out. If a domestic chore is brought to my attention at those times, I can pull out my phone and put the idea into the triage room of the home to-do list, then get straight back to relaxing. Later, when I'm in a doing kind of mood, I can triage that idea and maybe get some advice on it's priority - 'Love, would you like me to put up the hook in the bathroom first, or trim the hedge?'. I get a nice bunch of tasks to get through

so I'm rarely bored, the house gets fixed up in the right order, and my good wife knows she won't need to ask me again and again to get something done. Win-win.

I have other queues too: location specific ones, for when I'm in town shopping for example. Present ideas, which makes Christmas and birthdays far more enjoyable for all. And project specific queues, which deserve a special mention.

Group by Project

Every single work idea gets assigned to a project or a department. Projects are focused pieces of work with a deadline, like 'Build a company dashboard showing key performance indicators'. Usually an idea is related to a project that is currently active, because they are on my mind, but sometimes the idea does not fit into an existing project, it may actually be a new project idea. In this case the idea gets assigned to a relevant department - Finance for example.

There are a couple of big benefits to this extra effort. Firstly it means I can schedule time to work on a particular project or department without specifying what tasks will be undertaken. For example, I schedule 1/2 a day a week to working on Finance, and when that time comes I load up the list of ideas assigned to that department, triage them, then get to work, completing as many as possible during the time. This way I know that Finance is getting the attention it deserves, and that Finance tasks are being completed in the right order.

I always have way more tasks than time, which would get me down in the past, make me anxious. But now I know I am doing the best I can with the time available. No one can ask for more. I am always happy to discuss and adjust the priority of any of the task lists with anyone, and I am happy to discuss and adjust the amount of time that I allocate to a project or department. But this method explicitly defines how a potentially infinite number of ideas can be processed in a finite amount of time.

The second big benefit is the potential for parallel multi-tasking. Not me multi-tasking, I hasten to clarify. I can't multi-task for toffee. I can't even talk to someone in a room where the TV is turned on. But once you have your tasks

grouped into projects, you can share them with other members of the project team, or even hire an assistant. It's the closest thing to making time and is the path to seriously multiplying your productivity.

Set a Duration

Estimating how long an idea will take to complete is a great skill to develop, and the best way to develop it is to practise. Put a duration against every task, big or small and compare it to the actual time taken when it's complete. Over time your estimates will become more accurate and you can use them to help triage, because now you have another dimension to consider. Like tossing a coin when you are not sure what option to take, estimating can let you hear what your subconscious thinks about the idea, and you can judge whether the reward will be worth the time.

Another benefit is to use the duration as a time limit, which will allow you to practise 'selective perfection'.²² We've all had one of those gorgeously seductive ideas that grows and grows until it threatens to consume all the time you possess, quite possibly without an end in sight. I have one of those going on right now, it's called 'Learn to play the guitar'. It's such a beguiling way of passing the time that I have to instigate time boundaries so the rest of my life gets a look in.

Similarly, this will help you identify 'Gravity problems'; ideas which are so big, like discovering the source of Gravity, that solving them is likely to consume all your time²³. Do not let me put you off having a go at one of these if you really fancy it, but I strongly advise you to mix it in with other, more actionable ideas so that you taste the sweet taste of success on a regular basis. A great way of doing this is by chunking that gravity problem...

Chunking

if you estimate that the idea is going to take more than a few hours, it's a good idea to break it down into manageable chunks. There's nothing less inspiring than an overwhelming task at the top of your list, blocking up your

²² How to Be More Productive, According to Experts - Audrey Noble

²³ Designing Your Life: Build the Perfect Career, Step by Step - Bill Burnett & Dave Evans

whole flow. Break the idea down into its constituent pieces, and break those pieces down too if necessary, until ideally each is small enough to digest at a single sitting. Divide and conquer.

Set a Date

Some ideas relate to a specific date, or even time. For example completing the idea 'Propose during solar eclipse' even an hour early or late would seriously diminish the impact. Other ideas come to you before they can be actioned, and need a reminder setting some time in the future, like 'Spend New Year's Eve in Edinburgh' For both types, setting a date on the idea so that it disappears now, and then appears near the top of your list at an appropriate time is a great strategy. I have a whole host of ideas in a constant holding pattern that I'm not ready for just yet, but I don't want them to rely on me spotting them down the bottom of a list, so I set a date on them. They often come back at just the wrong moment, when I'm flat out with other work but no worries, I just set another date in the future, safe in the knowledge that they'll pop back up again.

Step 3: Get to Work

‘Just Do It’

We have given time to the dreamer and the planner, now it is time for the craftsman to step into the spotlight.

“Ideas are driven by a single impulse, to be made manifest.”²⁴

Elizabeth Gilbert

It is time for a special kind of alchemy, turning dreams into reality. Because up to now, all the ideas and the plans have existed only inside of you. Work is the way we take those ephemeral thoughts and bring them forth into the universe. This is creation, and it is miraculous.

“Is a dream a lie if it don’t come true? Or is it something worse?”

Bruce Springsteen - The River

For me, procrastination has been eliminated by the earlier triage step. Before I learnt to triage I could procrastinate for England. Where to begin? Should I take on this difficult task first, or warm up with a few easier ones? And this conversation would go on after every small step forward, leading to a kind of jerky progress at best, or no progress at worst. Tasks that I wasn’t sure how to start would never get done, but would clog up my list, using up precious brain cycles every time I thought about it. I’d feel guilty about it staring at me endlessly. Not enjoyable.

But now triage has made the decision for me. Hello idea at the top of the queue, your time is now. I still get that sinking feeling sometimes - that this idea is too big for me to tackle, or too difficult, or takes me out of my comfort zone. But my resolve is strengthened by the knowledge that my triage session has identified this idea as the most important thing for me to be working on, so I dive on in, headlong. Give it my full attention. And wouldn’t you just know it,

²⁴ Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear - Elizabeth Gilbert

in the vast majority of cases I start to enjoy it. It's not as bad as I feared, never is. Not as difficult. My comfort zone expands to accept it and I grow, I learn.

Sometimes progress is swift, sometimes I am thwarted, but I am always gathering knowledge.

I like to think of completing a task as being a journey with a number of steps. Some of those steps are easy, the glorious lap of honour kind, and some of them are the hard yards. Some may even be backward steps which can be very disheartening. But all the steps need to be taken to complete the journey, they are all equally important. Take each one and enjoy it for what it is, and you will have mastered the art of enjoying work.

And at the end of the day, if I have stuck to the plan that the triage session set, then no matter how the work has gone, I know that I have focused my efforts in exactly the right place. And that, for me, is satisfaction.

Step 4: Reflect

In 2002 British Olympic Cycling celebrated its 76th anniversary and decided a change was needed if they were to add to the solitary gold medal in their trophy cabinet. Rather than groping for a 'game-changing' transformation, the team looked instead to make small improvements, but to make them in every aspect of their approach. For example they painted the floor of the mechanics room white so it was easier to spot and remove dust before it got into parts and caused unwanted friction. They identified the importance of sleep to the athletes, so started bringing their own bedding to events. They taught hygiene and decided not to greet people with handshakes, to reduce energy sapping viral infections.

This culture of 'Marginal Gains' caught on throughout the team, with everyone getting involved in reviewing existing processes, identifying and implementing small improvements, creating a snowball like effect that boosted confidence within and demoralised the opposition without.

The result was nothing short of spectacular. At the 2008 Olympics they took home 7 out of the 10 track cycling gold medals, and proved it was no fluke by repeating the feat at the 2012 Olympics in London.

This remarkable turnaround in success was then transferred to the Team Sky professional cycling team, which went from start-up in 2010 to winning the Tour de France in just 3 years, and has gone on to win four of the next five.

There are lessons to be learnt in everything we do, a mountain of data generated from every completed task. Taking time to reflect on how the task went will always pay dividends which will be recouped the next time you attempt a similar task. This is progress, incremental improvement, marginal gains. When something goes well, we can analyse why and think about what could be improved next time. And when things don't go so well there is much to be learnt too, hard lessons in how not to do something which are highly advisable to take on board the first time and never repeat. For as someone, quite possibly the great Albert Einstein, said:

“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results.”

We’ve all been there - trying and failing, trying again and failing again, cursing, repeating, failing. Then someone else comes along and does it slightly differently and succeeds instantly. If only we’d taken the time to stop and review after a failure, but the old tunnel vision can so easily take a hold, condemning us to repeat the same mistake over and over, cursing each time. You just need to take a break, to give your brain time to review the data and suggest a different plan of attack, but it can be so difficult to do, even when you know it makes sense. This may well be why we have to sleep every day - to force us to take at least one break every 24 hours. Otherwise I can imagine I could still be stuck on a task from 2002, repeating the same failing behaviour time after time after time ad infinitum. And how many times does the answer come to you when you’re finally giving yourself a break, falling asleep, walking the dog or driving home? Let’s say it together, in the hope that we will actually abide by this simple rule:

“If we’ve tried and failed three times, it’s time for a break.”

But even when it goes neither well nor badly, but just as expected, there should be time for reflection. It’s so easy to get stuck in a rut, comforting even. Doing something the same way time after time. It can be inertia, pigheadedness or a resistance to change, but often it is much more benign than that, just following the path of least resistance, saving energy by not questioning the accepted best practice. Is it a rut anyway, or a groove? A well oiled machine, running a well drilled routine.

Practice doesn’t make perfect, so the saying goes, practice makes permanent. So make sure what you are setting in stone is the good stuff, by reviewing what you are doing as you are doing it and once you are finished, and implementing ‘marginal gains’ wherever you spot them.

If we use the Eisenhower Box technique from the Triage chapter to define this Reflection stage, it would be classified as important but not urgent. You can usually avoid this stage without noticeable drama because the right task

still gets done. It is not the present that is affected, it is the future, and that is why it is worth the effort, because it is your commitment to a better future. It is present day you 'paying it forward' to future you, and believe me, future you will thank you for it each time you do it.

Similar Methods

Here are some of the methods I have come across that overlap with Enjoyable Productivity.

Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA)

This is a four step Management method of continuous improvement and is also known as the Deming circle, the Shewhart cycle and the control cycle. There is an extended version that adds Observe at the beginning (OPDCA) which is in line with lean manufacturing and the Toyota production system.

This cycle has also been adopted by the ISO 9001:2015 standard to help companies implement a continuous improvement practice throughout their business with the aim of improving standards and profitability.

This method is very similar to Enjoyable Productivity but misses the initial step of capturing creativity.

Assess, Plan, Do, Review

This is a method used in education across the UK. I would say that this is very similar to the PDCA method, especially when considering that because of their circular nature, it could be written Plan, Do, Review, Assess.

Dream it, Believe it, Achieve it

I love this inspirational quote. It is so satisfying, I wish I'd come up with it! It adds the believe step but skips planning and reviewing in favour of poetic punch!

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Four of the seven habits in this excellent book by Stephen R Covey²⁵ can be mapped to the steps in the Enjoyable Productivity Process:

²⁵The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People - Stephen R Covey

Be Proactive - Get to work
Begin with the end in mind - Capture Ideas
Put first things first - Triage
Sharpen the saw - Reflect

The remaining three habits are all about interdependence - connecting with, and working with, others.

Inspiration, Motivation, Action

This one is from the Mark Manson book 'The Subtle Art of not Giving a F**k'²⁶ and is almost identical to the more poetic one above. In the book, Mark uses the method to highlight the key attribute of the circular nature of these methods. He argues that each step drives the next, so when Inspiration is not forthcoming, it can be kick started by getting on with the Action phase. So, for example, if you have decided to write an article, but find yourself sitting around waiting for inspiration to strike, Act! Start writing the article, write nonsense, write what you currently know, but write. That step of Action will produce a little inspiration, which can be used to generate some motivation, leading to some more action, and so on round the circle. This is the virtuous kind of vortex that we should welcome into our lives, a Productivity Vortex.

I find this all the time. Ideas do not come when I call, they are cats, they come when they're good and ready. I may as well get on with something mechanical, physical work. I know they will come to me when they are good and ready, and when they do I will note them down, and then get back on with what I was doing. Treat 'em mean and keep 'em keen.

²⁶The Subtle Art of not Giving a F**k - Mark Manson

Enjoyable Productivity Benefits

I have found that applying this process to my productivity has meant I get more of the right things done at the right time, and more enjoyably too. I have noticed other benefits too:

Feeling Overwhelmed

I feel very responsible, by which I mean that if someone comes to me with an idea, my default action is to feel a weight of responsibility to do it. I can see that this mindset has its strengths but one of its weaknesses is that I can easily feel overwhelmed. By using the Enjoyable Productivity process to capture and prioritise the idea, I find that feeling is pretty much eliminated, because I am reminded I can only do one thing at a time, and that I will get to all tasks with the correct priority. I can capture the idea and return to the work at hand, safe in the knowledge that I will treat it responsibly.

Feeling Bored

The flip side of feeling overwhelmed is the dreadful emptiness of having nothing to do, which is equally abhorrent to me. I don't mean doing nothing. I can do nothing, but that's a proactive kind of doing - choosing to do nothing. I mean the kind of nothing to do that is equated with boredom. The kind of 'I'm booooooreeeed' wail from when you were young. I've found that for some perverse reason, it is at this exact moment that it is hardest to think of something to do.

By capturing ideas when they do float by, I can store them up for the lean times, like a squirrel storing nuts. It's another example of how being proactive can enhance your life. I've currently got 1,179 ideas in my various to-do lists, 179 alone in a specific 'things to do' list. I may never do any or all of them, but I know that if I ever want to do something, there's plenty of ideas waiting for me. I haven't been bored for years. The Enjoyable Productivity process has allowed me to reliably surf the space between feeling overwhelmed and feeling bored, to be in an almost perpetual state of flow.

Wasting Time

I don't mind this as much as I should, considering that time is the most precious commodity of all, but I do love to be efficient, minimising effort and saving time because of some smart planning. Triage can make the difference here, allowing you to batch up tasks that go better together. Location is a great example. I can get such joy from a well planned trip around the house, picking up and dropping off items, completing tasks in a finely choreographed ballet. And there are many other ways to group tasks, by date, person, project or tools required for example. Putting on overalls and getting the toolbox out before taking on a batch of odd jobs around the house brings many benefits. It means I use the right tool for the job, rather than what I can find in the cutlery drawer. It means I don't ruin my 'good clothes' in another DIY accident. It means my mind is in the right place. And it saves the time of continually getting out and putting tools away.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read this book, I hope you have enjoyed it. You certainly deserve a badge of honour for joining the tiny subset of sentient beings in this crazily magnificent universe that has read these words. I wonder what you are like, just as you may have looked up into the night sky and wondered who, or what, may be looking back at you? I wonder if the message of this book, to enjoy this moment, resonates with you as it does so forcefully with me? Or if it seems trivial, obvious or irrelevant to your life. Whatever you think, I am desperate to know what you can see from your point of view that I cannot, for there is no doubt that whatever you thought of the ideas in this book, you will have different opinions, experiences and ideas to me, all of which have the potential to make this book more useful to others.

So please get in touch and tell me what you think. I would really value any feedback you can send my way.

The easiest way is to email me at: daniel@enjoyth.is

Or you can visit me on the web at: <https://enjoyth.is/moment/>

You can join the email newsletter and receive intermittent updates from me.

There's a facebook group: <https://fb.me/enjoythismoment-thebook> where we can discuss enjoyable together.

I started writing this book to help me understand enjoyable and although I am still forgetting to enjoy the moment on a regular basis, I feel like I am remembering more often than ever before, which is progress.

It was also as a challenge to myself, to see what it is like to write a book. Right from the first word it became an enjoyable journey, organising and expressing the jumbled knot of ideas that have been developing around this subject for most of my life. Now I have a working version, the focus has changed again and I harbour wildly unrealistic hopes for it as a positive agent of change, a totem around which humanity will unite and shake off the

oppressive chains of unhappiness once and for all. Rise, my beloved brothers and sisters, rise up and reclaim this land as the Eden it truly is.

Or at least be the life and soul of your own enjoyable party. I remember hearing a letter from a disgruntled radio show listener, complaining that his life sucked, it was boring and sad because he could not get girls to be interested in him. The Agony Aunt's reply has stayed with me ever since. Who would choose to hang out with someone who is having a pity party, she asked? If you want friends, you've got to start by making your world enticing, just like those adorable tropical dancing birds. Nice hobbies, habits, clothes and acquaintances can all help, but the crucial element is an attitude with a bias for enjoying this moment. You get yourself one of those, and you will be a friend magnet. You take your enjoyable attitude to any room and watch as the party develops around you. Because there is a universal desire to enjoy the moment, but it's not always clear how to make it happen. Now you know, you can be the spark in the dark that lights up the room. Because the great thing is that not only is enjoyable magnetic, it's infectious too. Your outjoy transfers to everyone else's injoy in a chain reaction. So go out there, my good friend, and contaminate the world. Let's instigate a global outbreak of enjoyable.

Acknowledgments

The deepest condolences must go to my beloved wife, Sally. You've had to put up with the full force of my sanctimonious preaching about Enjoyable for the last 10 years, knowing full well what a hideous mess of a person I can truly be. You've seen me at my very worst and you are still by my side, giving my life meaning and keeping me alive. You are the love of my life and are also responsible for creating the two greatest things in our lives, our wonderful daughters Evie and Grace. Stay fabulous girls, and keep on teaching me more about this fascinating world of ours. It has no idea yet how lucky it is to have you in it.

I would never have started writing this book without the support and encouragement you three always give me, and it would have never been finished without the generous contributions of a few key talents. I am indebted to Simon Cross, mainly for being the lead singer in our first gigging band 'Memphis Gent and the Mutant 1', but more recently for editing the jumble of uppercase, lowercase and punctuation I referred to as a first draft. I cannot thank you enough. Thank you to my brother Barny, the many deep conversations we have had over the years have helped me both come to terms with life and solidify the core concepts presented in this book. Thanks also to our business coach Andrew Abaza for supersizing our ambition, and the fabulous Plaxtock family for proving that a society can be run enjoyably.

Thank you to the exceptional team at Cobwebb Communications Ltd, your enthusiasm for adventuring and daily encouragement have been an inspiration. And to my brave band of first draft readers, Chris Wady, Mark Wilkinson, Lisa Williams and Alison Hardwick, thank you for being so gentle and enthusiastic with my precious, fragile baby. And finally, thank you to my beloved Mum and Dad. You managed to bring me up believing in myself even when the evidence was stacked against me. That is some trick, and I love you for it.

And thank you, dear reader, for giving me the gift of your attention and reading all my words, even these acknowledgement ones. I am impressed! I hope you feel your perseverance has paid off, it deserves to. Enjoy this moment.

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