

Out of Sweden comes an advanced journal of lifestyle design, modern survivalism and cyberpunk technology. We live in...

#7 2011

# Interesting Times

survive and thrive



CHAOTIC NEUTRAL: INTERE

# TONY ROBBINS ÜBER ALLES: OR, WHY I'M SUCH A GIGANTIC SELF-HELP ~~DOUCHE~~ JUNKIE

*"Be unreasonable. Be maladjusted. Make the future you want it to be. Build something new."*

John Robb (globalguerrillas.typepad.com)

As you may have guessed by now, we live in quite Interesting Times, we observers of this exciting and scary Zeitgeist called 2011, we proud and switched-on cyberpunks in this age of science-fiction wonder. (Still no flying cars, though).

Oceania has finally decided to off Emmanuel Goldstein<sup>[1]</sup> and the role of global archnemesis (Russia?) is now up for audition once more. Mother Nature, red in tooth and claw, is invading our vid-feeds with Oilmageddons<sup>[2]</sup> that evoke lovecraftian unknowns, and segfaulting nuke-plants<sup>[3]</sup> reminiscent of the end-screen in *DOOM*.

This, too, is an age of fermenting popular unrest, where networked postmodernity clashes with the mailed fist of the State in the CS-drenched melée of urban combat. The Hellenes, stealing a page from enraged Icelanders, are street-marching in phalanx, threatening to defenestrate<sup>[4]</sup> their rulers and unravel the European Union in a maelstrom of financial chaos. In the Middle East, open source revolution is going

viral under the catchy PR-company brand of *Arab Spring*<sup>[5]</sup>, nourished by the petri-dish of instant global communications. And we can still only speculate what upheaval will take place across the pond, as ominous twenty-twelve looms closer and the burden of money problems and factious rivalries weighs ever more heavily on the shoulders of Uncle Sam. All we can know for sure is that any dumping of tea in Boston Harbor will be twitterized in real-time this time.

**That is**, unless the powers that be manage to shut down the greatest cognitive enhancer in history and re-establish their chokehold on the official Metanarrative. Yes, the Internet itself, virtual lifeblood of countless millions of ~~serfs~~ ~~surfers~~ ~~consumers~~ citizens worldwide, and immutable bastion of liberty, porno and the American way, is under attack<sup>[6]</sup> from governments like Libya, Egypt, China and the USA. As long as they can keep supplying the masses with *pornem et facebookem*, they might just succeed. Don't kill-switch my Youporn, bro...

Add to this the plain far-out stuff like robotic German flesh-factories<sup>[7]</sup>, miniature hummingbird spy-bots<sup>[8]</sup>, and augmented reality real-time translation apps<sup>[9]</sup>, and it's safe to say that

we've passed the point in time where it's insightful to say that we live in the science fiction future. At this point, it's just cliché.

**But let's forget** about the world stage for a moment. Let's look inward, beyond the drama of 7 billion semi-advanced monkeys flinging feces at each other with high-tech toys. Let's look at one of our favorite topics here at this fine ~~rag~~ publication: self-help, also known as Personal Development.

What's the deal with this particular obsession of ours? Isn't the whole thing just a tacky and ineffectual waste of time, a veritable cavalcade of cheesy audio-cassettes promising quick fixes for the facile price of "\$29.99 if you order now", an indolent pastime of navel-gazing Americans, at best something to be mocked for its ineffectual poses and at worst a money-sucking sham<sup>[10]</sup> preventing people from joining worthy Serious Causes?

I've heard these arguments a hundred times, and been called naïve and inexperienced a few times too many. Haters gonna hate. I guess it's not mature to believe that life shouldn't be about suffering through 40 years of paper-shuffling



# ESTING TIMES EDITORIAL

Text A.H.A.

"work" in a cubicle while being deprived of any real power by the political system and treated to the empty entertainment of fast food and mass media in one's meager off-hours. Yet it's rare for me to encounter anyone who doesn't just accept those things as "that's just the way things are". As far as I'm concerned, most people are slackers and should *try fucking harder* in the thinking department.

When I started reading personal development materials<sup>[11]</sup> about 5 years ago, it truly altered the course of my life for the better. And I've had many similar experiences with friends and acquaintances I've introduced to the field. Self-help thinking has offered me real progress and allowed me to level up my life and transcend limitations in a manner unlike anything else. The difference between the self-help philosophy and "respectable" (ie old/obtuse) philosophy is that the latter pretends to have found definitive answers, yet doesn't offer any useable solutions whatsoever. I'll take cheesy rah-rah Americans over gloomy French existentialists any day. If life truly is doomed and fucked then it surely must be better to live in a juiced-up gung-ho state with dopamine and *joie d'vivre* aplenty, is all I'm saying.

**CONTROL YOUR DESTINY**  
*"Control your environment, or your environment will control you."*

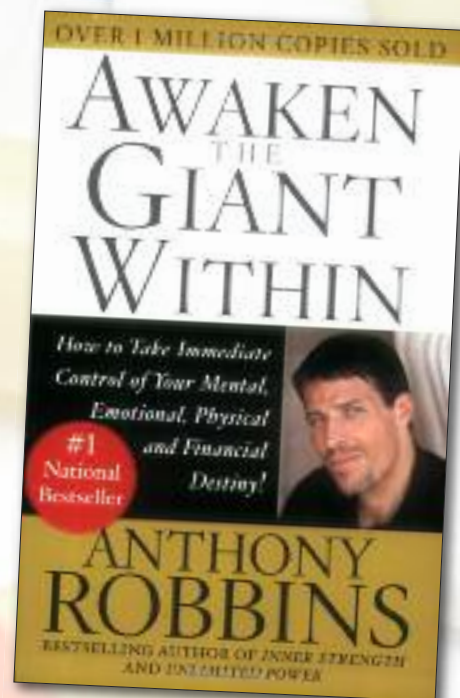
Sean Kennedy The Fucking Man  
on *Newsreal With Sean Kennedy*

If I could sum up my love affair with the self-help industry, it would be this. Control your destiny. The future is not written in ~~stone~~ plasteel. You can decide.

And even more, there is a *technology* behind this. Part of which can be found in... you guessed it, tacky American self-help literature written by people like the much-traduced Mr Robbins.


Technology? Wtf?

'Way I see it, technology isn't just suspension bridges and penicillin and jet fighters and Flash widgets for displaying streaming porno. Technology is anything that levels up humanity. Think about it: the human brain is (still) the most powerful computer on Earth. Doesn't it make great sense to pounce at any tool that promises to enhance it, the same way we upgrade our digital gadgets when we need more space and processing power for porno and Warcraft?



Seen that recent movie *Limitless*? The one with the experimental wonderpill "NZT" that in short order turned the protagonist into the smartest, most capable man on the planet. To me, this is what self-help should be about: not something to be mocked as low-class trash by Serious People, but rather something to be *feared* by aforementioned self-appointed high and mighty arbiters of Good Taste. Self-help should be potent like a hit of intravenous NZT, unlocking the infinitude of human potential. It ought to be life-altering, not the province of bored Oprah housewives looking for their next hit of feelgood emotion. It should be the crucial difference between daily "I know Kung Fu" moments, and fap-ping with your tears<sup>[12]</sup> for lube. Tyler Durden was wrong: self-destruction isn't cool.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that smart people ought to be winning! at life, and that we require



a specialized technology to achieve this. It's up to you to find the proper tech to achieve the right outcomes, and you can't be picky about the source.

Otherwise, you'll be one of those people getting tear-gassed in the streets because the government needed your dole money to pay off the megacorps.

#### CORE AREAS OF INTEREST

*"There were two routes... One of them is that it becomes a funny blip on the pop-culture map where guys are wearing funny hats and coats and doing magic tricks. Or it becomes the beginning of a men's self-help movement – because self-help isn't emasculating anymore if you're doing it to get laid."*

Neill Strauss in an interview about the *The Game*

So, maybe we want to start controlling our destinies a little bit more than we're used to. Let's talk specifics. Here is a list of some core missions of interest to the modern self-help cyberpunk:

- Becoming more strategic<sup>[13]</sup> about our goals and that which we wish to defend<sup>[14]</sup>. In other words: what the hell do you REALLY want? And how you gonna get it? (Or keep from losing it).

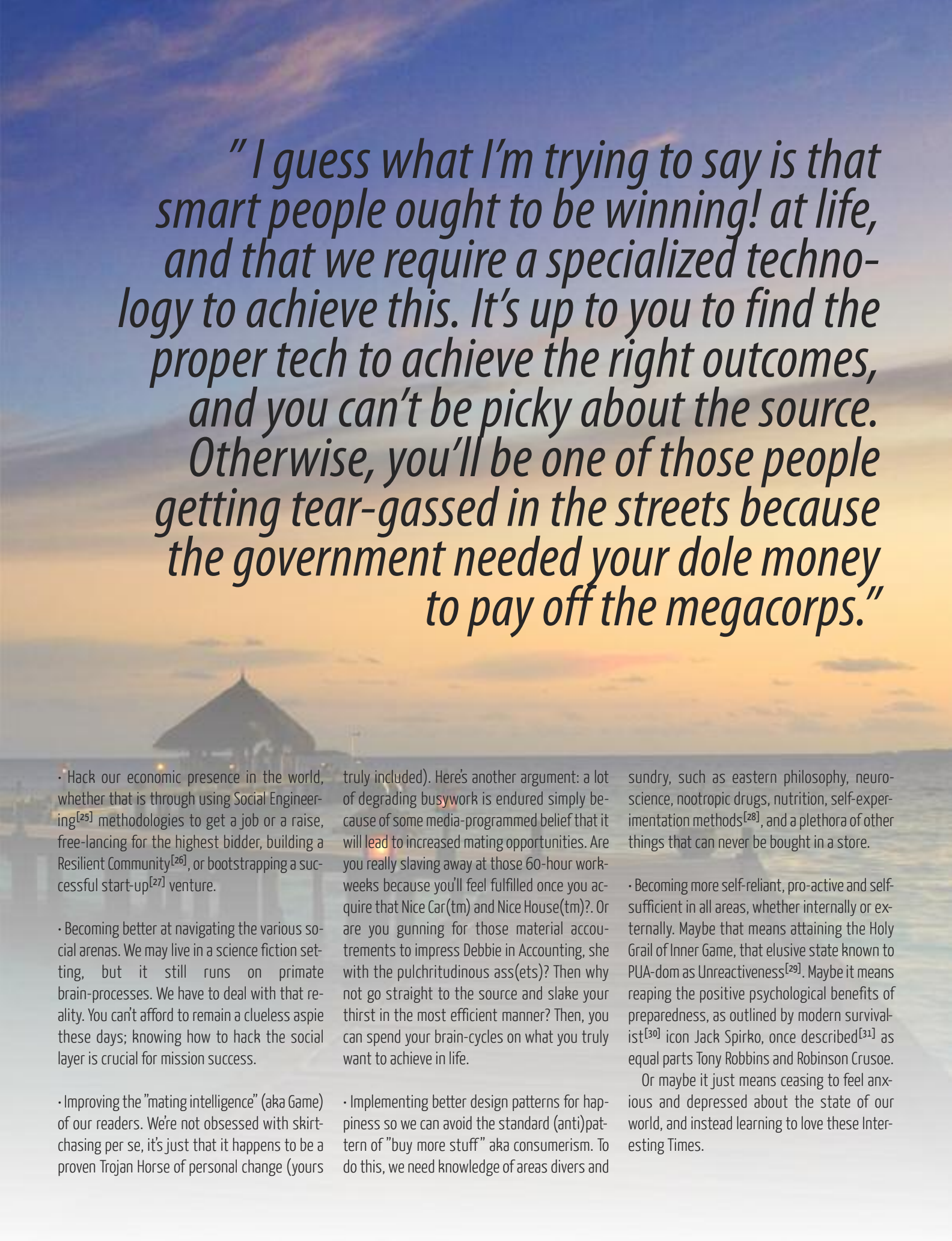
- Increasing our luminosity<sup>[15]</sup> and becoming less like robotic simians crawling around in a foggy swamp of neurosis and stupidity. Know thyself, monkey. And keep applying mental software patches to yourself so you become less of a buggy pile of shit over time.

- Hacking our minds, using whatever tools we can get our hands on, to become more diligent

<sup>[16]</sup>, learn stuff faster<sup>[17]</sup>, become stronger<sup>[18]</sup>, and impose fewer restrictions on ourselves<sup>[19]</sup>.

- Take control of our corporal destinies. For all the hate he gets, Tim Ferriss gets a lot of things right, one of those being his tenet that most everything begins with the body<sup>[20]</sup>. Improve your physical status and you'll reap exponential rewards in all other areas of your life. Call it "bodyhacking" and it becomes a lot more appealing to nerds.

- Becoming better at managing our attention, cognitive biases<sup>[21]</sup>, and bit-literacy<sup>[22]</sup> so that we can avoid drowning in misleading information, without having to resort to hermitdom. We want to shepherd our precious cognitive fluids, but we still want to remain agile, clear-headed and switched-on. He with the tightest OODA loop<sup>[23]</sup> and lowest FUD <sup>[24]</sup> buy-in wins.



*"I guess what I'm trying to say is that smart people ought to be winning! at life, and that we require a specialized technology to achieve this. It's up to you to find the proper tech to achieve the right outcomes, and you can't be picky about the source. Otherwise, you'll be one of those people getting tear-gassed in the streets because the government needed your dole money to pay off the megacorps."*

- Hack our economic presence in the world, whether that is through using Social Engineering<sup>[25]</sup> methodologies to get a job or a raise, free-lancing for the highest bidder, building a Resilient Community<sup>[26]</sup>, or bootstrapping a successful start-up<sup>[27]</sup> venture.

- Becoming better at navigating the various social arenas. We may live in a science fiction setting, but it still runs on primate brain-processes. We have to deal with that reality. You can't afford to remain a clueless aspie these days; knowing how to hack the social layer is crucial for mission success.

- Improving the "mating intelligence" (aka Game) of our readers. We're not obsessed with skirt-chasing per se, it's just that it happens to be a proven Trojan Horse of personal change (yours

truly included). Here's another argument: a lot of degrading busywork is endured simply because of some media-programmed belief that it will lead to increased mating opportunities. Are you really slaving away at those 60-hour work-weeks because you'll feel fulfilled once you acquire that Nice Car(tm) and Nice House(tm)? Or are you gunning for those material accoutrements to impress Debbie in Accounting, she with the pulchritudinous ass(ets)? Then why not go straight to the source and slake your thirst in the most efficient manner? Then, you can spend your brain-cycles on what you truly want to achieve in life.

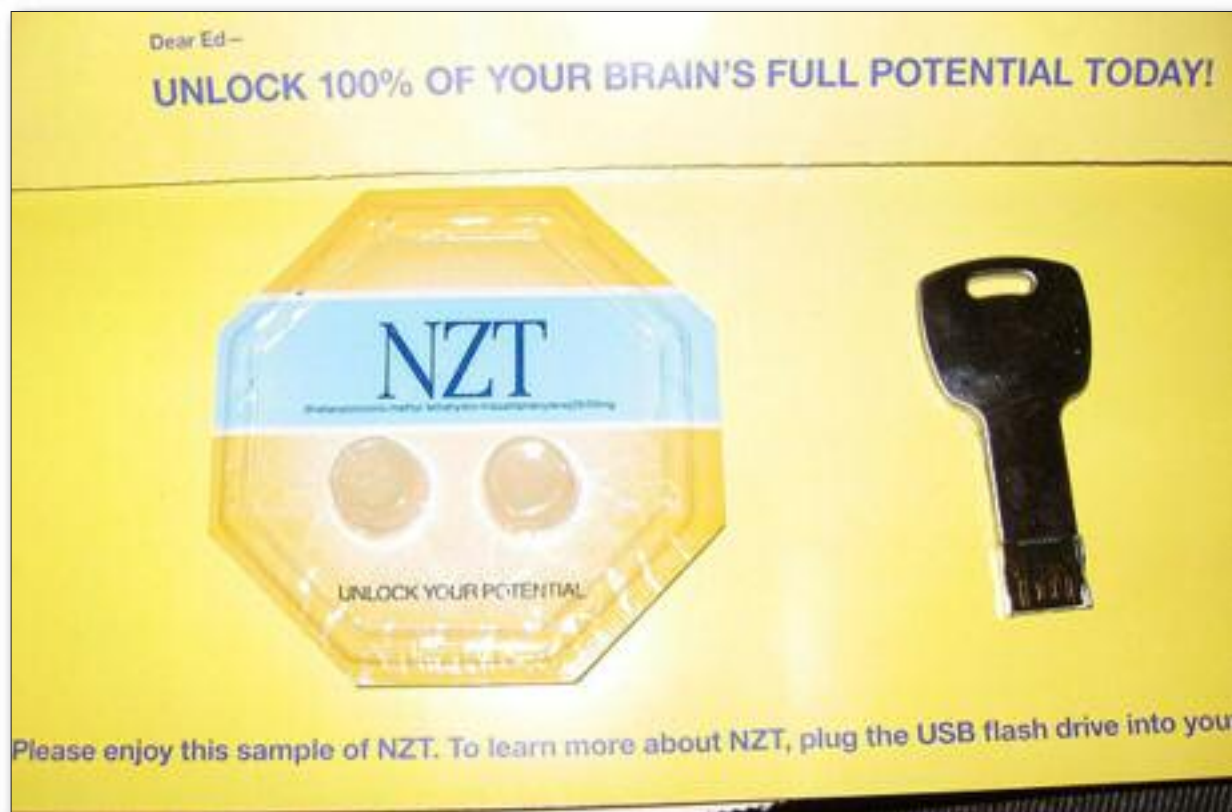
- Implementing better design patterns for happiness so we can avoid the standard (anti)pattern of "buy more stuff" aka consumerism. To do this, we need knowledge of areas divers and

sundry, such as eastern philosophy, neuroscience, nootropic drugs, nutrition, self-experimentation methods<sup>[28]</sup>, and a plethora of other things that can never be bought in a store.

- Becoming more self-reliant, pro-active and self-sufficient in all areas, whether internally or externally. Maybe that means attaining the Holy Grail of Inner Game, that elusive state known to PUA-dom as Unreactiveness<sup>[29]</sup>. Maybe it means reaping the positive psychological benefits of preparedness, as outlined by modern survivalist<sup>[30]</sup> icon Jack Spirko, once described<sup>[31]</sup> as equal parts Tony Robbins and Robinson Crusoe.

Or maybe it just means ceasing to feel anxious and depressed about the state of our world, and instead learning to love these Interesting Times.





## THE INTERNET AS SELF-HELP ACCELERATOR

*"If you want to be successful, find someone who has achieved the results you want and copy what they do and you'll achieve the same results."*

Anthony Robbins

Improving yourself and taking control of your destiny is nothing new. Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius was a bestselling self-help author<sup>[32]</sup> in the 2nd century BC, after all. What is new is the rapid iterative power available to anyone with spare time and a web browser. Nowadays, there is no need to chase down morsels of knowledge in obscure books or apprentice yourself to esoteric monks in the Himalayas in exchange for badassness (although that does seem pretty cool still). These days, all you need is the right URL and you can start to acquire role-models, immerse yourself in proven success-patterns, and enlist the aid of skilled peers who can guide your

quest for improvement and provide ample debugging and troubleshooting along the way.


Whatever you want to improve in, you can find a community for it, whether that something is acquiring buffness<sup>[33]</sup>, levelling up your Charisma stat to Casanova levels<sup>[34]</sup>, learning how to punch like Batman<sup>[35]</sup>, building your own G.E.C.K.<sup>[36]</sup>, retiring at an extremely early age<sup>[37]</sup>, working 4 hours a week<sup>[38]</sup>, making some cash off the Internet<sup>[39]</sup>, starting your own company<sup>[40]</sup>, getting an MBA for free<sup>[41]</sup>, lifting heavy shit<sup>[42]</sup>, learning math and science<sup>[43]</sup>, becoming Jack Bauer<sup>[44]</sup>, increasing your intelligence with brain-candy<sup>[45]</sup>, learning a new language<sup>[46]</sup>, becoming more rational<sup>[47]</sup>, hacking people skills<sup>[48]</sup>, acing your college courses<sup>[49]</sup>, simplifying your life<sup>[50]</sup>, negotiating for a raise<sup>[51]</sup>, transcending your cognitive programming<sup>[52]</sup>, quantifying yourself<sup>[53]</sup>, or hell, even creating your own networked tribe and declaring independence from your government<sup>[54]</sup>.

Or, you could just keep wasting your time with Warcraft, Facecrack gossip, and 4-minute clips of semen-splattered bimbo-faces. The choice is yours. There has never been a more polarized time when it comes to Personal Power: it's easier than ever to spend years on pseudo-pursuits, but it's also easier than ever to become more powerful than at any other given time in history. **This** is the core message of our publication. Sure, we live in a scary and troubling time, a landscape of technological horror mixed with chimpanzee-level decision-making. But if you want, you and your friends can become demigods. Or at least get laid a lot more and quit your boring-ass dayjobs.

Reject the consumerist siren-song of "get more". Instead, choose to **be** more.

Do whatever it takes, and don't be prejudiced against any method.

Not even cheesy Tony Robbins self-help tapes :)

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## Interesting Times, making out in power armor since 2009!

Interesting Times is a self-help magazine for extreme people, helping you survive and thrive in the cyberpunk future of today. Headquartered in Sweden, the magazine provides a unique perspective on the current age of possibility, where every new happening holds the potential for both disaster and groundbreaking success.

The magazine aims to implement total world domination using a shock & awe toolbox of positive thinking, power armor and pornstar girlfriends, edifying the reader with an eclectic mix of interesting subjects including lifestyle design, preparations for the post-apocalypse, and the pursuit of superhuman fitness through batmanesque bodyhacking. Building better bad asses is our main objective and we aim to please. The suck stops here!

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# How to be a VIRTUAL WORLD BADASS

text URIZENUS SKLAR, aka Peter Ludlow, founder of The Alphaville Herald

Picture this. Yesterday I was lounging on my yacht as it powered past the Golden Horn while the sun set over Istanbul.

Nikki and June were making mimosas from freshly squeezed Sicilian blood oranges and Cristal, garnishing each with a piece of rare psychoactive crystallized ginger that I had smuggled out of Uzbekistan.

Nikki and June are of course the products of my stripper rehabilitation program, established some years ago when I decided to make amends for that year in Toronto. Or was it Rio...

As I began sipping my third mimosa the mojo wire went off in the ready room on my yacht. My security officer, Helmut, came running with the phone. It was the editor of Interesting Times, a fly-by-night rag apparently published by shroom chuffing, blunt passing, snowboarding Swedes in search of... actually, I have no idea what they are in search of. Now you may be thinking, "Uri babe, you can write for GQ or the New Yorker or the Atlantic or anything you want. Why are you messing with these crazy Scandinavians?" And of course my answer is that I do what I want, so fuck you.

The editor of IT pleaded with me. "Uri, please, I'm begging you to write something explaining to our readers what it's like to be such a

badass." How could I say no? Here I am, blessed by gopod with copious amounts of badassitude. What sort of person would I be if I didn't share the wealth – if I didn't share the secret of my badassitude with the little people? And so, I now return to share my secret, a veritable bodhisattva of badass.

My yacht, my year's supply of Cris, the rehabbed strippers, and even Helmut are made possible by the great success I had establishing my media empire in a series of virtual worlds. Now you may not wish to be a media mogul, which is fine. My point applies to any virtual world endeavor. And indeed, I know many badasses inside virtual worlds who have pursued other career paths.

There is my friend Stroker Serpentine, who runs a six figure business making sex toys and animations inside Second Life. Or there is my friend Anshe Chung who became a real world millionaire by developing and selling virtual real estate and content. What do these people have in common with me? Here is the secret.

Most game players and virtual world denizens are sheep. They enter the world, graze on the eye candy foliage and quests that have been placed before them and are content. They play the game as it is given to them. This strategy will keep you entertained, it is true, but then so will a boxed set of all the episodes of Starsky and Hutch. There is more to life than merely







entertaining yourself. Sometimes you have to let your inner monster out of its cage and let it grab more than you have been offered. The virtual world badass does it in the following way. She says: my game is bigger than this!

**Indeed**, this is the question you have to ask yourself when playing World of Warcraft or Second Life or EVE Online. How big is my game? Does my game end at the gameplay and rules dictated by the game owners (game gods)? Or is my game big enough so that the game gods are part of my gameplay? Can I manipulate them to get what I want and need? Can I get them to reverse course when they are being fools with

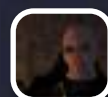
their platform? Can I get them to make their game better? Can I get other players to help me to get them to make the game better? Do I have to sue them in a real world court of law to get them to do my bidding? Then I will!

The game isn't about killing members of the Alliance, it's about politics first and economics second. The politics game involves leading player revolts against the platform owners. The economic game comes when you seize control and want to install a game economy that will enrich you and your virtual colleagues in arms. And I mean really enrich – not with a few paltry ducats of game currency but with mind blowing

amounts that will put you and your friends in six figures of Euros.

You see, the real currencies of virtual worlds are the reserve currencies of the so-called real world: the Dollar, the Euro, the Yen. These are what we play for. The game you see on your computer is not the real game. It is just a portal into the real game. Step through that door. See the real game. Become a virtual world badass. Like me.

*Peter Ludlow is the author of "Crypto Anarchy, Cyberstates, and Pirate Utopias". His alter ego is the virtual world bad-ass Urizenus Sklar.*





# *A New Breed*

## *- Profiting From Decades Of Knowledge*

More and more people passing the age of retirement are continuing to work full-time or part-time. A growing number are discovering the opportunities that the internet is providing for them to leverage, for financial gain, the skills and knowledge that they have acquired in their lives.

These skills however, are not limited to the workplace. Indeed, it is by sharing information about hobbies, sports, and life skills, that they are offering a real legacy to the next generations.

Baby Boomers – the generation born between 1945 and 1965 – are in the box seat when it comes to leverage their skills online. They are, in general, better educated than their parents, most have remained true to their occupation (amassing high level skills in the process), they have enjoyed a variety of lifestyle choices, and most have electronic communication skills.

However, it is their parents - those who remain with us – who have some old-school skills that it would be very sad to lose. And this presents

yet another opportunity: for Baby Boomers to record and preserve their parents' knowledge.

Believe it or not, there are young people today who would like to make a cake that didn't come from a packet in the supermarket. There are people who prefer custom made furniture and would love advice on making the perfect dovetail joint. And there are researchers who would like first-hand accounts of life during international conflicts, of journalism and science in the 40s and 50s.

The internet presents an amazing opportunity for knowledge sharing on a massive scale.

*Benefits of Working, Online or Offline, Beyond Retirement*  
Continuing income: Even with life savings, the increasing costs of living and longer life expectancies of retirees may render a retirement fund insufficient. Weak markets have taken their toll on investment properties threatening the liquidity of retirees. Working part-time or full-time ensures continuous income for retirees.





text KERRY FINCH (www.kerryfinchwriting.com)

# Of Retiree

**Improved health:** Doctors have long been aware of the important health benefits of staying active at an older age, particularly for mental health. Moreover, a study conducted by the University of Maryland suggests that older individuals who continued working, whether full-time or part-time, after retirement had fewer major diseases or disabilities than those who stopped working.

**Social interaction:** Lack of social activity has been linked to rapid decline in motor function leading some specialists to recommend regular social interaction for elderly people. Working presents opportunities for regular interaction with others and is recommended for the elderly.

**Happy disposition:** Older people tend to pursue their passions in their retirement years, starting new career paths that they have always dreamed of or establishing new businesses. This promotes positive attitudes and feelings of happiness and well-being.

## *Working From Home For Older People*

Internet technology and advanced computer applications have made it possible for many people to work from home. A reliable computer and good internet connection, and, preferably, a dedicated workspace, are what is needed in most cases. If video tutorials help to get techniques and messages across, a regular video camera (even the inexpensive Flip camera will do!) will be required.

Anyone who wants to succeed in working from home for an employer must have strong self-motivation and an openness to change, as traditional working arrangements take on alternative forms online.

On the other hand, managers who wish to tap the valuable experience and expertise of older people need to consider flexible job structures and workloads and to offer training and mentoring as well.

## *Get Paid For Knowledge Sharing*

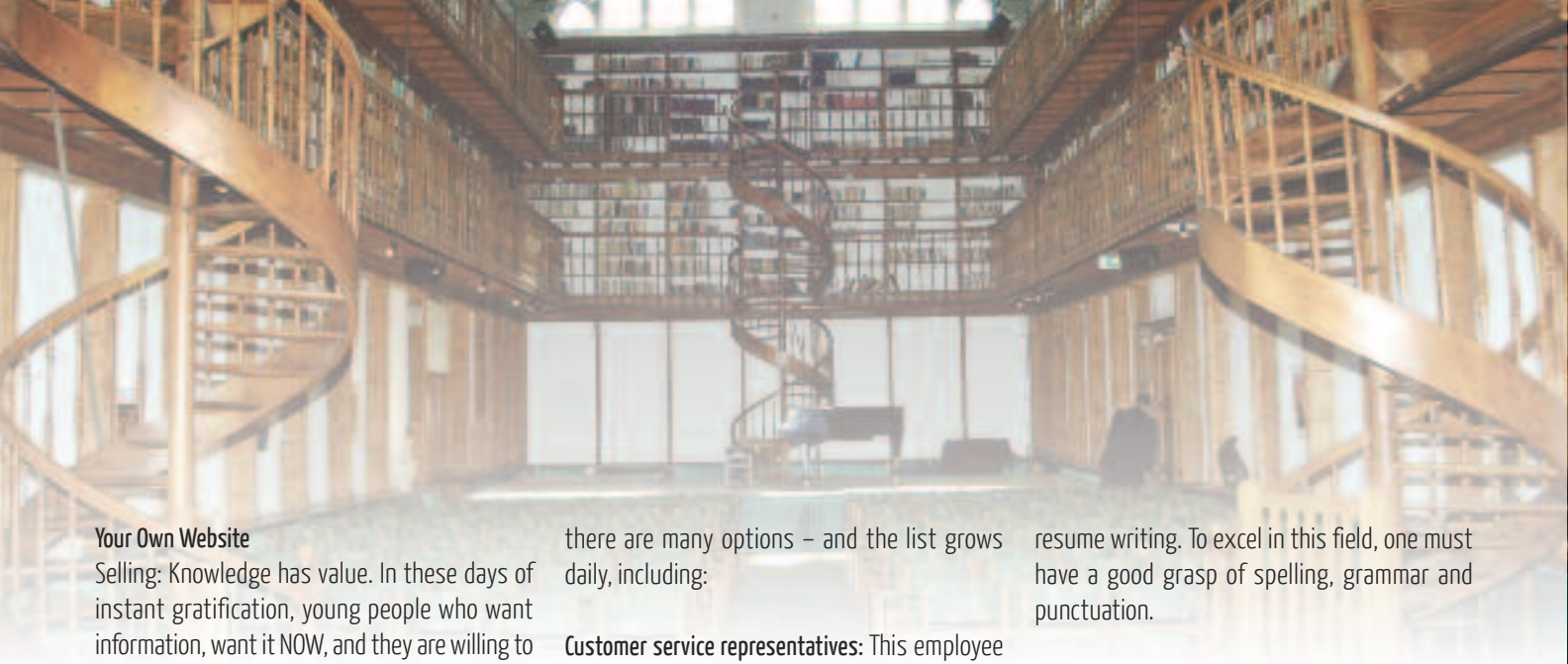
2011 has heralded a new form of peer-to-peer teaching and learning, with the recent launch of learnable.com.

### **Learnable.com**

This online platform has made it possible for people with knowledge on just about any topic – from worm composting to writing code – to create information products and sell them to a worldwide audience of information seekers.

The beauty of learnable.com is that 'teachers' create their product just once, and it remains for sale in downloadable form, on the site for as long as the teacher chooses. It is the classic example of how to earn a recurring income.

Learning is a lifelong pursuit, so this site is ideal for older people to learn about different topics as well. The courses are inexpensive, ranging from around \$10–50.



### **Your Own Website**

**Selling:** Knowledge has value. In these days of instant gratification, young people who want information, want it NOW, and they are willing to pay to have it NOW. Their being able to find and access the information that you have to share is made easier by having a well architected web-site, that the search engines rank well.

Setting up your own website has become so easy, with services like [seowebsiteshere.com](http://seowebsiteshere.com) who can have a good looking, easy to manage, website up and running for you in no time – for just a few hundred dollars.

If you have trouble writing the website content to promote your products or services, it has never been easier to outsource the writing ([kerryfinchwriting.com](http://kerryfinchwriting.com))

Armed with your product or service details, a website and a PayPal account, you can be selling online in a snap.

**Posterity:** Preserving the knowledge of older people for future generations via an online platform is a powerful gift to future generations. Video hints and tips can create a bond between generations that has before now been impossible.

Creating a website as a means of preserving knowledge, e.g. A video of Grandma making the traditional family festive cake, or Dad pruning his prize roses, allows simple, yet priceless, skills are kept alive.

### ***Paid Employment: Work From Home***

For those looking for paid online employment,

there are many options – and the list grows daily, including:

**Customer service representatives:** This employee answers incoming calls, takes orders, tracks existing orders and handles customer complaints for clients. Most companies offer paid training periods which can benefit the elderly.

**Online juror:** In the United States, attorneys who are working on cases need to obtain important feedback about the details of their cases by presenting them to online jurors who sit in mock juries. Digital files in various video and audio formats make this type of job possible without leaving home.

**Virtual assistant:** Companies have increasingly tapped the services of virtual assistants who perform various administrative tasks such as making travel arrangement, sending out letters and other support services that may be done through the phone or Internet. Anyone who wants to work as a virtual assistant may need knowledge in computer software applications, desktop publishing, project management, spreadsheets and database management.

**Online tutor:** Teaching students online is also a popular job that the elderly can do. Usual subject areas for teaching include world history, physics, science, math and English. Advanced learning programs may also offer tutorial sessions for helping students pass the SAT. Online tutors need to pass an exam for subjects they intend to teach.

**Freelance writers:** Writing online includes many activities such as copywriting, article and press release writing, proof reading, technical and

resume writing. To excel in this field, one must have a good grasp of spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Other types of work that they can do from home are consulting and mentoring where their long years of experience are an asset.

Online work opportunities for retirees abound in the Web but the challenge lies in determining which ones are legitimate and not mere scams. As a rule of thumb, anything that promises instant wealth without any effort or which charges a fee to obtain additional information about a job is not a legitimate offer and must be ignored.

Reputable work at home sites, where jobs are posted, include [ratercerebellion.com](http://ratercerebellion.com), [alpineaccess.com](http://alpineaccess.com) and [Elance.com](http://Elance.com).

### ***The Biggest Database Ever***

The internet is the ultimate museum, library or employment agency. It is a way for any individual – regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, culture or disability to learn, teach and work. And it provides an unprecedented opportunity for older people to financially benefit from the knowledge that they have gathered over decades.

Seizing the opportunity for you, your parent, your grandparent or your charity to profit from that knowledge, is just the click of a mouse button away.

### **About the author:**

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# THE CAREER LADDER IS DEAD - LONG LIVE THE OPPORTUNITY CLOUD

text ERIK STARCK  
<http://erikstarck.com/>

Throughout the industrial era we were taught to think in terms of a career ladder. Your goal was to reach the top preferably by climbing faster and higher than everyone else. In order to get on the ladder you had to have an education. This, too, was designed as a hierarchical system with the highest achievers at the top.

**After climbing the ladder you retired. Your working, sorry – climbing days over – time to live life as a senior citizen.**

**This worked because** the working environment was designed as a machine. It was, after all, the industrial era – the machine represented the highest level of efficiency so of course we modeled our lives after it. The educational machine produced components (a skilled workforce) to the production machine. Those who survived were rewarded with retirement.

But then something happened.

The machine became so efficient that the price of consumer items and even food plummeted. Demands were changing. People started to switch jobs at an increasing pace, always looking for something more challenging, more rewarding, more *fun*.

Fun! The career ladder was never about fun, it was about performing and achieving. Also, there is now even talk of an education bubble. The value of a fancy degree from an expensive university is lower than ever.

The machine is breaking down.

Or, maybe that's the wrong way to see it. A more correct description would be that the machine works just fine – but without us!

So, a new model is needed.  
I propose the *opportunity cloud*.

An opportunity cloud consists of opportunity capital that may or may not be cashed in to real money. It is the sum total of all the positive things that can happen to you at any given moment.

With an opportunity cloud, you are not climbing, you are accumulating, making the cloud bigger and more dense. A cloud has no particular direction, in fact it may take you places you didn't expect.

The cloud grows stronger when you do things that may lead to new opportunities in the future. When you start blogging about something you're passionate about. When you go to a mingle party to meet new people. When you learn a new language to get new ideas and

become influenced by a new culture. When you travel. When you share knowledge with others.

Yes, sharing is probably the best way to grow your cloud. Do that a lot.

Sure, getting an education or climbing the corporate ladder is also a way to grow your cloud – but it may limit your options, narrow your vision and make you connect with fewer people. These are all opportunity cloud eaters – they devour what you grow. Be careful!

**Now**, you may say that these are just word plays. That the career ladder and the machine both still exist.

And you may be right.

The opportunity cloud is more a way of thinking, a way to look at life. You may call it the agile version of the career ladder if you want to borrow a buzzword. Like the agile project management philosophy, the goal of the opportunity cloud is to make your working life as adaptive to change and as sustainable as possible.

Retirement, after all, is pretty boring. Flying away on a cloud of opportunity is much more fun, don't you think?

So – what are you waiting for? Get off the ladder. Grow your cloud!

And fly.

# THE HACKERSPACE AS BAT-CAVE AND LIFESTYLE-LAB

text RICHARD SPINDLER

Bruce Wayne has his Batcave.  
James Bond has Q's laboratory.  
Wayne and Garth have Wayne's basement.  
Adam and Jamie have the Myth-Busters Workshop.  
We are Outlaw Intellectuals.  
Weightlifting Pickup Casanova Nerds.

**Back then**, when the other kids were drinking, watching TV, or doing whatever teenagers do, our group spent the weekends carrying our computers over to each other's houses, laying BNC Ethernet Cables, and trying, desperately, to assign each and every one a distinct IP-Address. Now, about 10 years later, we have completed degrees, respectable jobs, and, for some of us, even girlfriends. So what now? We thrive, we have money, knowledge, and, apparently, enough time on our hands that we refuse to give up to light entertainment that the rest of the world appears to find satisfying.

So now I am 26, have done everything that was expected of me, my girlfriend is starting to get boring, and the urge to return to the childlike state of careless free roaming is as pressing as never before.

Fast forward one year.

**It's cold in this** backyard storage space (about 10°C). Barefoot, I walk across the rough concrete floor. I breathe and I look at the squat rack. 140kg squats it is today. Before stepping under the barbell, I always feel a bit uneasy, fear creeps up, and I tell myself not to think. As soon

as the weight is on my shoulders and I am going down to squat, I know I'll do alright. The first rep is always the hardest.

I don't have my girlfriend anymore. Somewhere, between family dinners and painstakingly boring sightseeing holidays, I think she lost me. I have something better now. It is called the "Zeitsparwerk", and it's a Hackerspace somewhere in a small town in Austria.

**I read a lot** in the last two years, and I visited the odd little festival for outlaw programmers and electronic artists in Norway. Out of school and university, I learned that the world is a whole lot different than what I was told. Tim Ferris told me that I could have my cake and eat it too. It was then that I made a commitment.

Whenever I use the term "hacker" to describe myself and what we do, I always get reactions that imply that I am referring to myself as a "computer criminal". Which we are definitely not. We know how stuff works; we can take things apart and put them back together. We are curious, and we want to look deeper into things. Being a computer criminal is just too simple. I know too much and just don't care. I can always

make more than enough money legally if I want to, so why should I bother?

**In fact, I've spent so many years** scouring Internet mailing lists that I am quite bored and tired of it all. Just too many years of trying to explain what I do and why things in computers are just the way they are and why I am not anyone's voluntary computer support person.

But this story took an interesting twist as, suddenly, a movement of netizens emerged and popularized the idea of moving net-culture into the physical space, founding clubs and building spaces. This knowledge, combined with the determined study of the four hour work week and fueled by every single book about motivation, money, success, leadership, war and fighting I could get my hands on, left me with only one choice.

**Running forward** with the blind enthusiasm of a man who has nothing to lose and knows that everything is possible, I infected my friends with a very specific vision of my plan.

And today we are a diverse bunch: there is my brother, powerlifting champion, aspiring movie



# ACE



director, and holder of a degree in English. There is the red haired physicist, who spends his work days transporting what he calls “cold atoms”. He takes a curious interest in building infrared, guerrilla warfare, remote devices that can switch off any TV in reach, wreaking havoc in local electronic markets. We have the overly energetic eco-energy engineer, who constructs solar-panels in the day and destroys quad-powered model helicopters at night, provided he is not putting himself in danger, while testing yet another adrenaline fueled extreme sports discipline.

There are some guys running cars that look like they’re straight out of “The Fast and the Furious”, and then there is me: founder and organ-

izer of the club, catching up on powerlifting, big time, taking extensive lessons in standard dance styles, learning foreign languages and teaching computer skills in a local community project solely for girls, fulltime.

**And the “Zeitsparwerk”** is where we meet, live, work out and build projects. There is a Power Rack with 300kg of weights, if we need it. In the other corner is an electronics workbench featuring a huge oscilloscope with a plethora of knobs, waiting to be turned on, looking as if it was taken out of the classic Batman TV Series. It’s a tough and rugged place filled with machinery, power tools, workbenches, half finished projects, sketches, plans and a plethora of

unidentified objects. Sometimes, I jokingly call it the Batcave or a secret superhero hideout. To us, this place is what Q’s Lab is to James Bond, and, well, what the Batcave is to Batman. It is, to us, what, for the martial artists, is his Dojo.

The vibrant community is governed by benevolent anarchism and structured chaos. The rules are loose and based on advanced common sense. After all, most of us are professionals in our respective fields.

Here, we strive to imitate the heroes of our childhood and adolescence, to become Batman, to become Tyler Durden; here, we have a home for our self-development.

# How to arouse

By EVAN MARLOWE, MD  
Dean and Founder of Man School, Manschool.cc

There are few things that empower a man more than his ability to arouse a woman sexually. But not every guy knows which buttons to push, since there seem to be so many, and each chick is wired differently.

So to make things manageable, I present to you an itemized list of tools, with the hope that I can bring some order to this often bewildering topic.

Before we get started, let me clarify what we're talking about. You want to get girls horny, with the ultimate goal being sex. Most articles I reviewed pertaining to "how to turn on women" made much reference to stuff like romance and being a gentleman. That's fine, but for the purpose of this article, I'm gonna assume you have these other aspects covered. Let's instead discuss the stuff that actually gets her lady bits wet. **Sound fun?** Super duper.

First, you will need a scale to refer to telling you where a girl is... bone dry to dripping wet. Here you go...

## Levels of Arousal

Having a system to tell a girl's readiness to bang based on her arousal would be very useful. Of course, you can't put a probe in her birth canal to measure drippiness, and so much of this may be a judgment call. When trying to gauge a girl's level of arousal, look for a cluster of behaviors indicating where she's at; any single cue out of context may not be reliable.

And finally, this is NOT a ladder. Some guys have devised escalation ladders (starting with the back of your hand on her elbow, ending up with sex), but I think they're lame and artificial. You may start escalation with a girl by grabbing her ass or making out with her, then jump back down to very light friendly touch, and then leap forward to foreplay. It's this kind of unpredictable and dominant behavior that turns girls on, not the standard and safe linear progression a ladder would have you follow.

The LAS goes from 1 to 10, where 1 is unaroused and 10 is highly eager to fuck. At 8 and above, girls are usually pretty horny and good to go. Use your intuition and calibration, and don't look at this like a rule book. These are just indicators you can refer to when trying to discern her readiness.

### Level 1

High fives, hand shakes, knuckle bumps  
Side hugs  
Thumb war

### Level 2

Simple, friendly hugs  
Arm-in-arm walking

### Level 3

She slaps your thigh while seated  
Holding hands, fingers not intertwined  
Tickling her  
Longer hugs, held tighter  
Briefly massaging her shoulders while she sits

### Level 4

Hold hands, fingers intertwined  
Caress her forearm

### Level 5

Smack her ass (and she's ok with it)  
She squeezes your thigh  
She sits on stool, straddling your legs/body as you stand  
Snuggling/spooning

### Level 6

Her palm on your chest briefly



# a woman



Massage her upper back while she's lying down  
Caressing her face, neck or hair  
Brief kisses, mouth to mouth  
She runs her fingers through your hair

## *Level 7*

Light making out. She doesn't use tongue much.  
Her hand stays on your chest, such as squeezing your nipple  
Massage her lower back, thigh and butt  
Kissing/biting her neck  
You clench her hair at the back of her head  
Having her suck your thumb

Caressing her lips with your finger  
Touch her breast over her clothes  
Briefly touching (but not rubbing) her vag area over clothes

## *Level 8*

Heavy making out. She uses her tongue/sucks/bites  
She initiates the make outs  
She's got her hand on your junk, outside of pants  
Squeezing her ass during makeout  
Playing with her breasts, skin-on-skin  
Sucking her nipple

She keeps her arm across your lap with her elbow touching your cock  
As you hold hands, the back of hers is against your cock  
Stands with her pelvis against yours, rocking or gyrating  
You briefly rub her cooch over clothes

## *Level 9*

She's giving you head  
She's rubbing your junk, skin on skin  
You're intensely rubbing her cooch over her clothes



## Level 10

Fingering her or eating her out

Okay, so now you have a point of reference in knowing where a girl is. So how do you get her horny? Well, you can turn her on with your touch, and you can turn her on without touching her. I call these tactile and non-tactile forms of stimulation.

### *Tactile Stimulation*

Here we have two variations: non-vaginal and vaginal. Ways to turn on a girl without touching the puss include kissing, massage, proximity (such as dancing close to her) and "being caveman."

Let's begin with kissing. There is one rule you need to remember on this topic... girls kiss you the way they want to be kissed. If she wants it rough, she'll kiss you roughly. If she doesn't want the tongue, she won't give it to you. Calibrate your kisses accordingly.

#### A few types of kisses:

1. **The suck.** You can apply this to her lip, her tongue, or anywhere on her body (especially effective on the neck, ultimately concluding in a hickey). If you do suck on her earlobe, I recommend holding your breath. The sound of your breathing directly in her ear can be a huge distracting turn-off.
2. **The bite.** Never bite the tongue, but otherwise go for it. Gently on the lip, or with more pressure elsewhere. This introduces another level of arousal, one which many girls are not okay with, so test it out judiciously before getting carried away.
3. **The lick.** Some areas aren't receptive to licking (the forehead comes to mind. Ewww.) But the mouth, the neck and parts below are generally all fair game.
4. **Frenching.** Typically, this is reserved for when she's more than just a little turned on. French kissing is often a gateway to get you farther along the path, such as petting and titty play.
5. **Soft kisses.** Place them on the lips, the neck

# "Choosing a cologne made your female friends or se turned on by L'Eau D I wear... The custom

or the breasts. Often the lightest of kisses can have the most impact if landed just right.

Massage is a skill you should acquire. Doesn't have to be spa-quality, but you should browse through a few books and get some pointers. Mainly, you'll focus on the shoulders, back, thighs and butt. If you wanna be a good sport, rub her feet. You don't need to rub deep; you're not trying to cure her back spasms. Be gentle at first, with long caresses along her shoulder blades and back, careful not to rub directly over the center where the bones pop up. You can use oil, or not. The point isn't to give her the best massage of her life, only to get her turned on. Ten minutes ought to do it, tops. And be careful not to tickle her once she's in the zone; tickling helps get her in a good mood, but it can easily break her arousal.

Besides being technically good at massaging, the biggest tip I can give you is to enjoy it. When you love giving massages, she'll know it, and the result will be apparent.

Most girls like being dominated. It turns them on, and it should turn you on being dominant. If you have issues with this, then you will need to address them. I recommend the fine book, *Just Fuck Me!* by Eve Kingsley, for starters.

Being dominant physically (also known as "caveman"), means treating her like a piece of meat. Slapping and squeezing her ass, grabbing her arm and pulling her into you, holding her hair at the base of her head. Your goal isn't to do harm, of course. But you do need to convey to her that she is your "property" and you will man-handle her as you desire. Sounds chauvinist, I know, but

this does arouse women.

**Those are** non-vaginal ways to get her turned on with your touch. Now let's get to the most obvious arousal technique: vaginal stimulation.

The vagina is absolutely loaded with zones you can hit to cause arousal and ultimately make her orgasm. So that you don't become overwhelmed, for our purposes, I'll discuss only two: the clitoris and the G spot.

Guys have trouble finding both of these, and many women aren't even aware of their own G spot. Each arousal point gives women different types of orgasms, with the G spot tending to be a deeper sensation.

When you're looking at a vagina with her on her back and her knees straddling your head, the clit is at the top. Just beneath this is the urethra (where pee pee comes out), and then the entrance to the vag. Each girl is unique as to what kind of pressure and motion her clit desires; you will learn her preference through observation and experimentation. Also important to note, the clit usually has a refractory period after orgasm, during which time it is too sensitive for further stimulation. Give it a rest, work on the G spot or other bits, and then resume clitoral stimulation when she's ready.

As you enter the vagina, the G spot is located on the roof, not far from the entrance. Typically, women like either a "come hither" motion of your fingers, or an up-and-down movement. With enough G spot stimulation it is possible to make her squirt; many girls cannot or will not squirt, so don't be surprised if she is reluctant to even try.

# ay require you to survey sexual partners; mine gets L'Eau D'Issey, so that's what The customer is always right."

Ways to stimulate these two points include orally, with your fingers, with your cock and with toys. Take a trip to a sex store some time if you are not familiar with sex toys. Learn about various types of vibrators (battery and wall-powered), dildos (vaginal and anal), and other accessories like beads.

To learn more about cunnilingus and sexual technique, download my free ebook, *PUA Field Guide* and head to the chapter devoted to female orgasm and anatomy. The site is [puafieldduide.com](http://puafieldduide.com).

## *Non-Tactile Stimulation*

Playing with a girl's pussy and making out with her are skills that take a little finesse, but can be easily learned. A more difficult challenge awaits you: turning on a girl without using your mouth, hands or dick. I call this non-tactile stimulation, and categorize it further by senses.

### **Auditory**

What a girl hears can get her wet. Within auditory stimulation, you have conscious and subconscious forms.

The conscious type of auditory stimulation includes the words you use, and within this category you can speak nonsexually (wit, sense of humor, routines) or sexually. Intelligent women get turned on by a man with wit, though many dudes use their wit and humor as a shield to hide behind. Don't be that guy.

I have previously covered sexualization in my article, "How to Get a Girlfriend." To review, sexual talk can be implicit or explicit. Both can get the job done, though explicit tends to work bet-

ter once a girl is already getting wet.

Subconscious auditory stimulation includes vocal tonality (the deeper the better), and more obscure NLP-ish tactics like embedded commands.

### **Touch**

Here I don't mean you touching her, since that would fall under the above category of tactile stimulation. What I'm referring to instead is her touching you.

Hair in certain places, and the absence of hair in others, can turn her on. The touch of skin-on-skin is arousing, even if you aren't doing anything actively to her. Well-defined muscles (chest, shoulders, butt) turn girls on, though each girl prefers more or less muscle mass and definition. And finally, girls like playing with cocks. That alone can make them ready to bang, hence the motto, "when in doubt, whip it out."

### **Smell**

Again, we find conscious and subconscious forms of smell. Your cologne, the smell of your hair, having clean-smelling skin and fresh breath can turn chicks on. Some amount of sweat (not nasty body odor, just a whiff), can be arousing. Choosing a cologne may require you to survey your female friends or sexual partners; mine gets turned on by L'Eau D'Issey, so that's what I wear... The customer is always right.

Subconsciously, there is evidence that pheromones can affect a girl's sex drive. This is a science still in its infancy, though.

### **Visual**

While there may be subconscious cues you can

use to turn on chicks (self-pointing, for example), overwhelmingly the tools that will get her visually aroused are conscious. Having a great physique (but not Mr. Universe ripped – that turns many women off) excites women. Making seductive, dominant and confident eye contact is powerfully effective. In contrast, sometimes blind-folding her can turn her on, sparking a sense of danger. The words you text can get her hot as well; download my free ebook, *Text Game Primer*, for examples.

Men are visually stimulated by things that are sexually explicit. Porn, for example. Some girls get turned on by porn as well, though many times what you don't reveal is as much of a turn-on. For example, women tend to prefer pictures of naked men with their willies hidden, versus exposed. As with blind-folding, withholding visual information from a girl can create intrigue and ultimately arousal.

### **Taste**

This is probably the least used of the senses, since there are very few tastes which make women horny. Folk lore says things like oysters are aphrodisiacs, but practically speaking there is little truth to this. You can have her lick pudding off you or feed her strawberries, but again it isn't so much the actual taste of the food which is turning her on, but how you use the food.

Some women find the taste of salty skin (such as after exercise or sex) stimulating, and some like a man's mouth that tastes like cigarettes or alcohol. As with the other categories, each girl responds differently to various stimuli; experimentation and observation will help you sort things out.

**The goal of this article** has been to help you categorize female sexual arousal levels and techniques, so that you may search for and define trends in your interactions. Whether you approach this like a mad scientist or an artist, always have fun with it.

# HACKING YOUR TACTICAL KIT PART I: FERFAL'S FAVORITE CLOTHING & GEAR MODIFICATIONS

text FERNANDO  
"FerFAL" AGUIRRE

In spite of the market being saturated with every imaginable type of clothing and piece of gear, seemingly endless variations of backpacks and bags, it comes to a point where you realize that if you want to get exactly what you want, you have to do it yourself. In spite of everything the market has to offer, we as individuals are one of a kind with unique differences.

## CLOTHING

One of the first things the self-reliant individual notices is that you need to carry with you a basic minimum amount of tools so as to handle different sort of situations as well as possible. This may include a simple pocket knife such as a Victorinox, a small multitool, a lighter and likely a compact flashlight.

To that you must add the common items every urban dweller carries. Things such as keys, coins, etc. In no time you realize that the delicate fabric of most jeans pocket or dressing pants is no match for that kind of wear, so it's easy to see why one of the first mods I ever did to my clothing was adding larger pockets made of thicker fabric. Canvas will last longer and is comfortable against the skin, but a blend of natural and synthetic fabric will resist wear much better.

People that carry firearms and must wear suits because of their line of work usually ask their tailor to add a patch of cloth so that the firearm doesn't wear out the clothing on the spot where it makes contact. This would also be an option if

you carry a knife, fixed blade or folder. Many folding knives have clips that will wear a hole through clothing in relatively short time. A patch of cloth in the right place will avoid this inconvenience.

When it comes to leather jackets I soon found out that even with quality leather ones, the inner liner is often overlooked or neglected entirely in terms of quality and durability. Maybe a secretary can go through life with a neat suit that has a flimsy glossy satin liner, but in my case that liner must have pockets capable of carrying keys, pocket tools, ammunition or extra pistol magazines.

If I'm shooting I want to just throw a handful of ammunition in there and not worry about the cheap satin pocket falling apart.

What I did with my jacket was replace the satin liner with thick 50% cotton 50% synthetic canvas. This is soft to the touch but rugged for heavy use. I also asked my tailor to add a couple more pockets on each side, make them larger than average so they can each fit a Glock 17 pistol if needed, and made the pockets with that

same material, using double stitching. These leather jacket pockets usually don't have zippers but I had some installed with a short bit of cord added to the zipper so it would be easier to open with cold, numb hands. For a couple extra dollars, I got top quality YKK zippers. The beauty of customizing your gear and clothing is that you choose the best materials since you're not trying to cut costs.

It has been suggested to me the possibility of adding Kevlar body armor panels to the inside of the jacket within the inner liner. The panels are made of 25 layers of Kevlar, stitched together forming a vest. This would offer protection against most common pistol calibers such as 9mm, 45 ACP and 40S&W.

Some other readers mentioned adding panels to the forearm section so as to use it when protecting yourself from knife attacks. This of course adds a lot of extra weight and doesn't come cheap. Still, if you consider that your





lifestyle or current situation requires these extra measures they do offer a lot of protection and may save your life. Specialized companies do make these sort of jackets per order for clients but they can be pretty expensive.

## BAGS AND OTHER GEAR

Backpacks, shoulder bags and other pieces of gear can be customized to fit your needs as well and it can be done by you with some polyester thread, needle and lots of patience.

I've modified magazine carriers so that they would fit my particular weapons. Sometimes you just don't find exactly what you need but it comes close. With a little patience a pistol magazine leg holster can be partially disassembled, elastic bands added and stitched back together to create a magazine holder for 40 round pistol subcompact magazines.

A customization I often do to my bags is adding hidden pockets, or sew hooks so as to keep my keys readily available. It's easier to get started with something that isn't very expensive and cotton is often easier to work with. With tough cordura you'll need a thick needle and may have to push it through with pliers.

Where legal to carry, a messenger bag can be modified with some elastic bands sewed into place to create several inner magazine carriers. This way your spare mags, (or flashlight or OC spray) can be easily found when you reach for it in a hurry.

You have to keep in mind that companies often try to save money wherever they can. If a pocket is left opened in your backpack to save the cost of a pressure button or buckle, it doesn't mean they are doing you any favors. In a city where pickpocketers are out to get you, you may want

to invest a few cents and some minutes to upgrade your gear.

It takes time but the results are good when you do things by yourself and know how it's been made.

Hope you enjoyed this article and have a few ideas to improve your gear.

Take care and good luck!

**Fernando "FerFAL" Aguirre**

*Author of the book [The modern Survival Manual: Surviving the Economic Collapse](#) and editor of [www.the-modernsurvivalist.com](http://www.the-modernsurvivalist.com)*

*Interesting Times is looking for more articles on the topic of modifying/hacking your clothes & gear. Send in your ideas to [editor@interestingtimes-magazine.com](mailto:editor@interestingtimes-magazine.com)*

REVIEW:

# The Language

text OLLE LINGE

People are always interested in anything that makes their endeavours easier. Wouldn't you be interested if someone told you that you could learn a language in only a few months, and you had some reason to trust their statement?

That is what Benny Lewis is currently doing. He's writing about it on his website *Fluent in 3 Months* [[fluentin3months.com](http://fluentin3months.com)] and *The Language Hacking Guide* is the accompanying e-book that explains his approach to language learning.

Could you (yes, you!) learn a language in just three months? Oh, yes, absolutely, at least making certain assumptions.

**The book is focused** on the idea that anyone can learn languages in a fairly short period of time, provided that they have the right mentality and strategy. To the seasoned language learner (a category in which I sort myself), there will be few genuine eye-openers in this book, but for those of you who think that learning a language in just a few months seems like magic, you should definitely keep on reading.

In fact, I would suggest you read *The Language Hacking Guide* even if you already spend most of your free time learning languages, because there will still be some useful tips and tricks.

*The Language Hacking Guide* comes in different formats, one looking very much like a power point presentation, another a basic PDF and a third for e-book readers. The looks of these various formats are functional, but not elegant. Clarity is never a problem, though, and it shouldn't take you long to get through the book.

Lewis sets out describing what mentality is necessary to adopt when studying a language. This involves things that should be obvious to all, but

sadly isn't, such as having clearly defined goals (what do you want to learn?) and an explicit motivation to reach that goal (why do you want to learn?) You should also start enhancing positive feelings about a language (it's interesting, fun, beautiful) rather than the too common negative feelings (it's too hard, irrational, weird). The author also stresses the point that language learning is much more about commitment than being talented or having the right genes.

In the following chapters, the author goes on to discuss more practical aspects of learning a language, such as setting short-term goals, evaluating progress and so on.

The most valuable lesson here is that you learn a language by using it, and you should start doing so immediately, seeing all the mistakes you will undoubtedly make as valuable lessons rather than setbacks.

Languages are tools for communication and if you use them as such, you will master them faster. Lewis also says that immersing yourself in the foreign language is more about your own attitude than where you live geographically. He provides a number of helpful tools to enable you

to do this, even if you've just started learning a language and have a very narrow vocabulary.

**Still haven't found** the magic key that will open the door to all wonders? Let's read on, but the remaining chapters won't give you the answer either. They deal mostly with more details about what language to choose, learning more than one language and so on. The part about talking to native speakers is perhaps the most interesting in the entire book, but it doesn't give a formula to enable you to learn a language quickly. The included interviews broaden the scope of the book a lot, but I would have preferred more focused talks on specific topics.

The truth is that I don't think that there is any magic, or if there is, it's like Zen, which is a little bit like fooling people that there is a hidden secret, but in truth there is nothing there. Or at least the answer was within reach from the very start. What do I mean by all this? I mean that the reason most people think that they could never learn a language in just a few months is that they have a skewed picture, both of what learning a language means and their own abilities.



# Hacking Guide

by Benny Lewis

First, it's grossly unfair to compare three months of total immersion and dedicated studying with three months of studying in high school, which typically involves just a few hours a week. I did some maths on my own studies of French in school and arrived at the conclusion that it's possible to spend more time in three months than I did in seven years. Immersion isn't supernatural, it's basic arithmetic. Of course, it does matter how you spend your time studying, but the total number of hours shouldn't be neglected.

So far, I've mostly praised this book for highlighting things which ought to be obvious for all, but seldom are. It's true that my overall impression is very positive and I recommend people to read *The Language Hacking Guide*. However, I did encounter some things I didn't like.

First, Lewis focuses almost exclusively on spoken language, which is fine if that's what you're interested in, but I still think that it would be cheating to say that you learned the language in three months if you can't read or write. Three months is a short time, but it would be considerably shorter if you had to learn the written language. The difference might not be huge for a language like French, but it is certainly is for languages which don't use the Latin alphabet.

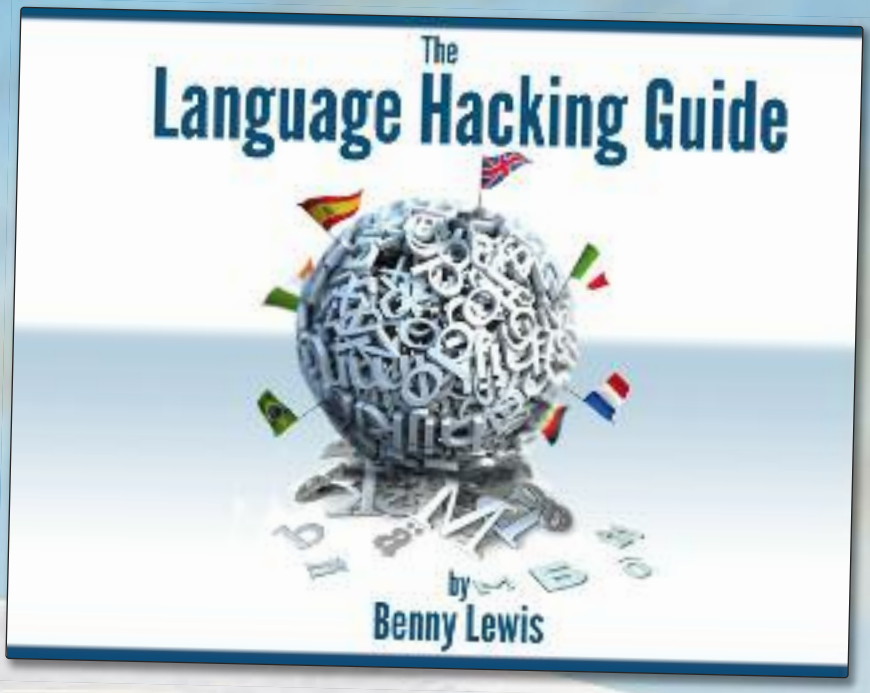
Second, the book mostly mentions languages belonging to the same language family. This means that there's a very important positive reinforcement and overlap from one language to another. It's one thing to say that you can learn

Spanish in three months if you know French, but quite another to say that you can learn Chinese in that time, coming from the same language background. You can certainly get very far in spoken Chinese in three months with the right focus and strategy, but if you have to learn to write as well, the time easily doubles.

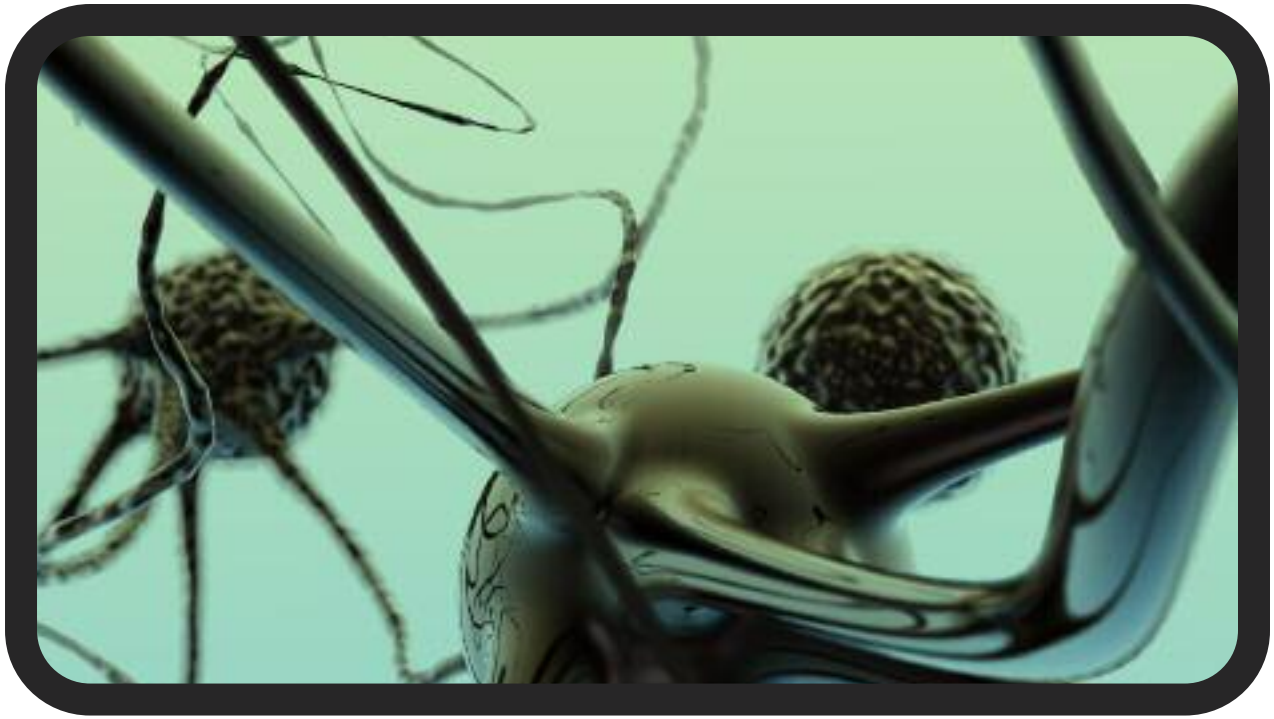
**However**, note that the issues I bring up concern things that aren't mentioned in the book, rather than criticising what's already in it. That means that I think some of Lewis' conclusions are a bit too easily derived and might not be relevant for all languages and all people, but they are still relevant to most! What's in this book is good; I had to move outside and see what wasn't there to find problems.

To conclude, I believe that anyone can learn a language in three months, provided that they have the devotion and the right attitude, and that they are learning a language fairly close to their own native language and have the time to immerse themselves fully. As I've discussed above, there is no magic trick, no secret technique. If this book contains any magic, it's a spell that removes certain mental blocks that stop most people from approaching language learning the right way. Is this worth a few hours of your time? Is it worth a few bucks? Oh, yes, absolutely.

*Olle blogs about how to learn Chinese at [HackingChinese.com](http://HackingChinese.com). His personal website can be found at [Snigel.nu](http://Snigel.nu)*







text KYLE HIPKE

# HOW TO LEARN ANYTHING

and have more "I know Kung-Fu!"-moments

Since you're reading this magazine, chances are you believe that specialization is for insects. It's fun and incredibly rewarding to improve lots of skills - in the same way that it's fun to level up in video games. Plus, most skills are inherently valuable: sports can improve your health, martial arts might save your life someday, and pick-up skills might get you laid someday.

Regardless of your intentions, you are almost certainly going to want to learn new things and improve current skills throughout your life.

**"Not only is this a fun, RPG-esque way to track your progress, it'll also help you decide what skills are just outside of your ability."**

As most readers know, it's better to work effectively, not hard. Practicing and learning can be tough and frustrating, especially when your improvement isn't proportional with your effort. That inequality can lead one to give up. The trick is to be a learning ninja: improve yourself as effortlessly as possible! Findings from neurobiology and learning research give us valuable insights that can make our learning way more effective. It all starts with the stuff brains are made of: neurons.

## THE NEUROBIOLOGY OF LEARNING

Neurons are the little, microscopic cells that make up the brain and nervous system. Each neuron in your brain connects to lots of other neurons – basically, your brain (and nervous system) is this HUGE network of little neuron cells hooked together. Just like wires, neurons can carry signals to each other to pass information to different organs, muscles, parts of the brain, etc... When you move your arm, what really happens is a signal travels through neurons in your brain to the spine, then to motor neurons in your arm which tell your muscles to contract. The same goes for mental processes – when you think about how to solve a tough problem, signals travel like crazy back and forth between lots of neurons and parts of your brain to give you the answer.

The cool thing about neurons is, unlike wires, they can modify themselves! When a neuron is

stimulated enough (when a signal goes through it), cells in the brain start wrapping the neuron in this material called "myelin". Myelin is like steroids for neurons – it makes them transmit signals way faster, which, basically, is how people become pro at things. It's why, when someone starts out on the violin, they make hideous screeching noises. At first, the signals to the muscles are imprecise because the specific, correct neural pathways haven't been defined by myelin wrapping. As the musician practices, the neural pathways for the fine, precise arm and hand movements that control pitch and timbre get myelin-ified and fire faster and stronger than the wrong pathways. This translates to faster playing, better control, and beautiful music.

Myelination (turning neurons into uberneurons), DOESN'T happen immediately when the signal hits a neuron. Once your neurons have been stimulated during an intense practice session, the growth occurs a number of hours later. That's why, contrary to popular belief, you actually CAN learn things overnight (and can't master skills all in one practice session) - provided you practiced during the day!

Unfortunately, your neurons get wrapped even if you messed up the performance. The end result? When you make a lot of mistakes, your neurons get trained to make those same mistakes. It then takes you longer to learn the cor-

rect actions because you have to unlearn the wrong ones.

With this in mind, and scientific research on our side, we can strategize learning to make it effective, easier, and ultimately more rewarding.

## STRATEGIZING YOUR LEARNING

### SOME GENERAL LEARNING TIPS:

Think about your motivation for learning the skill. Write it down somewhere where you'll see it frequently. Even better, find a picture that motivates you to learn (For example, a picture of a professional performing the desired skill)

**Find a mentor.** If you can spend some money on a coach or private lessons, great. Other options include joining a group related to the skill or finding (or making) a friend who can mentor you. At the very least, you want someone who can correct your mistakes. Even better, you want someone who knows effective training exercises/methods for the skill.

**Immerse yourself in the skill:** actively watch professionals. This will give you something to shoot for/imitate, and increase motivation.

**Come up with a skill tree.** Brainstorm and break the whole skill into a bunch of sub-skills. Draw a hierarchy of the order you need to learn skills in. Not only is this a fun, RPG-esque way to track your progress, it'll also help you decide what skills are just outside of your ability.

**Most importantly,** do some preliminary research



on how to learn the skill. Ask professionals/ query the Internet about effective practice methods.

#### **PRACTICING**

Here's the formula to follow for effective practice. There really isn't a hard-and-fast rule on how long to practice for. Just don't stop practicing before you perform a given action (or, at least, a part/slower version of that action) successfully a few times in a row. If you stop before then, the correct neural pathways won't have been stimulated much and won't be getting myelinated while you go about the rest of your day.

#### **1. Pick an action just outside of your current ability.**

For example, if I want to learn to play guitar, my first action could be learning how to play a chord or scale. If you pick something within your current ability, you'll still probably improve, but not

at an optimal rate. If you pick something too far outside your current ability, you'll risk learning to perform the action incorrectly, or just be really frustrated. It's important to constantly self-evaluate: If something feels too easy, make it harder or pick something harder. If it feels too hard and you are struggling and failing, make it easier or pick an easier action.

#### **2. Find a reference for the action.**

Find a real person or video of someone who can already perform the correct action, and watch it. The closer you do this to when you actually attempt your action, the better. Ideally, you should be able to see the action, try it a few seconds later, then receive feedback/evaluate your performance as soon as possible.

YouTube videos are a good substitute when you can't find a real person. This is important, because, if you have no reference, you'll have no idea when you've successfully learned the action.

#### **3. Try to perform the action.**

As soon as possible after observing the action, perform it. While you perform it, become aware of mistakes immediately, and stop! You don't want to give your neurons any chance to fire incorrectly. This involves focused, mindful concentration (i.e. constant self-awareness and monitoring). Practice should almost never be mindless or passive. If you struggle with this, look into mindfulness meditation (there are lots of online resources).

#### **4. Evaluate the gap between the reference and your performance.**

First, note what mistakes you made. If you have a person to help you, have them tell you what they noticed. Then, figure out what you should have done differently. Be very explicit about what you did incorrectly and how you should have done it.

Then, focus on correcting only one mistake at





”Just like wires, neurons can carry signals to each other to pass information to different organs, muscles, parts of the brain”

a time (unless the mistakes are all really related to the same problem).

**5. If there was no gap, repeat the action.** Once you perform it correctly several times in a row, move on. If there were mistakes, apply a practice technique, chunk it up, or slow it down.

Now is the time to use a practice technique, if you discovered any during your preliminary information-gathering or your mentor has any ideas. By “practice technique”, I mean an action that helps you learn the target action (that isn’t the target action, or is some approximation of it).

The practice technique should target the specific mistake you made. Most major skills have quite a few of these that have been developed over time. For example, music teachers often have their students play a short passage of a piece in many different rhythms, gradually building in speed.

If you don’t have any specific practice techniques, here are some general strategies for correcting mistakes (these can be combined):

**A. Break the action into smaller chunks.**

Isolate different parts of the action. If you were learning to swim, for example, you might isolate the kicking motion while holding on to the edge of the pool. If you’re learning to play a song, you could isolate a small section of it. The part should be such that you can perform it without mistakes. Take one part and practice it like you did the whole action (i.e., take the part back to step 2).

**B. Perform the action more slowly.**

Slow the action down to the point where you can perform it with no mistakes, then do it correctly, at that speed, several times. Then, increase the speed and do it correctly several times, and so on. This works because, though you’re performing the action slowly, the correct neural pathways still get stimulated.

It’s important to stop when you perform the action successfully several times in a row. First of all, consecutive success is a good indicator of mastery. Secondly, it’ll take your neurons time to become myelinated. If you repeat the action too many times, you’ll risk failing due to fatigue and learning the incorrect action. Practice is really just about triggering the development of myelin, so, once you reach this point, stop doing the action until your next session.

With all that in mind, you’re well on your way to improving yourself. Take a moment and think of all the things for which you’ve ever thought “I wish I could do that”. Think of any abilities you already have that you could improve, or even teach to others.

The great part about skills is that they are awesome progress indicators, and, if there’s one thing that makes people happy, it’s a sense of progression and accomplishment.

**So go level up!**



Creative Home Engineering  
- MAKERS OF THE BEST  
**SECRET**  
**PASSAGES**





text ALICIA WACH

Since the days of Ancient Egypt, when builders constructed escape routes for royals to hidden bars during the Prohibition Era or pop culture icon Bruce Wayne and his batcave – secret passageways and hidden rooms have always been very, very cool.

So what if we told you that you could have your own hidden passageway right in your very own home? Admit it – that would be pretty awesome. And that is where Steve Humble and his company, Creative Home Engineering come in, because he is in the business of building hidden passageways for anyone willing to foot the bill.



Throughout history people have been using secret passageways to secure people and valuables. Marie Antoinette used one in 1789 to escape an angry mob. A secret passageway provided Anne Frank and her family safety for two years during World War II. Pope Alexander the 6th even built one inside the Vatican called "The Passetto" which gave direct escape in case of invasion. And today, Creative Home Engineering has an extensive list of clients all over the world that use their secret passageways for protection.

"Currently about 60% of our clients need the secret passage to fill some sort of security need" says Humble.

Usually it's some sort of priceless collection or a panic room so they'll have a place to go in the event of a home invasion. The rest of CHE's clientele just want their home to be a lot of fun, including projects for elaborate kid's playrooms, secret mancaves, and hidden theater rooms. Their doors are unique, imaginative, and visually stunning.

If your inner child isn't imagining endless possibilities, the grown-up side should be impressed as well. A secret room creates a safety standard unparalleled by traditional safes. Visible safes and vault doors are known to attract thieves and your neighborhood hardware store sells all a thief needs to break open even the best safe door. That's why secret passage vaults give palpable safety - particularly if you're away for long periods of time. A thief can have all the time he needs - he could literally live in your house for months and never know that your valuables even exist. How can a thief steal what he does not know is there?

Humble is quick to point out the differences between his products and the lower-quality imitators that have sprung up in recent years.

"We're always trying to make sure the client understands the difference between a bookcase mounted on a hinge and a precision-hidden passage system."

While traditional millwork companies just



mount hinges to the wood - resulting in a low precision door prone to sagging, warping, rubbing, and large gaps for air and light to come through, CHE's passageway systems are professionally engineered and then literally built around reinforced structural metal skeletons. The passageways are then mounted on quiet, smooth precision ball bearings that transfer the load directly to the floor rather than through the walls and life-cycle tested in a high-tech testing jig. This allows the passageways to work smoothly while handling heavy loads, even over time and with varying temperature and humidity conditions that tend to plague other doors.

"That is why our warranty is by far the best in the industry", Humble adds proudly.

CHE is so aware of sub-par secret passage designs because fixing and replacing the lackluster

secret doors of competitors is much of their business.

"People think they're going to save money by going with a less reputable company or a conventional wood shop, but it always ends up costing them more in the end."

But the mechanical design isn't the only thing that CHE has to engineer. There is also the electrical system. These passageways can be triggered in virtually any way. Push on a copy of William Shakespeare's *Othello*? Turn a candlestick just a quarter of an inch? Press in the third blue tile from the sink? Whatever your idea, consider it done. Be sure to think outside the normal. Try a retina scan as the only way to enter. Move a chess piece to open a door only to reveal a fingerprint scanner. Biometrics scanners (that

So what kinds of people make up Steve Humble's client list? Most clients choose to keep this knowledge secret for obvious reasons, and CHE's records are strictly confidential. But we do know that plenty of big name athletes and actors are on the list. High-profile business moguls come frequently to CHE and ex-CIA personnel firms have purchased discrete panic room entrances from CHE to furnish the mansions of billionaire executives. We do know that one of the wealthiest men in the world protects his museum-quality art collection with Creative Home Engineering's help.

"At first we couldn't get anyone to look at the house. Then we included in the listing that it had 3 secret passageways and we immediately began showing it constantly until it sold a few weeks later."

When you do something right, recognition follows. Creative Home Engineering has been featured on television practically everywhere including all the major broadcasting networks: NBC, CNBC, HGTV, DISCOVERY, ABC, and FOX to name just a few. Recently they even donated a secret passageway for a needy family on ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition". The secret passageway gave a needy boy a dream-come-true. You can watch the clip on the company website ([creativehomeengineering.com](http://creativehomeengineering.com)) and see the chest of working drawers that opens to

**So what kinds** of secret passages can Creative Home Engineering make? Remember the revolving fireplace from the Indiana Jones series? Humble's crew makes it a reality. Using a brick facade to minimize weight, the look is flawless and matches the real brick support of the fireplace. The fireplace is useable as well. Want it to slide open instead of rotate? No problem. The classic rotating bookshelf is another popular option. Choose the book you want to move or press and you have a Sherlock Holmes worthy entrance. The woodwork is custom built and can be matched to any preexisting color or finish. Often an entire bookshelf unit or library is built with only one section revolving to the opening. Some homes features an entire staircase that flips up to reveal a child's play room. A guest would never know that underneath his carpeted feet lies a secret getaway. CHE can disguise secret passages as just about anything and they boast the most comprehensive secret passage portfolio of any company in the world.

Whether they're interested in adding prestige, security, fun, or resale value to an existing home



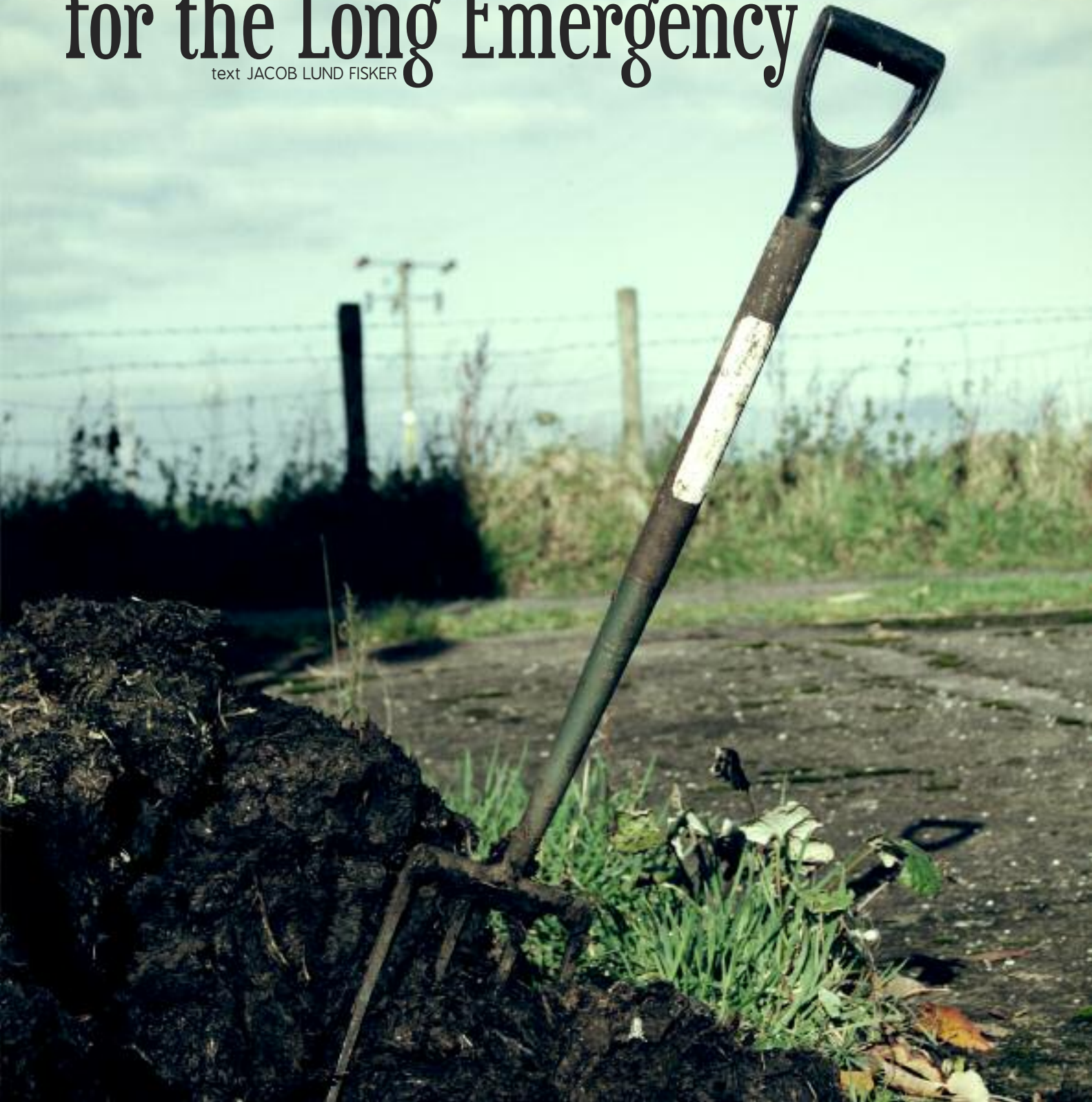
If you'd like to obtain information regarding a hidden passageway system for your home, visit the Creative Home Engineering website at [www.hiddenpassageway.com](http://www.hiddenpassageway.com)

*Editor's note: the style of this article may strike one as that of a paid-for infomercial, but that's just the way it turned out. Rest assured that we remain ever unpaid for our efforts. // ITM staff*



# Cassandra be Damned: Incremental Resiliency for the Long Emergency

text JACOB LUND FISHER





Unless you've been living with your head stuck in the sand, like normal people, you're probably aware of the encroaching triple-whammy of resource depletion, climate change, and overpopulation, the latter euphemistically known as "food insecurity". (Yes, I suppose being chronically hungry would make one feel somewhat "insecure".) These will be the defining traits of the 21st century much like the competition of which country should pick up the imperial mantle after Great Britain lost it after overspending their means resulting in two World Wars and the resulting Cold War (three big wars all totaled) was the defining trait of the 20th century.

Of course, such trends are so big and massive and individuals are so small and insignificant (most of us anyway) that it's hard to do something about them. If you got your head in the sand like a good consumer they'll pass right over you like a tsunami; for which the proper response, I believe, is "duck and cover"...or was that the proper response to a volcanic eruption, I forget.

In fact you might not even notice these things, or more likely attribute them to other causes such as, for example, thinking that all the mess in the Middle East is about terrorism (a symptom) instead of the Middle East holding the largest oil reserves in the world and the West being the world's largest oil consumers (a cause), or that the Great Recession was due to irresponsible bankers or subprime borrowers respectively, depending on which side of the political spectrum you find yourself on and which pundits you subconsciously copy your opinions from.

Anyway, it really pays to be informed such as to stay out of the inevitable hot spots. In the 20th century, you could have left Nazi Germany before it went completely insane – the signs were there for 15 years! – and you could have avoided

losing your farm in the Great Depression. In the 21st century you probably don't want to be a self-sustaining farmer caught in the megadrought of California's Central Valley in 2030 (currently producing 1/3 of all US fruit), or, say, behind poorly maintained levies of a Metropolis; or the levy of a nuclear reactor guaranteed to withstand a tsunami of 6.5 meters which in hindsight turned out to be a 7 meter tsunami. Whoops! But what's a pithy 50 centimeters between friends? It probably saved a few million bucks in construction costs. To survive, it helps to be informed and stay one step ahead. (Did someone in the theater yell fire?)

**Much survivalist preparation** has been set in the old-fashioned Cold War frame of mind which is (currently?) outdated. Back then the idea was to grab your Bug Out Bag (available at a nearby online outlet for \$279.95; there's always profit in fear, doubt, and uncertainty) and head for the hills with your guns and ammo and start shooting the wildlife. Once the forests had been rendered devoid of song birds and other critters [as it tends to happen when more than a neolithic mass density of people decide on the locust maneuver] presumably all the "civilians" would have died in the ensuing chaos in the [still] radioactive cities and life would slowly return to

normal. However, people are beginning to realize that it's probably not going to go down quite like that.

Yet we are no longer looking at the systemic disruptions that follow from a 5 minute nuclear exchange over the North Pole. We are looking at financial mismanagement that takes years to manifest itself. We are looking at environmental consequences that take decades to play out. We are looking at a demographic churn with social security and medical liabilities that takes generations. These things take so long that you are not going to notice from one day to the next; or even one year to the next. However, some day you'll note that you can't drink untreated water from the creeks anymore; that it's been years since you've last seen a frog; and that if you could actually use your eyes to see the CO2 blanket we have been putting out over the past hundred years, you'll note it is now 25% thicker than it was 50 years ago. Now doesn't that make you feel warm and fuzzy?

What this means is that the key is no longer to focus on tactics, e.g. bug out bags, .30-06 rifles, and a year long supply of toilet paper. No, the key is to find a strategy to avoid getting caught living in the wrong place without the

means to take care of yourself as you find yourself subjected to the short end of the globalization stick, fiscal liabilities and decade long recessions, electric brown and black outs, high and volatile gas prices, possible food shortages, excuse me, insecurity. You need to position yourself to avoid gas embargoes that'll leave you stranded in suburbia without the means to heat your 5 bedroom home, and figure out how to deal with limited internet access as servers shut down to conserve energy. Fun fact: Did you know that an estimated 10% of electricity usage now goes towards supporting a fully operational internet. Pop quiz: If the electricity grid can't deliver, what you do think will be switched off first?

The 20th century strategy to the good life was to "go to college", work hard, and spend your money on a "nice house"(tm). This is the strategy that most young people are still told to pursue. Find something you're passionate about and work hard. Then "reward yourself" by going shopping for "nice stuff"(tm) to put into your heavily mortgaged "nice house"(tm).

However, the sure-fire "work hard and you shall be rewarded" career track jobs are a lot harder to come by than they were 30 or 50 years ago. Most people will never work within the field of the education they picked because their 18 year old selves were passionate about it. Instead they find themselves stuck in temporary service-level jobs as they jump around from job to

Fun fact: Did you know that an estimated 10% of electricity usage now goes towards supporting a fully operational internet. Pop quiz: If the electricity grid can't deliver, what you do think will be switched off first?

job for longer and longer while trying to make ends meet paying their bills and buying stuff.

**Even employees**, who managed to get onto an actual career track and may still feel a remnant loyalty towards their employers will eventually discover that the employers' loyalty is long gone as many of the "real" jobs have either been replaced by friendly robots or friendly foreigners working for \$0.25/hour in campus-like mega factories leaving mostly a carnage of service jobs as burger flippers or supermarket greeters in its wake. At least a degree in comparative literature will allow you to inquire whether the customer desires ketchup with his fries in iambic pentameter as long as you can convince the hiring manager that you're not actually overqualified for the job. I suppose if you got a dual degree in existential philosophy you will be able to appreciate the irony of your position as well.

What remains unanswered is how young people are to make a stable living when most career

opportunities were filled forty years ago by boomers who seem to remain glued to their seats much as they tell us that career success is more a case of hard work [like it was for them] than it is of demographical advantage [which they remain oblivious of]. Yeah, right! These days, hard work is out and trading favors and career politics also known as networking is in. Career advancement is a zero-sum game. It's not what you know, but who you know, and the price of admission is \$200,000 for a brand name "degree" and a matching education that a reasonably bright person can score for the proverbial \$5 in late fees from a public library. Sure, some in Generation X and Y (and now Z) are good at playing these games, but many of us more traditionally minded ones, who believe(d) in working hard over playing power games, have a harder time.

The problem is that – depending on where you live – the world has been either in a full-on or impending recession for the past 10-20 years

and that it's probably heading for more of the same. While everybody else seems to have a lot of "nice stuff", which they most likely bought on credit, you find yourself unable to afford more luxury than the latest model cell phone from a popular fruit company. But that is apparently enough to appease the general population.

**With these pervasive** issues entering the Zeitgeist, a desperate market has been created for a concept called "lifestyle design". Lifestyle design in its most popular form, as far as I understand, has to do with hiring cheap labor in other countries to help sell unregulated pills, plastic junk, and pretend-expert \$77 e-books (in the form of double-spaced double margin 120 page pdf files) to suckers on the internet. It is a microreplication of the game played by transnational corporations but run exclusively on the easy-entry platform of the internet. Yet to achieve a sustainable business success, you need a significant hard-entry moat and if what you have or plan to have is "quick and easy" or morally dubious, you ain't got the aforementioned moat. Either others will quickly copy your idea and drive your profit margin to zero or your customers will catch on sooner or later which is why the snake oil salesmen of old times quickly moved on to a new town. Escaping your reputation on the internet is hard since your reputation is now global and follows you around permanently. Hence instead of enjoying the promised life of automated income you'll have to shut down operations and come up with some-

thing else. Thinking of this intermission of zero-income unemployment as a temporary retirement will at least allow you to feel good about yourself while you play "geoarbitrage" sitting on a beach in a poor country and scramble to come up with another dubious get rich quick scheme. Oy vey!

The problem with all of these attempts is that they all try to fit into an industrial system which can't prevail, because, well, frankly, it's running out of resources, like oil and gas and strategic metals; it's polluting the environment badly enough to change the climate and render parts of it unlivable – at least to species other than humans, 40-70% which are expected to die out in the next 100 years (the 20th century saw the loss of 10% of all species thanks to our great progress in making and selling stuff without concern for any unintended side-effects); and it's getting to be so cost efficient that it no longer has room or opportunity for all 7 billion people to spend a lifetime filing forms, pushing buttons, making widgets, or selling junk to each other.

As overall complexity has increased – we call this technological progress – the world has also become enormously interdependent. While this has made tremendous economic efficiencies possible and given us things like strawberries airlifted in from New Zealand during [our] wintertime, \$2 shoes from across the Pacific ocean (sold for \$200 in a sports gadget store near

you), and about as much stuff as money can possibly buy, it also has a downside [beside the obvious ones]. Financial problems in one country now cascade as viral contagion and affect the world as fast as the news come up on the trading terminals (about a minute or so) which link all the world's money together. A tsunami hits Japan, the electric grid shuts down, which in turn shuts down one of the world's few specialty chip factories, and the manufacturing of cell phones goes down. The world has definite choke points, for sure, and several of them are likely just upstream of you but outside of your control.

The problem is that most of us have become utterly dependent on this industrial-technological system for all of our needs and wants. Shopping is as important as oxygen to us. Close down the malls for a few days and people go crazy. We no longer think of ourselves as citizens but as "consumers", a descriptive term that I've always found kind of derogatory. This dependence is so fundamental that it goes unseen, much like fish don't see the water they swim in. Consequentially, the only solution we can think of whenever we struggle with unfulfilled needs or wants is to "earn more" and start a side-business, negotiate a raise, and gamble on some more education – it's an investment in your future (ha!). The only perceived way to a better so-called standard-of-living is to work harder and smarter and earn more. However, what this often results in is more environmen-



tal damage or at best reshuffling money from suckers to scammers.

A good measure of how much you depend on the industrial system is how much money you spend on an ongoing basis. This is a direct proxy for your consumerist dependencies. It is a direct measure for how much income you need to compensate for your lack of self-sufficient skill. In The United States the average family, also known as a "consumer unit" needs \$48,000 annually. Since this also happens to be about what the "consumer unit" makes in earned income, as nothing, I repeat nothing, is saved for the future, the dependency is 100%. That's a pretty precarious spot to be in, if, say, you lost your job thus removing all your means. Many people are literally one paycheck away from defaulting on their obligations and losing their homes.

**Much survivalist literature** deals with worst case scenarios. Perhaps this is a matter of definition because we wouldn't call it survival if there wasn't a threat to life. However, I would argue that survivalist thinking is useful on many levels. Dmitry Orlov wrote of the five stages of collapse which progress from financial collapse to commercial collapse to political collapse to social collapse to cultural collapse. Basically, you'll start going through your stockpile of toilet paper following a commercial collapse, and you'll bring out the guns following a cultural collapse.

I think it would be helpful for most people to consider the preliminary "zero stage", that is, the point before financial collapse which many of us refer to as normality or business as usual. This is the point where you might lose your job, but the government will still come around to collect taxes. It is the point where the police won't show up if your house gets burgled, unless you shoot the burglar in which case they will show up to arrest you.

"From someone who is used to depending on either the government or Walmart for all their needs, self-sufficiency may seem overwhelming. How does one achieve self-sufficiency? How does a fish swim out if its water?"

The world reached its peak in global oil production in 2006, which was immediately followed by rising prices and a recession. From now on the world will see less and less energy on a global scale. However, what is also clear is that the powers that be are very keen on retaining control which basically means keeping the market operational even if it means using the military to take control of the remaining oil reserves and strategic pipelines to keep the oil for sale. You see, if you're one of the richest people in the world (and if you're reading this, you're probably richer than 90% of the world) it doesn't really matter what the price of oil is; what matters is that you can buy oil in the first place. Now, consider that global energy production divided by global population peaked in the late 1970s and it's clear that the average world-citizen has been getting poorer for a good 40 years. Sure, we got the internet and Hollywood movies to distract us. It makes for nice bread and circus. However, the edges of the empire are not doing so hot. Like with energy, if you follow the deep news, almost every year there are worries about global wheat supplies. In the latest technofolly, some genius decided that maybe we should burn our food supply by turning it into ethanol for cars.

Brilliant! Also known as the tortilla crisis, this caused riots around the world as corn prices went up and people who could barely afford to eat as it was suddenly found themselves unable to afford food as we were busy adding ethanol to our cars to be "more environmental". To summarize: The richer you are, the longer you can remain oblivious to such encroaching problems. Yet sooner or later they are going to affect parts of the industrial system (the recent recession was a hiccup) and if your well-being depends 100% on the industrial system, you will feel the consequences.

To avoid this unfortunate destiny, you have to do two things: 1) develop wealth and savings so as to stave off the effects of joining the global poor for as long as possible; 2) become more independent of the industrial system, so as to remain impervious to systemic hiccups, convulsions, and potential collapses.

Let's start with the second one because the first one will follow from that. From someone who is used to depending on either the government or Walmart for all their needs, self-sufficiency may seem overwhelming. How does one achieve self-



sufficiency? How does a fish swim out if its water?

Fortunately, it is quite possible to proceed in a step-wise manner. Start with 10% self-sufficiency, where 10% self-sufficiency is defined as replacing 10% of your spending with alternatives. You could of course just give up superfluous spending, but that's no fun at all. No, this is an excellent excuse to polish off and engage in various survival techniques by improvising solutions instead of buying them. Resourcefulness is something that must be cultivated. The more you know, the less stuff you need, so play around.

**One problem** is the pervasive dependency on experts. Some people no longer feel qualified to determine, on their own, whether they can engage in the labor of walking 10 blocks for their groceries without consulting a physician. Everything has been entrusted to experts. However, in 80% or some equivalent high percentage, experts are overqualified. You don't really need an expert to change a flat on your bike. It is time to re-engage with the technology you use. Instead of looking at it as a black box,

understand it. To give you a simple example, I recently built a rake out of a 2x4 and a dowel. What is a rake? It is a handle with a crossbar and some teeth pegged to it. It's easy to build. All you need to eliminate is your impulse to go out and shop and instead bring out your tools.

Over a period of about a year I managed to replace 80% of my spending relative to my income (which wasn't spectacular by any means). I moved close to work thus replacing a car with a pair of good boots and the ability to walk for miles without tiring. I got rid of a lot of stuff. I started buying things used and selling them again when I no longer needed them which kept my amount of "baggage" low thus giving me flexibility. And so on. These days I get around on a bicycle I put together from parts from several discarded bicycles. I have also taken to growing some of my own food out of self-watering containers I made out of recycled 5 gallon buckets. It is a rare occasion for me to actually need to go shopping. When the recession hit, I barely noticed.

I think the immediate impulse to self-sufficiency is to go overboard and aim for 100% self-suffi-

ciency/independence. This is a nice goal, but it is also hard work. This is mostly because of the Pareto principle. With relatively little effort (a few years of learning DIY skills and reframing your thinking from a consumer to a self-producer), you can become sufficiently resourceful and competent, like a Heinlein hero, to replace 80% of your spending with things you either made yourself or bargained for or simply repurposed. About half of this will come from finding a better place to live (30%) and becoming car-independent (20%), which means finding a place to live which is local to your work, supermarket (food), and hang-outs rather than living out in the middle of nowhere suburbia and spending two hours a day commuting back and forth. The next 30% comes from developing DIY skills, recycling and repurposing and being adaptable and flexible. The final 20% is much more challenging, so maybe just forget about it. Imagine building an electric engine from scratch to build a windmill. Do you know how to wind a proper coil? Do you know how to build a vacuum tube out of a discarded jam container? It can be done, but it is frankly much easier to buy this solution (used on eBay of course). Conversely, it is much easier to learn how to unclog a pipe





than it is to work to pay \$800 for a plumber's apprentice to spend 20 minutes doing it for you. You want to strike a balance.

The keywords are flexibility, resilience, resourcefulness, and skills. The solution to systemic independence will not be in hoarding supplies. This is just repeating the consumerist way of doing things, when skills is outsourced into buying gadgets. Yes, we all like our serrated folding knives, fire strikers, and tactical flashlights, but what it really comes down to is how resourceful you are with the things you can find and make yourself.

If you can manage to build this level of resourcefulness I bet you'll be a popular guy

when The Shit Hits The Fan (TSHTF) – well, actually, it's more likely to come out of the leaking pipe you can't afford to pay someone to fix. However, even better; consider your financial situation. You can currently pay for this lifestyle with a part time job as a burger flipper. If You were lucky enough to pick a better major, you will be able to save upwards of 80% of an average income. In the US this means maybe earning \$40,000 after taxes, spending \$8,000 and saving \$32,000 every year. What this means is that if you work 1 year, you will have saved enough to pay for the expenses for the next 4 years. This scales linearly: work 2 years, save 8 years of expense; work 3 years, save 12 years. Imagine a short career as a delivery truck driver or something that gives you a comparable income, like,

say, a PhD in physics (yes, I got one and I still regret not going into the trucking business instead), and you have saved enough for the next 30+ years within a decade of work. If you invest this money back into the system, it has been tradition to be able to withdraw about 3% of the principal every year on a permanent basis, that is, for the rest of your life, even if you plan to live forever. The only way this will fail is if we reach a social collapse (see above). In this case you will likely still be better off thanks to your ability to improvise solutions. By that time you might even have reached 100% self-sufficiency or at least hooked up with like-minded individuals which are currently few and far in between.

A few years ago I called this crash crowbar-





method savings program Early Retirement Extreme (a.k.a ERE, now available in blog, forum, and book form, just google it), figuring that it was easier to convince people of its merits if I waved the carrot of financial independence and being able to stop working for a living than the whip of doom and gloom.

The system is robust in the sense that the outcome is predictable. You won't run into competition from hundreds or thousands of others trying to make a living hawking their latest e-book on "how they're being awesome on the internets". You and I can both save our money (and the planet) without interfering with each other, and we can make our living as old school capitalists as long as there is something to invest in whether that be stocks on NASDAQ or

camelback trade caravans in a Mad Max world.

**I will tell you outright** that getting to where I am today (I reached a level of self-sufficiency and savings that allowed me to stop working for a living when I was 30. I retired at age 33) will not be "quick and easy". However, it is not complicated either. The difference is between that of the miracle diet supplement and that of simply eating right and working out hard. What you need is persistence, discipline, and enough will to make it a priority and succeed. Unfortunately, this seems to be something most people don't have which is why they continuously fall for get rich quick schemes.

Now, with all this said, it may be that I'm off in

my gloomy predictions by a good 50 or 100 years. Perhaps the almighty internet will become self-aware and invent fusion reactors and we'll establish a colony on Mars, start mining the asteroids, and rebuild the dinosaurs from recovered DNA, or whatever. In this case, the ERE method still wins. Projecting my conservative investment returns out under a business as usual scenario, I will be a dollar millionaire before I'm 50, for whatever that's worth. Under the industrial metrics, this is still a success, and if I change my mind I can always go back to finding meaning in life from buying stuff and putting it in my garage.

*Jacob Lund Fisker's site can be found at [earlyretirementextreme.com](http://earlyretirementextreme.com)*

# 10 ways to obliterate your fears and expand your comfort zone

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For the last six months or so, I've been consciously running towards my fears rather than away from them. I've set myself dozens of challenges designed to push me out of my comfort zone, and found out a whole bunch about myself and the world in the process of attempting them.

Below I want to list out just ten of those challenges, and share an important lesson I learned from each.

## 1. Strike up a conversation with a homeless person

We're told growing up not to talk to strangers, especially the smelly ones who live under the bridge. Well, I went and talked to one of those guys anyway. His name was Eric. He was about 25 years old. Once assured that I wasn't some "Jesus freak" trying to save his soul, Eric told me his story.

Ten years earlier he was living at home with his mother, who had a string of abusive boyfriends. The boyfriends used to beat the shit out of Eric, until finally he'd had enough and gave his mother an ultimatum: it's either them or me. His mother promptly kicked him out of the house.

Eric stopped going to school and started sleeping in a nearby field. Friends from the neighborhood would drop by every so often. They never spoke a word about what had happened at home, but they would bring Eric a few beers every now and then, to keep him warm at night.

Before long, Eric was an alcoholic. But he was an angry drunk and he would get himself into fights, so a "friend" introduced him to a more chill drug called heroin. The next decade went by in a blur, as Eric found himself always in search of his next fix, sleeping on the street, in and out of prison. Earlier that day I met him, he'd spent a few hours locked up for stealing a mobile phone.

I came away from my conversation with Eric thinking how that could have been me sitting there on the side of the street, begging for spare change. The big difference between us both as 15-year-olds was that I had good parents and Eric didn't. What if he'd been born into my family, and me into his?

The lesson I took away from it all is that I'm one extremely lucky and privileged mofo. If you're reading this, you probably are too. As such, we should make the most of the opportunities we've been given. Otherwise, it's a kick in the teeth for someone like Eric.

## 2. Sing or dance in a public place where nobody else is singing/dancing

I planted myself in the middle of a busy pedestrian area one Monday afternoon in January and started belting out a few tunes a capella. I was nervous as hell at the start, but soon got into it. By the time I started singing Bonnie Tyler's *Holding Out for a Hero*, I no longer cared much what the passers-by thought of me. I was having too much fun.

This exercise might seem pointless, but what it does is build up a resistance to social pressure. People look at you strange when you start singing badly in the street, just like people think you're strange when you set out to do *anything* remarkable.

- You want to cycle to China? Don't be stupid.
- You're going to give up your high-paying accounting job to become an artist? Get real.
- Think you can become a world champion in synchronized swimming? Dream on, dumbass.





# "Laugh in the face of your fear. It hates that"

If you truly are to live a remarkable life, you must learn to ignore those naysayers and dream slayers, build up a resistance to their negativity. Because you don't need anyone's permission to go do what you want to do.

### 3. Try stand-up comedy

I've tried stand-up comedy twice in the past six months. My first time sucked balls. My second attempt went pretty well. But really, the prep work for it all started years before, when I joined Toastmasters to work on my speaking skills and get comfortable standing up there all alone in front of an audience. Even though I was terrified of public speaking, I pushed myself to participate in each club meeting and enter whatever contests I was eligible for.

Gradually, I grew more comfortable speaking in front of people. I learned a whole lot about being funny on stage when I entered a humorous speech contest. That forced me to repeatedly practice and tweak a speech (about the first girl

I ever hit on) until I had it just right. I got through all four rounds of the contest and won it out.

Then came that first attempt at stand up. I was nervous as all hell and got hurried off stage. A few months later I tried again, this time with a new philosophy (forget about being funny, focus on being comfortable). I felt completely at ease and my set was well received.

The lesson is this: It takes time to build the confidence you need to overcome a big fear. Don't expect it to happen overnight. It took two years of persistent effort, practice, failure, and resolve before I was able to tackle stand-up successfully.

### 4. Offer a stranger a hug

I staged what was essentially an impromptu free hugs event in the middle of my city, putting the word out online less than 24 hours before. The time came and I found myself out there alone. Nobody else had shown up. It was kinda awkward. Just one weird dude out there trying to hug

strangers (again though, good for building that resistance to social pressure).

After ten minutes of awkwardness, the cavalry arrived. (And by cavalry I mean just one other guy.) Offering hugs to strangers suddenly became much easier. I was no longer out there by myself, the lone weirdo.

Never underestimate the power of a solid support system. Surround yourself with good people who are on board with what you're trying to do. Even better: hang out with folks who are a few steps ahead of you on the path. Even one good connection can make a huge difference.

I like to use a simple analogy to drive home this point: Imagine two young basketball players, both with dreams of making the NBA. One surrounds himself with friends who like to hang out in basements getting high and playing video games. The other surrounds himself with other basketball junkies, many of whom are older and better than him.

Which kid has the better shot of living that dream? No contest, right?

### 5. Shave your head or dye your hair

I decided to do this challenge on a whim. I woke up one morning and the idea of shaving my head flashed across my mind. Immediately I began to fight it. I told myself that I'd look ridiculous, my ears were too big, my skull was probably shaped like a coconut, yada yada yada.

That was the stupid, scared part of my brain talking. Once I recognized the voice, I knew I had to do it. Less than 12 hours later and, for the first time in my life, I was rocking a freshly shaved dome.

And I liked it.

Of course, for many people, shaving your head is no big deal. But for me it was scary, and therein lies the lesson: Courage is relative.

Some people are scared of failure, others are scared of success. Some people are claustrophobic, others are agoraphobic. Some are afraid of living, others are afraid of dying. But what other people might or might not be scared of really doesn't matter. You know your own demons, and it's up to you to slay them.

### 6. Lie down in a department store

On a Monday afternoon, right after my Bonnie Tyler tribute, I went to a department store, found a big, central aisle, and lay down on the floor. The challenge was to stay there until someone came over and told me to get up.

Within 30 seconds, a checkout clerk approached, looking puzzled. He asked if I was alright.

– Yeah, fine thanks. Just feeling a little tired, so I'm going to nap here for a minute.

And then I closed my eyes. And then he left... to call security. Almost two minutes passed before the big security dude came along, right as I was scratching my ass and rolling into a fetal position.

– Hey, you can't lie down there. Come on, get up.

I did as I was told, and quickly left the store. I felt a little thrill for having completed the challenge, but there was also a bad taste in my mouth. Later, I would figure out why.

See, intentionally pushing yourself out of your comfort is cool, but you need to be careful when involving other, unsuspecting people in the process. As a rule, I believe it's fine to make oth-

ers feel uncomfortable every now and then, but you should always strive to leave them better than you found them. Making a fool of somebody else does not count as a courageous deed.

### 7. Walk into a tall building and ask at reception if you can go up on the roof to look at the view

I tried this challenge three times before I succeeded, learning a lot about *how* and *who* to ask for things.

First the *how*: You need to give people a reason. Nobody will let you up on the roof of a tall building "just because". My spiel was that I was doing a project for my website. I made the story a little unusual, remembering the mantra that it's often better to be different than good. It also helped a lot that I kept my mood light and a smile upon my face. Everyone knows that jumpers and terrorists don't joke around much.

Now the *who*: I failed my first two times because I never got to talk to the decision-maker (a.k.a. the gatekeeper). On my second attempt, the receptionist called up the maintenance guy from the front desk and relayed my request (badly):

– Yeah, up on the roof... he says it's for a website... okay, thanks [hangs up, turns to me] ...he said no.

On my next attempt, at a different tall building, as the receptionist reached for the phone, I asked if I could speak with the maintenance guy personally. He came down to see me, I sold my request like only I could, and five minutes later he was snapping a picture of me up on the roof.

The lesson here is that you need to keep trying. Learn from your mistakes and alter your approach as you go. Simply move along if you hit



"Some people are scared of failure, others are scared of success. Some people are claustrophobic, others are agoraphobic. Some are afraid of living, others are afraid of dying. But what other people might or might not be scared of really doesn't matter. You know your own demons, and it's up to you to slay them."



a big roadblock. There will be other tall buildings.

## 8. Quit your job and start your own business

I had a nice 9-to-5 job in New Orleans, working for a university as a web designer for three years. It was undoubtedly a good job, but for me, it wasn't *good enough*. I don't believe in settling, at least not when it comes to something you spend 40 hours a week at, so I quit.

And then I started my own business. I'd been following the progress of some online entrepreneurs, saw the quick successes some of them were having, and figured I could do the same. No worries.

Now, here I am, six months later, still struggling to get my business off the ground, earning very little and watching my savings shrink.

But that's okay. I'm not about to go running back to regular employment. See, I've given myself permission to suck. Most people don't do that, and so they get frustrated very quickly and give up too soon. I've come to understand that, with very few exceptions, success has to be paid for in advance, and you pay with long stretches of suckage. You endure the hard knocks of that pain period and keep pushing through, allowing yourself to fail and continue on regardless. Until eventually you wake up one morning and you find that you no longer suck.

As I'm writing this, I still suck at self-employment, just like I once sucked at public speaking. But I don't suck at the latter anymore, and I won't suck at the former forever.

## 9. Ask someone very different from you to share their viewpoint on a controversial topic

I've been vegan for two years, and during that time I've come to appreciate and support many of the common arguments for plant-based diets. So for this challenge, I figured it would be

a good idea to find a butcher willing to share his views on veganism. I went to the local market and found an elderly gentleman in charge of a third-generation family meat shop. His name was Mr. Bresnan.

I interviewed him for five minutes on camera, not allowing myself to contradict anything he said or offer any resistance. I just asked open-ended questions and listened to what he had to say.

Of course, I disagreed with many of Mr. Bresnan's viewpoints, but the whole experience drove home for me a pretty simple, yet profound, lesson: You don't have to agree with someone to respect them. All I did was listen to this person very different from me, and I somehow came away believing him to be a good man, living his life the best way he knew how, the way that made most sense to him.

And a second lesson here, something I've had to relearn many times over the years: you can never change someone's mind unless it's willing to be changed. I could have argued with Mr. Bresnan, but I would never have convinced him of my viewpoint. And he would never have convinced me of his. As such, an argument between us would have been a complete waste of time and energy. Better to focus those resources where you actually can make a difference.

## 10. Flirt with the hottest guy/girl in the room

Many of my challenges over the last six months or so have involved the opposite sex. I was the shyest kid I knew growing up, and remained socially inept well into my 20's. I've since made some big strides, learning how to get chatting to pretty much anyone in a friendly way. But I wanted to build my flirting confidence, especially with extremely attractive women, before whom I usually crumbled.

One of these challenges was to go into a bar and flirt with the hottest girl there, for better or

worse, 'til unbearable awkwardness (or whatever) us would part.

I was nervous beforehand, but resolved to just have fun with the experience, make a game of it. I told myself repeatedly that the outcome didn't matter; I was to just enjoy the moment, forget about trying for a date or a phone number.

Magic ensued. I ended up flirting my ass off with a ridiculously hot blonde, who before long proclaimed that I was the most charming man she'd ever met. (WTF? Me?) I did eventually try for her phone number, only to get shot down (apparently she had a boyfriend). But it didn't matter. My new approach obviously trumped my old.

And I've since found that the be-playful approach works great for pretty much any challenge. Strange how focusing too much on a desired outcome actually gives you less chance of achieving it. You're better off coming up with a firm intention, setting everything in motion, then letting go of the wheel, kicking back and enjoying the journey. You make a game of it and have some fun, laughing off the fear that would otherwise own you.

Apparently, there's some science behind this, too. As Laurence Gonzales writes in the book *Deep Survival*,

*"Laughter stimulates the left prefrontal cortex, an area in the brain that helps us to feel good and motivated. That stimulation alleviates anxiety and frustration. There is evidence that laughter can send chemical signals to actively inhibit the firing of nerves in the amygdala, thereby dampening fear."*

My final lesson to share: Laugh in the face of your fear. It hates that.

Niall Doherty wages regular war on thoughtless-living over at *Disrupting the Rabblement* <http://www.ndoherty.com>, helping people face their fears and piss off zombies. Follow the bejaysus out of him on Twitter <http://twitter.com/ndoherty13>.





# The Myth of Approach Anxiety

text ROSS JEFFRIES

When I was a little kid, one of my favorite hobbies was breaking my younger brother's toys. The cooler the toy, the more eager I was to break it, and the more inventive the method I employed. Maybe you could say in my defense that I found out how things worked by breaking them. Or maybe I was (and still am) a bit of a malicious little bastard.

In any event, one day, my sister bought him a very cool remote controlled car. It basically had 4 possible things it could do:

1. Turn right
2. Turn Left
3. Go forward
4. Go backward

In the interests of breaking the toy in a unique way. I hit on a pretty cool idea: I decided to give it the command to turn right and turn left at the same time.

You can probably guess what happened.

The little electric motor revved up, worked harder and faster to follow both commands, the car shook like hell, and then the whole thing blew a circuit. There was even a little cloud of blue smoke that came out of the wiring as it caught fire.

## It's not "Anxiety": it's neurological conflict

It's my sage opinion that this is a good analogy for what is actually going on in "approach anxiety". It isn't a matter of anxiety about the approach. It's mostly a sign of neurological conflict: giving your neurology two opposite and contradicting commands at the same time.

Just stop and think about it. Remember the last time you saw a smoking hot girl you wanted to approach. If you look a bit closely, you'll see that almost certainly, your thinking went like this; "Oh my God. Look at that ass. Go talk to her" And at the same time, this: "Wait, wait. Let's make sure we come up with exactly the right thing to say".

And so you go back and forth between two opposite commands: go forward and hold still. It is this overload from trying

to do two contradictory things at once that produces the sense of "anxiety." And because it feels just like the "fight or flight" signals you would get in the presence of an actual threat, unless you are trained to see what it actually is, you almost certainly will interpret it as a sign you are about to fail or be humiliated in the world.

## Intervention #1

### Acknowledge, change meaning, decide

One of the first interventions I do with my students and clients is to get them to realize that the "anxiety" they feel contains no information whatsoever about the woman they want to approach. Their internal conflict tells them nothing at all about whether she will reject them, accept them, or have any other responses. It simply means they are experiencing an internal conflict.

It can be as simple as saying to yourself, "Wait a minute. This feeling tells me nothing about how she'll respond. It's only information about what's currently going on with me, at this moment". From here you add in one more piece – what your action/decision is going to be.

So the next part of the sentence, after acknowledging what is going on is this: "So let's go talk to her and see what happens". Fundamentally you experience the conflict as exactly and only what it is: a conflict inside of you. You recognize this conflict contains no information about the world outside your own skin. And you don't let the conflict decide what you will do in the world.

## Intervention #2: Awareness and equanimity

For some people the raw feeling in the body – the uncomfortable physical sensations – are so strong and overpowering that no amount of clear thinking will make one bit of difference. If you fall into this category there are two things you can do.

First, tune your attention into the raw physical sensations going

on in your body. Rather than trying to numb out, force your way through them, or try to change them, mindfully put your attention on them. So let's say the "anxiety" takes the form of a clutching sensation in your chest. Simply put your attention on the sensation without any need, desire or attempt to change it. Pay attention to it while at the same time, giving it radical permission to be there.

As you do this, you may find that the sensation begins to shift and change somewhat. You may find that the intensity of the sensation changes; at times it can be more or less intense.

You may also find the "flavor" of the sensation may change: the clutching may become a pushing outward, or a stabbing. The extension of the sensation might change; it could move from the chest and spread throughout the body or jump to a different region of the body.

By putting your full attention on the sensation without fighting, resisting, or attempting in any way to change it, you will find, paradoxically, that it begins to change on its own, and that the suffering and the sense of it being a block to your taking action radically reduces. It helps to keep track of all of this by saying, either out loud or to yourself, "same" or "changing" every ten seconds. Simply label the sensation like this, matter of factly, without expectation. After a while, it will become second nature.

#### **Key understanding:**

#### **Pain and suffering are not the same**

A key learning here is to realize that pain of any kind is not the same as suffering. As my teacher, Shinzen Young explains, it is pain multiplied by resistance and lack of awareness that produces suffering, overwhelm, and the sensation of being "blocked".

To use Shinzen's formulation a bit more accurately, if you have 10 points of subjective "anxiety" and 10 points of resistance to it, and ten points of simply lacking awareness, these elements multiply to produce  $10 \times 10 \times 10$ , or 1,000 points of subjective "suffering".

According to this teaching, when you bring permission and

awareness to the "anxiety" the elements no longer multiply, they add. So instead of 1,000 points of being "blocked" you have 30. And, as Shinzen says, a 30 pound weight can be managed. A thousand pound weight will crush you.

#### **Intervention #3: Ground into your feet**

Once you've brought mindful attention to the raw "anxiety" sensations, there is one more piece you can do. And that is to simply place some of your attention – say 20-30% of it – onto the touch sensations of your feet pressing against the ground. By holding onto this sensation while you are talking to the woman, you'll find that you feel much more naturally relaxed, any sexual excitement you may feel is appropriate and doesn't overwhelm clear thinking, and that the eye contact you hold is much more positively received.

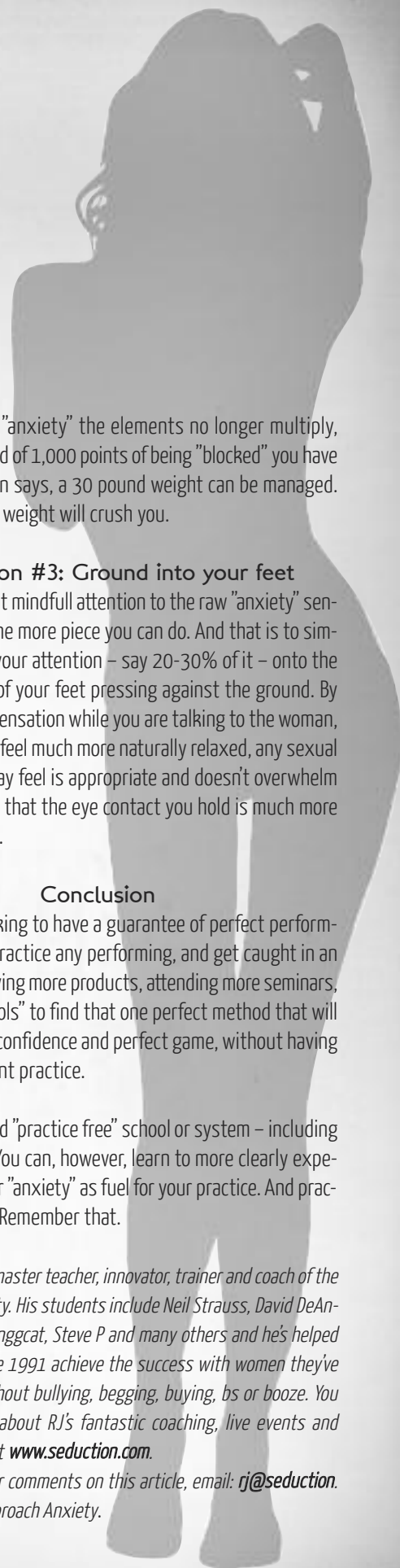
#### **Conclusion**

Many guys are looking to have a guarantee of perfect performance before they practice any performing, and get caught in an endless loop of buying more products, attending more seminars, and jumping "schools" to find that one perfect method that will give them perfect confidence and perfect game, without having to do any consistent practice.

No such perfect and "practice free" school or system – including my own – exists. You can, however, learn to more clearly experience and use your "anxiety" as fuel for your practice. And practice makes pussy. Remember that.

*Ross Jeffries is the master teacher, innovator, trainer and coach of the seduction community. His students include Neil Strauss, David DeAngelo, Hypnotica, Swingcat, Steve P and many others and he's helped countless men since 1991 achieve the success with women they've always wanted, without bullying, begging, buying, bs or booze. You can find out more about RJ's fantastic coaching, live events and recorded products at [www.seduction.com](http://www.seduction.com).*

*To give feedback or comments on this article, email: [rj@seduction](mailto:rj@seduction). Subject: Myth of Approach Anxiety.*





# *Designing your life and living your dreams*

text RASMUS LINDGREN

We had just landed in Bangkok after an 11 hour direct flight from Denmark and as I looked out on the plane from Thai Air I smiled by the thought of having this fantastic opportunity.

A couple of months earlier my girlfriend and I had bought a second home in Thailand and on this first trip we were going to spend a month there together with our 10 months old princess.

It had been fall in Denmark when we left but as always the weather was fantastic in Thailand. Now we just had to finish the last two and a half hour cab ride to our villa in Hua Hin and our first month of relaxation together with my family in our second home could begin.

I have certainly come a long way from the begin-

ning of 2008 where I first read the book "The 4-Hour Workweek" by Timothy Ferriss as a 9-5 employee to now where I was self-employed and only had to work for six months a year, and spending a couple of months in Thailand each year.

This article is all about lifestyle design. Sounds grand doesn't it? Well... it basically means designing how you want to live your life and then making a plan on getting there.

If you keep reading I will show you the formula I use to work less and follow my own dreams.

Also as you read this, please keep in mind that I still have to work six months per year as an IT Consultant but this will most likely be around 3-4 months next year, so I'm still not down to the 4

hours per week as the title of Timothy Ferriss' book. There is still some way to go but I'm confident that the track I'm on will take me there.

## **The 4 Hour What? Workweek? What are you on?**

Before going into the details of how I have designed my life, I think it's due to pay some credit to Timothy Ferriss and his book "The 4-Hour Workweek". This was the book that made me stop up and re-think my life and it is this book that defines the overall model that I have implemented. If you haven't read it I would recommend that you do. I've seen a lot of people trashing the book online but I've also heard enough stories about people changing their lives and following their dreams to know that the one's trashing it, is often the people not tak-



"Most of the times, our dreams cost a lot less than what we expect. Most of the time we don't have to be millionaires in order to live like one"

ing action. So I credit Tim Ferriss for inspiring me to take action.

The book describes a four step model but in this article I will focus on a subset, so first of all...

When I start mentioning a "4 hour workweek" to people I quite often get the question: "but I actually like my [9-5] job, why would I want to work less?" And my usual response is "If you were diagnosed with a terminal disease giving you one year to live, would you continue going to work each day?", their answer typically after a few comments about their perfect health: "well no, then I would probably...". And then we're on the same track! Now we can start to discuss how people really would like to live if they had the chance.

### **Turn your dreams into goals**

We all have dreams, but the thing with dreams is that we think of them as something far fetched that is unreachable and the only way we see ourself pursuing them are if we win the lottery or inherit some rich uncle. Dreams also have a tendency to be rather fluffy, like we would like to go around the world with the family in a boat but that's usually the amount of details we pour into it. After this we usually discard this as a dream and get back to our grocery list or our job in front of the computer.

The first thing to do is to accept your dreams as goals. You don't have to work with all your dreams, but you could start out by selecting a few of them. Once we start telling our brain that they are goals instead of dreams our brain will

start to look for solutions and this is what we need.

So get your dreams out into the open. Sit down and write down the dreams you want to pursue and define them as goals. You've probably heard the term SMART goals that says that a goal has to be "Specific", "Measurable", "Attainable", "Relevant" and "Timely". While this is the hard definition just getting something down on paper that you can see yourself working towards will usually be enough.

Your goal needs to be defined enough in order for you to easily identify the first few actions you need to take in order to attain that goal. Don't worry that you do not know all the steps you need to take, you just need to get started.



Once you have converted your dream into a goal, it is also easier to put a price label on it. For me it was living in Thailand with my family during the winter time in Denmark. I quickly realized that I could either rent or buy something in Thailand. I ended up buying something because the prices are relatively low and if I manage to rent it out for just 12 weeks each year it would practically pay for itself. While I am still not renting it out as much as I would like to, the expenses are really so low that I can't figure out why more people aren't doing this. And this is a fairly large villa (200 square meters) with a private pool in a closed community.

Most of the times, our dreams cost a lot less than what we expect. Most of the time we don't have to be millionaires in order to live like one (one of the mantras of Tim's book).

So put a price tag on your dreams, then you

know what kind of money flow you need to live them out.

### **Create a muse to support your dreams**

Now when you know how much it will cost you to live your dreams, it is time to build a vehicle that will provide you with resources. We should build a business that is largely automated and can make money while we are running around and living our dreams (such as making money while I'm in Thailand with my family).

Tim calls this vehicle a "muse". Something that requires low maintenance while continuing earning you passive income.

"Hold on there... Did you just say passive income? Is this at all possible?"

Get this. I've heard people saying that there is no such thing as passive income. Of course there is. To start out I guess that we can agree

you can buy some stocks and if they go up, you have actually made "passive income" since you made money while you were doing something else and didn't have to sit around all day watching the stocks doing nothing else.

You can of course buy stocks, but I would recommend that you build a business instead. Since the whole idea is to free up your time you need to move away from the notion of selling "hours". Instead focus on products.

In the book Tim spends a great deal focusing on his own business (which he has now sold) where he sold sports nutrition products. Since someone else handles the packaging, shipping, customer support etc. he has time to do different stuff. Yes you earn less if you have to pay someone else to do this, but in return you get a business that scales better and you don't have





to work more for each new client you bring in.

Business online has certainly made things much easier and created possibilities that didn't exist before. There are several business models that work well as muses. I know people who earn a full time income from affiliate marketing meaning that they promote other people's products and get a commission of each sale on complete autopilot. The cool thing about this business model is that you do not have to invest time and money in creating your own product.

I have a few online businesses mainly targeting small Danish businesses. One of them are doing e-commerce sites for entrepreneurs. Everything in the process is outsourced to a company in Eastern Europe and I only have to spend a few hours per week maintaining it. It does not bring in a full time income, but \$2000 extra each

month for little work is certainly nice. A business model that I am currently trying to set up, is an online membership site. Basically people are paying a monthly subscription fee in order to get some training in a given area. I am using subject matter experts to do the content and solely focus on building the site (I outsource some of this) and doing the marketing.

The membership site model is great since it gives you recurring income month after month, something I like in my e-commerce business.

### What is holding you back?

I know that this kind of lifestyle is not for everybody, some people are more focused on the security in the steady paycheck than living out his or her dreams. It is a well known fact in marketing that people will typically try to avoid loss, instead of pursuing gain, so it is obvious

that you should probably be a little entrepreneurial by heart in order to go this route.

On the other hand.

You don't have to quit your job tomorrow, you can start defining your dreams and perhaps spending an hour each evening setting up your own business.

So what are your dreams? And how will you design your life?

– Rasmus, <http://my4hours.com>  
@rasmusl

*Rasmus Lindgren experiments with lifestyle design, online business and outsourcing based on the principles of "The 4-Hour Workweek". He's currently down to only working six months per year and has a second home in Thailand. He blogs about changing your life and following your passion over at <http://my4hours.com>.*



# DR. STRANGE INVESTOR

text TOM CHITTUM

(Or How I learned to Stop Worrying  
and Make a Fortune by Betting  
on the New World Order)

In short, invest in a group of metals I shall collectively refer to as the "High Tech" Metals. Most are commonly referred to as "rare earth" metals.

Rare earths are the 15 metal elements of the lanthanide group plus the metal elements scandium and yttrium. They are referred to as a group because they are commonly found all mixed together and are similar in their electrical properties.

Be advised that these rare earth metals are not rare in the strictest sense of the meaning of rare. In fact, if you went out into you back yard and started digging every shovel full of dirt would contain minute amounts of probably all of the rare earths. However, there are a limited number of locations on this planet where they are concentrated enough to make their extraction economically feasible.

#### The rare earths are:

Cerium  
Dysprosium  
Erbium  
Europium  
Gadolinium  
Holmium  
Lanthanum  
Lutetium  
Neodymium  
Praseodymium  
Promethium  
Samarium  
Scandium  
Terbium  
Thulium  
Ytterbium  
Yttrium

To this list I will add a few other metals that (I assert) have glittering futures in high tech manufacturing. They are:

Gallium  
Molybdenum  
Palladium  
Platinum  
Silver  
Thorium  
Vanadium

Why do I assert that these "High Tech" metals have a glittering future and are (collectively) going to make you as rich as Scrooge McDuck (or drain you of every dime you haven't snorted up your nose and leave you rummaging through garbage cans and cursing my name)?





Thulium



Dysprosium



Erbium



Gadolinium

At the highest level this assertion of mine is a bet on one of two competing and mutually exclusive economic systems.

System A is currently dominant in the London based global vampire slave empire (which includes the USA as its junior partner).

System B is currently used by the alliance of Russia and China and the growing list of former System A slave states that are escaping from the System A slave plantation and joining the Russia/China alliance.

So let's take a peek at the organizing principles of both.

**System A:** The Venetian or Globalist school of imperial bloodsucking based on:

- 1: So-called "free trade"
- 2: Monopolies of the international commodities markets
- 3: Outright military conquest when necessary
- 4: Total domination of international banking by a gang of bloodsuckers whose lair is in London.
- 5: Indifference to the living standards of the mass of the people coupled with government of the wealthy hereditary oligarchy, by the wealthy hereditary oligarchy and for the wealthy hereditary oligarchy.
- 6: Control of the media and cultural and religious and educational institutions.

And the other system...

**System B:** The so-called "National System" based on

- 1: Selective use of tariffs and government subsidies to protect and promote key industries.
- 2: Active and coercive government direction in long range economic planning.
- 3: A strong national bank to expedite the above two
- 4: A commitment to increasing the standard of living of the mass of the people.
- 5: An emphasis on increasing "value-added" manufacturing (AKA high tech) to achieve item number 4.
- 6: Control of the media and cultural and religious and educational institutions.

And one must keep in mind that **military power is the true coin of the global realm**, not gold or oil or religion or food or any damn thing else.



So now we'll take a peek at how our slow motion World War III by proxy is proceeding. Do you remember reading the novel 1984 by the Englishman George Orwell (Whose real name was Eric Blair)?

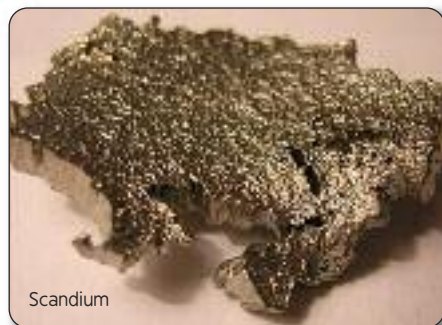
It was really nothing more than a winner take all match between Eric Blair's two eternally warring global empires Eurasia and Oceania. Mr. Blair was very much a New World Order insider and was familiar with the plan of the great imperial military and geopolitical visionary Sir Halford Mackinder. Sir Mackinder reasoned that the key to the military (and therefore economic) domination of the entire planet was the military control of what he termed the global "Heartland" or central Asia. The British Empire, we shall recall, was based on global "trade" (AKA looting of its colonies) and that "trade" was protected by its navy. The portion of the globe least accessible to the power projected by its navy was the interior of Eurasia. Sir Mackinder reasoned (rightly, I believe) that if the British Empire could somehow bring that area under its military control its navy could be depended upon to dominate the remainder of the planet and thus THE ENTIRE PLANET would be under the effective control of the British Empire and no thus power could ever rise to challenge it.

One World, One Ruler, Forever.

Unfortunately for the British Empire (and its muscular hillbilly sidekick America) Mackinder's "Heartland" is now under the control of Russia and China who have formed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (the SCO) a military and economic pact to ensure that the West keeps its grasping claws out of their cookie jar. So Blair's vision of Oceania (The UK, its misnamed "Commonwealth", and the USA) vs. Eurasia (Russia and China) looks damn prescient.

The age of oil is kaput – this is the dawning of the age of manufacturing.

So how do my "high tech" metals figure into this drama? My high tech metals are absolutely indispensable to the ongoing economic and mili-



tary struggle between the System A and System B empires. The majority of those reading this analysis are familiar with the ongoing oil wars and diplomatic maneuverings that have shaped our global economy and non-stop wars by proxy since the 1973 OPEC oil embargo. I assert that those days are now history. The age of oil is kaput and the age of manufacturing is dawning thanks to Russia and China.

For those of you who didn't get the memo, oil was not produced by piles of rotting dinosaurs and swamp plants millions of years ago. Oil is now proven to be a primordial substance that has been in existence since long before life appeared on this planet. The same applies to natural gas and coal. All of these useful fuels are found in great abundance in many geographic regions scattered all over the planet. Also, new technologies are making these fuels ever more accessible and so-called "peak oil" is a boogie man useful only for frightening those whose heads are stuck in their TV sets.

System A can not monopolize the global oil/coal/natural gas supply without conquering

the entire planet and thanks to Russia and China no such conquest is possible. It doesn't matter how many nations like Libya or Iraq System A mugs and loots like the giant oil sucking vampire it is, there will always be an abundance of supplies elsewhere to fuel System B. Moreover, the ENORMOUS diversion of System A's productive capacity has turned its principal armory (America) into a clapped out third-world garbage dump.

The age of high tech manufacturing

To understand what is going down you must stop dismissing China as a sort of vast sweat shop useful only for filling Walmart with cheap junk. China's policy always has been (and still is) to constantly move up the so-called "value added manufacturing chain." That is to make ever more high tech products until they are the dominant high tech manufacturer on this planet. And that's where my "high tech" metals become the central and indispensable resource in the struggle between System A and System B.

In the last few decades scientists have discov-

ered literally thousands of uses for these formerly ignored and little used metals. And all of these new uses are in high tech gizmos that define our age. Let's start with steel to illustrate the situation. By adding relatively small amounts of high tech metals to steel, manufacturers can make almost infinite varieties of new steel alloys whose properties make them greatly superior to "plain vanilla" steel in thousands of applications. Furthermore, these high tech metals are useful (and downright indispensable) in an almost endless list of other high tech gizmos including lasers, catalytic converters, high storage batteries, ceramics, computers, cell phones, permanent magnets, electric cars, solar panels, electrical generating windmills, all electronic consumer devices and last but not least high tech weapons. In short, unless an imperial manufacturing system has access to supplies of the entire spectrum of high tech metals and in abundance, it is stuffed. If you don't have these high tech metals you will be stuck with manufacturing obsolete Sixties junk of plain vanilla steel while your competition has the entire range of high tech goodies to offer.

The principal areas where high tech metals CAN be mined are America, Australia, Canada, China, Mongolia, Russia and South Africa with less significant deposits elsewhere. The principal areas where high tech metals ARE mined are Australia, Canada, China, Russia and South Africa. Moreover, something like 95% of all rare earth currently mined are being mined in China. It wasn't always like this. Until about 1985 the USA mined about half of the global production of rare earths and the rest of the world produced the other half while China produced basically none at all. Then in the mid Eighties, China, which had finally shaken off the insane policies of Mao Tse-tung, saw the light and began a go-for-broke policy of industrialization which is still in place today. Realizing that their goal of being the world's leader in high tech manufacturing meant having an enormous supply of rare earth metals they began digging the stuff up like gophers on go-pills. What they didn't immediately need for themselves they sold to foreign currency to im-

port high tech machine tools and other goodies they couldn't (at that time) make in China. Because China was a lower cost producer of rare earths than America almost all the rare earth mines in the USA shut down and worse yet the rare earth refineries here shut down as well.

So how does one make a fortune off of this turning point in the clash between System A and System B? My answer is to buy common stocks in certain key companies that mine and/or refine high tech metals. The companies that I am (or shortly will be) buying common stock in are:

**American Vanadium** (a vanadium mining company operating mainly in Nevada)

**Avalon Rare Metals** (a rare earth miner operating mainly in Canada)

**Great Western Minerals** (a rare earth mining and refining company operating mainly in South Africa)

**Lynas** (a rare earth mining and refining company operating mainly in Australia and Malaysia)

**Molycorp** (a rare earth mining company operating mainly in California)

**North American Palladium** (a palladium mining company operating mainly in Canada)

**Quest Rare Minerals** (a rare earth mining company operating mainly in Canada)

**Rare Element Resources** (a rare earth mining company operating mainly in Wyoming)

**Ucore Rare Metals** (a rare earth mining company operating mainly in Alaska)

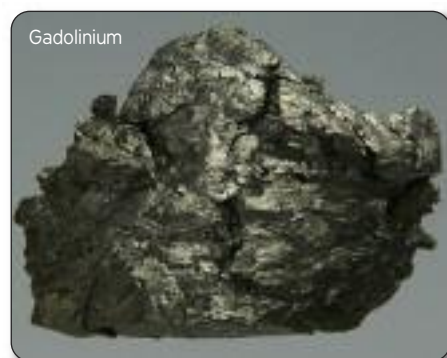
My guess is that Ucore is the best bet of the lot and at this time I intend to put about 20% of my available money in this company.

As I learn more about high tech metals I will add companies to my list. Readers should be aware that my investment horizon is about 5 years by which I mean I think that any money invested today will be worth at least 10 times more 5 years from now, maybe even 100 times as much... or... you will be wiped out, dead broke and digging through garbage cans for your supper.

Me hearties, Western Civilization is getting its



Lutetium



Gadolinium



Lanthanum

economic ass kicked and the whole putrid mess is now one big third-world garbage pit except almost nobody realizes it yet.

Me hearties, I say we turn pirates and go for broke – get rich or die trying. You are not going to survive this ongoing economic crash by storing beans in your basement and gats in your garage. You will either get rich or you will die.

You can keep up with my investing at my web site: <http://abandonhope.weebly.com/>

# THE CONFLICT CYCLE

text MARC "ANIMAL" MACYOUNG

No reflection on your sex life, but every night you go to bed with a human, a monkey and a lizard.

These are gross oversimplifications of the parts of your brain. Basically, your rational 'Human Brain' is your neo-cortex. Your social/emotional/troupe 'Monkey Brain' is your limbic system. Your survival/autonomic functioning 'Lizard Brain' is your hind brain.

Each of these is necessary for human survival, but our social behavior and concerns are the realm of the Monkey Brain. This especially means both the cause of conflict and our behavior during such clashes.

**Many people are afraid of conflict.** Personally, I put a greater emphasis on the results. By this I mean both the result of engaging in conflict and the result of not doing so. And, yes, both have results. The reason I emphasize results is because those are the consequences with which you have to live.

This especially applies to any unacceptable results coming from not standing up for yourself – because you tell yourself you're afraid of conflict.

But wait, doing the 'right thing' and avoiding conflict shouldn't have negative consequences!

Marc, what's wrong with you for saying that? Everyone knows conflict is bad! Look at the results! Meetings with the HR (human resources) department or boss at work, filing for divorce, filling out forms for a new place to live because you split up, a new job application, filling out incident reports for later use in court, being arrested, being in court.

All of these are the results we supposedly fear from conflict. The truth is, if conflict is mismanaged and allowed to escalate out of control, these can be the results.

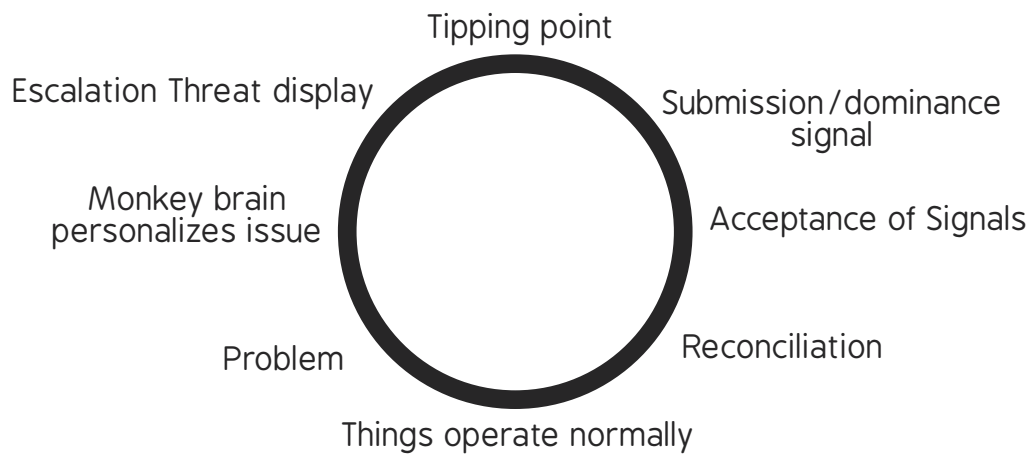
But is that always true? Does each and every

conflict end up there? No, and we know that. At least our Human Brain does.

Much of what we claim 'we fear' is actually excuses. And those excuses hide our real fears from us. Such fears are subconscious, primal, irrational and – if we're honest with ourselves – pretty stupid and selfish. Fears we want to pretend we're too good to have while they are driving our behavior.

What are these fears? Fear of humiliation, shame, losing status or hurt pride. Fear of how we will look to others and imaginary conse-



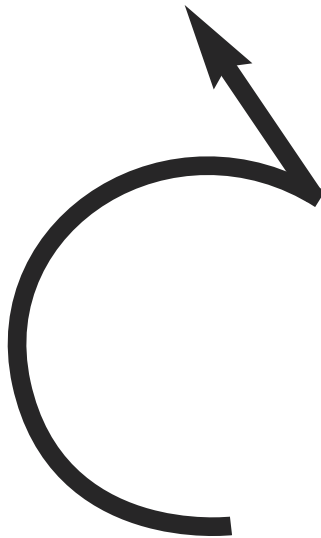


quences. In short, Monkey Brain fears. These fears come from very primitive parts of our brains. Parts we are not normally conscious of or aware how strongly they direct our behavior. These fears seize control and plunge us into discord faster than we can think. But what's most interesting is how – at the same time they put us into dispute – they increase our loathing of conflict. I mean, if we don't fight, we'll be humiliated. If we do fight, we risk losing and being disgraced even more.

**In short**, we're hitting both the gas and the brake. Unfortunately, we're often a little slow on the brake, and the gas pedal wins. When that happens, we find ourselves deep in clashes often before we know what's happening. In modern society, we've been conditioned to believe conflict is bad. The result of this is we don't know how to behave in disputes anymore. This ignorance is hurting us. First, we aren't taught the 'rules of conflict' or why we need to follow them. Second, we've lost the knowledge how to safely engage in disputes. Third, because we aren't taught how to cope with conflict, we're more likely to be traumatized by it. Fourth, our 'civilized' fears of discord allow us to be bullied and intimidated by those who know how to turn our fears against us.

Not a winning strategy, that.

So how do you manage conflict to get the best results? We can start by knowing the conflict cycle. Then it all becomes a lot less scary. This is 'scripted' behavior that is oriented on the Monkey's agenda of keeping the troupe together and functioning. (It's a caveman thing). It is a squabble over how the group is going to run.



That's what you're fighting for. Even better, once you understand the cycle, you'll be far better at ensuring any 'results' of conflict are positive. Basically, differences between members of the same group follow a basic pattern of 'Bang Bang. Kiss Kiss.'

**Starting at the bottom go up**, clockwise. There everyone is just tooting along, and everything is fine. Well, along comes a problem. Instead of staying in our Human Brain and actually fixing the problem, the Monkey Brain hijacks the issue and makes it about our status, how someone treats us, our little duck feelings getting hurt, our self-esteem or this person's lack of respect toward us. In short, we personalize the problem. Once we do that, we're in our Monkey Brain and following its agenda.

From the moment we personalize it, we are no longer trying to fix the actual problem, we are on monkey scripts. To be more specific, we're

fighting over how the group is going to be run. Stop and think about that. It's both important and – no matter how much you think it's about you – it's really about group dynamics. We constantly contest over group dynamics, rules, our status in the group and 'how things are going to be done around here.' Try to think of a conflict you were in with someone that wasn't about those elements. (Go ahead, I dare you.)

The next step is that things heat up. Depending on how you're socialized, this stage could be yelling, screaming, waving your arms around and even threatening to hit someone. Or it could be as subtle as your boss asking, "Do you like working here?" No matter how it's done, both parties are sending messages of "don't mess with me! See how serious I am about this?" Then comes the tipping point. Now this could be as simple as you getting a visit from the 'Angel of Duh!' and realizing this issue isn't worth taking any farther. There are many ways this happens. The most obvious is you don't want the situation to go physical. In more extreme cases, it could be someone knocking you on your ass with a left hook. And you thinking, "I think he's a little more committed about this than I am." No matter how you get to the 'tipping point,' it's you deciding you don't want things to get worse. When I ask, "Where do you think things are most likely to go wrong with this process?" most people answer on the upswing (Bang Bang part). The truth is, most things get wonky on the part we're now heading into (Kiss Kiss).

The use of the term 'submission/dominance signal' can rub people the wrong way. Well, tough. If we're talking about an issue between you and

**”No reflection on your sex life, but every night you go to bed with a human, a monkey and a lizard.”**



your boss (and you want to stay employed), if it's between you and a cop (and you don't want to get arrested), if it's between you and a 250-pound biker (and you don't want to get your ass kicked) or if it's between you and a teacher, etc., etc., ...then dominance/submission are the proper terms.

If it's between you and your spouse, okay, it's a slightly different dynamic. Same goes between you and your friends and other people you care about. But often, it really is about 'do it this way or else' – even with your kids.

The dominance/submission stage is easier to understand if we talk about it as: Throwing up your hands and saying, "Alright, we'll do it that way!" It's actually demonstrates you are no longer interested in taking the conflict to a higher level.

This is different than the tipping point because a decision made is not the same as a decision communicated. This stage is about communication. This is a subtle, but important, distinction. Because, as much as the Monkey believes it's psychic, it's not. You do have to communicate.

Another key element at this stage is the 'dominant' showing it is safe for you to back down. In fact, think of it as a deal he's offering. Again, communication.

**This stage and the next** are where most situations go horribly wrong, but we'll get to that in a bit. Let's keep on following the cycle to its conclusion first.

Now comes a critical juncture, 'acceptance.' Both of those signals have been sent. But they have to be recognized, received and accepted. In short, the terms and conditions have to be agreed upon.

Why is this important? Because they show that the conflict is functionally over. There is going to be no more attacking one another, no more arguing and – most important – that it is safe to quit for both parties.

Reconciliation is the real Kiss Kiss part. Because up until then, we've been negotiating. Reconciliation is where both parties must make gestures to show no hard feelings. More specifically, they both demonstrate that they're still a group. Not doing this will leave the fight as un-

finished business, and things will light up again. Another subcategory of the reconciliation stage is determining how the original problem will be dealt with. This, even if it means the status quo remains the same. Only then do things return to functional, and the group carries on.

I mentioned earlier that most people screw up in the back half of the cycle. There are a lot of ways. Often one mistake leads to another, and everyone heats up again. Remember emotions are contagious, so too are mistakes.

First off, did you know that most violence comes with instructions on how to avoid it? It's true. So does most trouble incidentally, but it's easier to see this dynamic I'm talking about through violence. For example, when someone tells you to "shut up or I am going to kick your ass," he is not, I repeat NOT, asking for you to mention his sexual practices with his mother. But your Monkey Brain – deeply involved in threat displays and fixated on 'winning' – will tell you ignoring the instructions is the 'right thing' to do. That excited Monkey has a hard time following any directions except its own. It's



not going to let that other monkey tell it what to do! Shut up? HA! I'll show him by mentioning his testicles on his mother's chin!

Then it will blame the other person for becoming more aggressive. (In case you haven't guessed, the Monkey is real good at self-justifying its bad behavior. But it's even better at stirring things up and then bailing out, leaving you to deal with the negative results. Keep that in mind next time you're thinking about mentioning someone's mother during a fracas.)

When it comes to avoiding violence, you really need to start listening, instead of letting your Monkey tell you that you HAVE to do the direct opposite. The Monkey not only makes us deaf, but goads us on out of emotion, pride, anger, revenge and the insidious desire to 'win.' That's really the big problem. Just because you've passed the tipping point (where you've decided you don't want to keep escalating up to violence), it doesn't mean your Monkey has given up. If you have an overwhelming urge to 'win,' that's your Monkey. It will keep your mouth going aggressively long after you should be on the resolution part of the cycle. And that's where the back end of the cycle often goes sideways.

**It's important here** to mention something else. Of all human behavior that can elicit negative responses, betrayal will get you punished the worst. Keep that in mind. Because when you break this cycle, the kneejerk response by most people is to consider it betrayal

When someone is offering you the opportunity to safely back off from a battle, he or she is taking a chance. By sending the submission signal, you indicate you aren't willing to take it physical. Realistically, what you are saying is you won't attack any more. They, in turn, ease off the throttle, too. Think of this as lowering their

guard in the name of peace, a sign of trust. In the process, they're saying they'll stop attacking, too.

If you sucker punch them, it's a betrayal. It's easier to understand this behavior in physical terms, but it happens verbally and emotionally all the time. Someone just has to get that last zing in to 'even the score.' It not only hurts and is a betrayal, but your attack will cause the situation to explode again.

In what should be the calm down, reconciliation stage, some people 'need' to get the last word, throw a final insult, voice a parting shot, get in those snide, contemptuous and sniping comments or – in a less obvious example – still justify 'why they were right in what they did.' ALL of these indicate the Monkey is still driving your bus. That person is not only violating the conflict cycle, but his Monkey is still on the fight.



Worse, they are telling the other person's Monkey that the issue isn't settled and that they will be a problem in the future. That's because a pissed off Monkey is an untrustworthy Monkey. This fight isn't over, and it will come back at you again.

That same Monkey, who got you into the conflict, can make it much worse for you if you allow it to keep going after the tipping point. If, after you decide you aren't willing to go physical (tipping point), but still verbally attack during the cool down phase, it will be seen – by the other person's Monkey – as a betrayal.

And, rightfully so, it will be treated as such.

Like I said, it's easier to explain this in terms of physical violence, but it also applies to work and relationships. It is knowing when to tell your Monkey to back off before you get fired or do irreparable damage to your relationship.

**”First off, did you know that most violence comes with instructions on how to avoid it? It’s true. So does most trouble incidentally, but it’s easier to see this dynamic I’m talking about through violence. For example, when someone tells you to ”shut up or I am going to kick your ass,” he is not, I repeat NOT, asking for you to mention his sexual practices with his mother.”**

Most people think it’s the fear of punishment that keeps them from backing down. There’s some validity to that. The truth is there are lots of people who don’t know how to ‘win’ graciously. Such people break the rules of the conflict cycle by demanding punishment and penance from those who have dared challenge them. The people who fear punishment the most are the ones who are most likely to make it a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This comes back to the betrayal issue. Realistically, it wasn’t until that last dig they had to throw in to ‘even the score’ that the other Monkey decided to punish them. In the thousands of conflicts I’ve been involved in and witnessed, overwhelmingly this betrayal of the script is what provokes retribution. Someone taking your submission as a green light to punish is far more the minority. Someone sending a submission signal and then betraying the cycle with a last dig to ‘even the score’ is far more common.

I should also tell you about a common misunderstanding during this process. That is the perception if the dominant starts huffing and puffing about having been challenged he’s going to try to punish you. It looks like he might attack again, but odds are he won’t. Think of a gorilla beating his chest and making a lot of noise to prove what a stud he is. Also, don’t be confused by the gender reference, women do this chest beating, too.

There will usually be some chest thumping by the dominant. Mostly it’s a matter of style. Some are loud and obvious, others aren’t. Having said that, there’s a fine line between chest thumping

and being overly aggressive. And it is a line a lot of inexperienced people cross.

If you have someone, who is already concerned about punishment for having dared to challenge you, and you get all big, bad and threatening, they have no reason to back off. It’s not safe for them to do so. If they feel threatened by too big a dominance display, they’ll go on the attack again. This is another way things can light up again.

The back end of the conflict cycle is a delicate process. And delicate process and pissed off Monkeys don’t really make a winning combination. It takes a mature person to take control of his or her Monkey and guide the cycle to completion. This includes knowing when to ignore little mistakes, like snide comments (meant to sooth that person’s bruised ego), and ham handed, verbal dominance displays. When the process is correctly guided, the conflict is resolved and everyone is happy.

**I’d like to point out** another way things can go wrong. I have a saying: If there are seven stages to a conflict, a bad boss only does five of them. Reconciliation is important because – if you don’t complete the cycle with make up gestures and communication that things are alright between you – discord will begin anew. And it usually will be with more vengeance and outrage because someone violated the cycle and betrayed you. You don’t slap away the hand that is offering the peace laurel.

Even chimpanzees, after a fight, will bring each other gifts, groom each other and comfort

one another to show that everything is okay. But many people, who apparently aren’t smarter than chimps, will insist on pride, continued outrage and the belief that it is the OTHER Monkey who was in the wrong. It’s up to the other monkey to make up with them (read grovel). This is a great way to lose friends, lose jobs, estrange yourself from family and, of course, get divorced. Those nasty ‘results’ kind of things.

**There is one more thing** I have to mention. There’s a lot of confusion about this cycle in the modern world. We’ve been taught that conflict is taboo. In fact, it’s to this century what sex was to the 1950s – NICE people don’t talk about it or admit they do it.

We’re social primates, so, like sex, conflict is part of life. Like it or not, we’re going to have disputes with those people in our lives as we hash out the group dynamics. You can use these guidelines to become better at handling conflict and less fearful about it. Or you can keep on letting your Monkey dig you deeper and deeper into conflict and have to face the consequences. If you really want things to get ugly, don’t follow this pattern, especially at work, in your relationships or with your family.

Who do you want controlling your life, you or your Monkey?

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Marc MacYoung and Rory Miller are the cofounders of  
Conflict Communications ([www.conflictcommunications.com](http://www.conflictcommunications.com))*

# On inner drive and the way to your goals

text JAKOB LØVSTAD

In today's western world we are approaching a standard of living and a society that allows each individual to create both success and disaster. Pretty much everyone has the tools available to reach any number of people through blogs, social media and the like. Education is widely accessible to anyone willing to put in the work and if developing your body is your thing, then you can join any number of gyms that offer everything from light fitness to grueling full contact martial arts workouts. Unfortunately it seems that instead of having set the stage for developing everyone into superhumans, we are currently seeing the phenomena known as "the dessert generation" – people who expect a lot from doing very little. What went wrong and how do we fix it?

Hi, my name is Jakob Løvstad, known throughout my ten year long MMA career as "The Striking Viking". While fighting in the cage was my hobby (if you can call something that takes over 20 hours of training per week a hobby), I also got my MSc in computer science, started a PhD program and wrote two books. The latest one, "Going Mental" from MX Publishing is about programming yourself to reach goals. And this is something I'd like to say something about in this article.

You see, it's like this: we are currently living in a society with endless possibilities, but at the same time we don't really have to do anything. While our parents, grand-parents and so on had to get their butts out of bed early in the morning and work all day to make a living, many of today's youth may just as well drag themselves up at noon to play some computer games and perhaps have a look at some schoolwork. I saw an article a few weeks back in Norway's biggest business newspaper that essentially talked

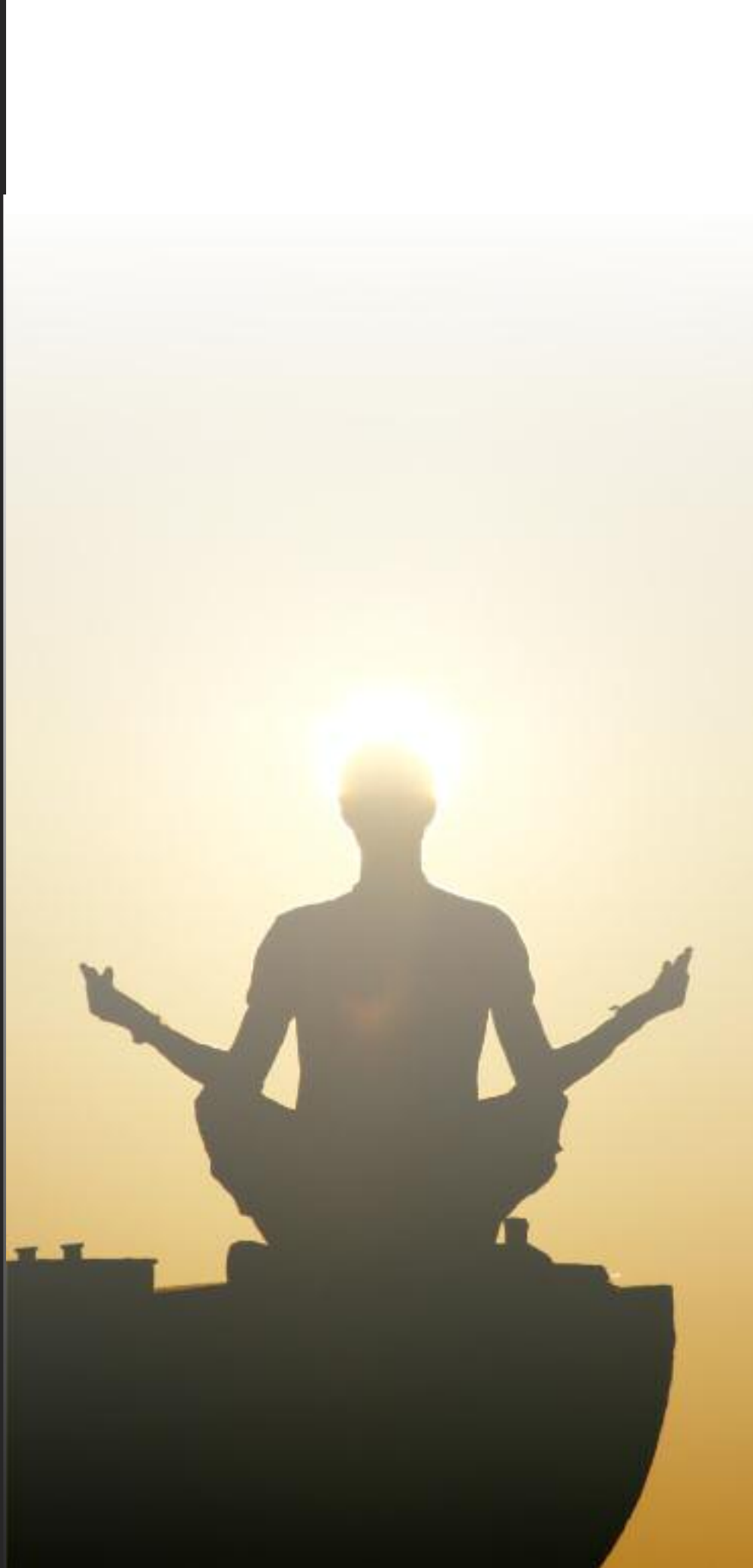
about how psychologists were adding another stage to our development. After adolescence, they added a period somewhere between the age of 20 and 30 where we now spend our time "finding ourselves" by traveling, studying some, taking odd jobs, partying etc before becoming proper adults.

This all sounds a bit strange to me as I've been very much fanatical about my interests and succeeding at them. Although mine isn't necessarily the ideal approach, I do think that there is a problem in that we don't have the same incentives for becoming great at anything – because things are "ok" anyway. In such a world we need to try to find out what's really important to us – who we want to be, what we really want to do and how we want to live. There really isn't a big "stick" out there anymore, so finding that "carrot" becomes all the more important if we are to realize our true potential. And even if you are doing lots of great things, you might still benefit from what we're about to do – consider it a review on whether you're on your right path or whether you need to make adjustments.



Now obviously this is only an article and as such I can only give you a starting point for finding out a few important things about yourself. But I think you'll find this valuable as long as you do the exercises properly.

The first thing we are going to do is a bit morbid. I think I originally saw this exercise in "The 7 habits of highly effective people" by Stephen R Covey. It helps you focus on who you really want to become in the span of your life. I recommend doing this when you have some time to sit down and focus properly. Ready? Ok, do this: imagine that you are at your own funeral. That's right, you're dead, but your ghost (or whatever form of spirit fits your religion) is there to see and hear what's happening. Present are all the people you've been close to in your life: family, friends, lovers, colleagues and so on. Each of these groups has a person speaking for it and in turn every one of these representatives step up to say what they think of you. Write down what each representative will say about you post mortem. What kind of person were you to them? This will give you an idea of who you want to be – the ideal



**”When I trained two sessions per day while studying or working all day and kept this up over ten years, it wasn’t just momentary motivation – it was what I refer to as drive. It’s that inner something that is just so *right* to you that you’re willing to do what it takes to make it.”**

you as a person. Take some time to reflect on the speeches you have now written down. Are the things you are currently doing helping you becoming what you wish to be? If not, what adjustments do you need to make and why?

Now for our next trick, we will have a look at what you’d really like to do in your life. Let me just say first that I don’t believe that we as humans have only one life project. It’s not as if you set up a goal such as “I want to win in the Olympics” and then go shoot yourself if you make it. But there are things that really make you go “Yes, I’d love to do that” at this point in your life and are both important enough and congruent enough with your personality that you will do what it takes to achieve them.

Before we start the next exercise, I’d like to

point out something crucial: the difference between motivation and drive – at least in my humble opinion. Motivation, to me, is the sum of the various factors that make you take some sort of action. It can be listening to someone talk enthusiastically about something, watching a movie that really inspires you or anything that pushes enough of your “buttons” so that you spring into action in some way. And it sure is easy to make your goals based on motivation – the things that seem to matter in the moment.

Unfortunately this is often a very temporary phenomenon. When I trained two sessions per day while studying or working all day and kept this up over ten years, it wasn’t just momentary motivation – it was what I refer to as drive. It’s that inner something that is just so *right* to you that you’re willing to do what it takes to make it.

And so I’d like you to do the following: imagine that you don’t have to do anything. Imagine that you can do whatever you’d like and that there isn’t a single limiting factor anywhere in your life. The future is completely open and you have no needs, no duties or anything else that might be perceived as a hindrance. And you have all the resources, both internal and external, to create whatever you wish. With that in mind... what would you go out and do? What would you create? Who would you bring along on that journey? What would be the ultimate outcome? And how would your life be afterwards? Write down the answers to these questions. Take your time to do this right and reflect on what you’ve written when you’re done. Again: how does this compare to what you’re currently doing? Are you on your way to your goal with the people you want around you? Or will you make adjustments?



Now for the last bit on how you want to live. Because there are many roads you may travel to become who you want to be and to create the outcomes you want for yourself and others. Some roads will give you more energy and make you a happier person along the way while other roads will be bumpy and make you older beyond your years as you travel them. Although you might "make it" either way, you won't feel much satisfaction in doing things in a way that feels self-destructive. The key to having a journey that is worth the investment in terms of time and energy is to live according to your values and convictions. Unfortunately it can be quite a process to find out what these are. But let's at least get you started.

Look at the goal or goals that you've chosen for yourself and ask yourself the following ques-

tion repeatedly: why do I want to do this? Let's say you have a goal of getting a certain job. Asking yourself "why" might get you an answer such as "to get a higher income". So ask yourself again "why?". Maybe you'll find that it is to be able to travel more. Again, "why?". Maybe it's to have more adventure. Asking "why?" again might get you something like "to feel freedom". And so "freedom" might be a key value to you, with the lesser values "adventure", "travel" and "money" connected to it. If you then make decisions that limit your freedom and stop you from traveling to have adventure while not getting you the income you deserve, you will be on that bumpy road. Go ahead and use the "why"-chain on your goals. Find out what values you need to live by to stay in the zone. Are you living the way you should or will you have to make changes?

Let me finish by saying again that this is a short article and I'm showing you a very quick and dirty way of finding out where you want to go in your life. Still, by doing this right you will gain insight into yourself and how to move forwards in life in a way that will be good for you. Keep what you have written down somewhere safe for future reference.

When you are ready, you can go buy "Going Mental" (on Amazon) which helps you with how to use NLP and other Change Work methods to move towards your goals. I just want you to be sure you know where you want to go before you start moving. And when you're ready to get a coach, you can reach me at [jakob@allconfidence.com](mailto:jakob@allconfidence.com).

Good luck on your path to greatness!



# Can pick up be guided by the Financial Markets?

text HARRY NEMO

Its 3:45 PM, almost closing time at the New York Stock Exchange. Gazing intently at my computer screen I try to decipher what the market is telling me. "Hmmm the Dow's up today on the back of a long rising trend. The wave count is in 3 of (3) of ③", a good sign. I make my plans for the night; the market confirms the social mood<sup>1</sup> is still strongly positive; it should be a great night for pickup.

Wouldn't it be great to have a traceable indicator that forecasts the right pick up approach consistently over time? It could give you that edge you've been seeking. But is there really a link between the financial markets and successful pick up strategies? I believe there is. Let me explain.

## The Theory

When I first heard of the "Game" the information was passed with reverence and the under-

standing of keeping the sacred knowledge close. It was unthinkable that it be made available to the "general" public and it was the responsibility of the custodians to ensure it did not. But then, why did it move from the shadows to a skill that could be taught in a workshop or published in a "how to book"? Was it driven by entrepreneurial spirits who saw an unfilled market or was it coming out regardless? I contend the latter.

The theory is that as the social mood careened towards extreme positive levels in the late 2000s, it created conditions conducive to the acceptance of pick up in public society. People felt great and were becoming more willing to forgive, forget and more importantly, explore. In general life was great and getting better. But how does this relate to the financial markets?

Please read on.

First, a general understanding of Socionomics is required. Essentially, Socionomics is *"the study of the social results of economic changes. Its goal is to monitor and evaluate how changing economic conditions interact with shifting social conditions to influence the economy and the economic status of people."*<sup>2</sup>

Socionomic research has shown that *"Social mood waxes and wanes positively and negatively. A positive social mood is associated with a host of social phenomena, such as bull markets, bright colors, short skirts, re-election of incumbents, peace, and deregulation. A negative social mood is also associated with a host of social phenomena, such as bear markets, dark colors, falling hemlines, rejection of incumbents, discord, and regulation."*<sup>3</sup>



Other examples of social mood include<sup>4</sup>:

### Direction of Mood Trend

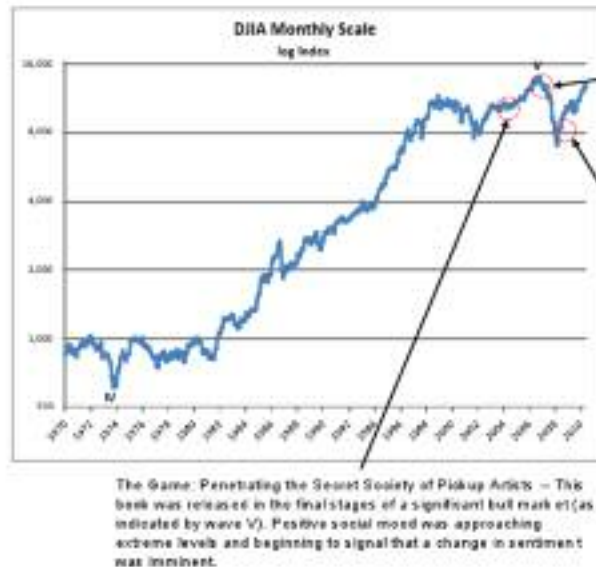
Area of Culture	Rising Transition	Peak Positive Mood	Falling Transition	Peak Negative Mood
Family Life	Babies popular, family orientation, marriage	Trend reaches extreme	Children a negative value, divorce, "single" life preferred	Trend reaches extreme
Fashion (colour)	Colors emerge	Bright colours dominate	Drabness emerges	Drab colors dominate
Fashion (covering)	Men's narrow ties	Bodies exposed, short skirts, bikinis for women, tight pants for men	Men's ties widen	Bodies covered; Floor length dresses, baggy pants
Fashion (style)	"Correctness" stressed	Flamboyant individually for men and women	Anti-fashion fashions	Conservative dress returns
Pop Music (Image)	Dirty, happy	Clean, happy	Clean, angry	Dirty, angry
Pop Music (Lyrics)	Any non-negative themes OK	Joyous celebration and love songs	Anxious, socially conscious themes emerge	Songs of despair, hate, violence; also happy denial
Pop Music (Melody)	Melody emerges as a key ingredient	Lifting, complex, inventive melodies and harmony	Melody is eclipsed by various elements: rhythm, arrangement	Little melody or chord structure
Pop Music (Mood)	Upbeat, major keys	Upbeat, major and minor keys	Minor keys, downbeat, arty	Distorted sounds, atonality, dissonance
Pop Philosophy	Achievement is possible and desirable	Love will save the world	Achievement is a waste of time	Hate and destruction will give the world what it deserves
Sexual Images	"Masculine" men and "feminine" women	Heterosexual images peak	"Feminine" caring men; "Masculine", liberated women	Focus on alternative sexual styles
Stock Market	Rising	Topping	Falling or correcting	Bottoming

## And More Theory

Importantly the study of Socionomics maintains that it is the prevalent social mood that governs events rather than the social mood responding to say "news". For example a revolution will start because there has been a negative build up in the "social mood" and it manifest itself as violence against the perpetrators of that mood.

But what governs social mood? Does it develop in a linear fashion or just burst out? For that we turn to the Wave Principle<sup>5</sup>, the foundation for Socionomics. In essence, the Wave Principle is based upon Ralph Nelson Elliott's discovery that recognisable patterns exists in behaviour. Elliott used stock market data to identify these patterns to which he classified generally into impulsive waves (composing 5 subwaves that move in the same direction as the larger trend) and corrective waves (composing 3 subwaves that move against the trend). These structures are fractal in nature such that they are similar at any size. For example with stock data, Elliott waves are found in data at all timescales (i.e. minute, hourly, weekly etc); they just repeat themselves with the smaller waves building into bigger waves.

And now the final piece of the puzzle – What's all this got to do with pickup? Well, the "essence of Socionomics is that changes in social mood motivate decisions to take social actions of many types... Actions that can be taken almost immediately in response to social mood tend to register first and can therefore be used to anticipate actions that take more time to take effect. For example, investors can act to buy or sell stocks faster than a business owner can act to complete plans to expand or contract operations and faster than a Government can act to draw up a peace treaty or start a war. This is why the stock market is a good leading indicator of many other types of social actions,



including macroeconomic and political trends.<sup>6</sup> Emphasis is mine.

So in summary Socionomics tells us that the stock market can reflect the prevailing mood. The larger and more liquid the index, the faster social changes are recorded. Twitter is another example of a medium that can also register social change. However, for my purposes the stock exchange provides a more accessible and broader account of rising or falling mood. Further, it allows a practitioner to both count the wave structure and relate transition points to major events in history.

## Using the System

As an example, I have mapped the Dow Jones Industrial Average Index ("DJIA") against the writings of a well known identity in the Game, Neil Strauss of course. I have used a small subset of his published works<sup>7</sup> as a proxy of where the evolution of pick up may be with respect to the Elliott Wave structure and Socionomic theory. As depicted below, the publication of "The Game" coincided with the final stages of wave V in the DJIA (according to my read of the wave

principle). This follows the general progression in social mood in a rising market- at the beginning (wave 1) you feel less sad, about the middle (wave 3) the mood is starting to feel good and at the end (wave 5) it is positively great. Anecdotally, this tracks my personal experience of receiving a pickup manifesto back in 2002, the mood was not yet ready to receive, accept and broadly release it – that would take a few more years.

Interestingly, Neil Strauss then completely changed track a few years later with his more sombre "Emergency" which was released at about the bottom of a major decline in the DJIA. Based purely on his previous work this change in topic seemed odd, but viewed in the context of the Wave principle and Socionomics, it was quite fitting for the times.

## Where to from here?

As a starting point it's probably evident that the master of the game is already well attuned to the social mood. They just have to be. For every one else a study of the financial markets may be our only chance to decipher where the mood





artwork LYDIA BURRIS

has been and potentially could be heading. This study may reveal that your pick up strategy is not congruent to the prevailing social mood and some serious tailoring is required.

If my view that we are experiencing a bear market rally is correct, then this may suggest that peak negative mood may again be brewing and it will soon trigger another major correction in the markets. Looking back to the above table, we can relate where the market may be trending to various indicators observed in Socionomic research. If the market is in a falling transition then a potential outcome is a greater preference for the single life – perhaps things are looking good again for the pick up artist after all!

The writer would be interested in the views of practiced participants to see if they have consciously (made a direct change in their approach) or unconsciously (upon reflection can recognise a change in their approach) adapted to the prevailing mood and also from new entrants regarding their success or lack thereof with tried and true techniques. And finally, this article represents the personal views of the writer and his current understanding of Socionomics, the Wave Principle and the "Game" in general. It is up to the reader to use this insight for good or for nefarious means. There is always more to learn.

*harrynemo@hotmail.com*

1. "Social Mood" is a concept used in Socionomics, a study pioneered by Robert Prechter. For the more curious, I suggest visiting Socionomics.net and also reading the seminal material of the pioneers in this field.
2. <http://www.socionomics.net/2011/04/socionomics-vs-socioeconomics/>
3. <http://www.socionomics.net/2011/04/social-mood/>
4. Excerpts from "Pioneering Studies in Socionomics", Robert R Prechter page 6 and 7
5. The even more curious should refer to "Elliott Wave Principle" by Frost and Prechter for an introduction to Elliott Waves and its use in forecasting financial markets.
6. Excerpt from the article "Setting the Record Straight About Socionomics" by Mark Almand and Matt Lampert
7. Note this is not a statistically robust analysis but is used to demonstrate the concept.

# THE MEMORY PALACE:

text RUBEN BERENGUEL

A venerable technique for remembering historic dates,  
your shopping list and phone numbers of random girls



**Dream scene:** imagine you sitting in your high-school desk. Your teacher opens the door, looks at everyone in class and screams "History test, now!"

You shiver, look at the test... and don't remember anything. You can do nothing at all, it was like the exam was written in Chinese.

A nightmare you may have even faced (or be about to face) in real life. But there is a way to ace history tests, remember phone numbers, birthdays and whatnot.

And you'll learn it now.

With such a good memory you will be able to remember phone numbers on the go: no need to take out your own phone when that lovely girl finally tells you hers. You will also be in a damn good position to remember facts and dates: no more missed birthdays and special moments, you'll even be able to annoy your friends with personality trivia (did ya know that Michael Jordan was born on 17th February, 1963?).

We will start by the framework, which is known as the memory palace technique (if you want to sound fancier, the method of loci, from the Latin locus, meaning place).

It was widely used since its discovery, but


there is very little written record of the method: for Middle Age scholars it was like tying your shoelaces: you don't write books about such trivial and well known things!

**The memory palace technique** began in the 5th century B.C. Greece, when Simonides of Ceos, poet, was attending an unfortunate banquet in Thessalia. While he was away to talk with a courier who asked for him outside, the hall's ceiling crumbled, killing everyone. There was no way to recognise the corpses, after all, they were crushed... Until Simonides realised that it was no problem to recall who was where, without needing any effort.

The memory palace is well suited to how our brains have evolved. Back when we were living in caves, moving from one place to the other, we needed to know how to get somewhere (the lake, the plain) and remember what was there (fresh water, hunting). By taking advantage of this fact we can build an array of impressive memorisation techniques, to ordered or unordered lists.

Remembering lists may sound lame, who wants to memorise a list..? But lists are just ordered arrays of knowledge! What you study for a history exam is a list of ordered dates accompanied by facts and causes (hey, these are





sub-lists!). When you learn a new recipe, it is a list of ingredients and steps. A telephone number is a list of numbers. A poem is a list of phrases. And this list goes endlessly...

**Let's start** by creating our first memory palace, both as training and as demonstration. It does not need to be a palace, in fact, it should not. Just think of your home, and as a sample I'll assume is really small: from the door you get to a small hall, connected to a living room which leads to a kitchen, a WC and a bedroom with a balcony. This is a sample, to memorise correctly you have to visualise your home or any other place you may know very well. You can of course use this mental image of an imaginary house, but memorising may be harder, be warned.

Now consider the following shopping list: lettuce, bacon, onion rings, SD card and oranges. We want to memorise it. I picked a short list to make the article shorter and make it fit in our small imaginary home: try your hand with a longer list if you don't believe you can do it with longer lists. You can. To remember the list, we have to place each item somewhere in our mind palace. This of course can mean one item per room or several items per room, each one in a special spot in the room. The simplest method is

to put each item in its own room, when you are confident enough, create additional cargo space in each room. Thus, our small 5-room house could be easily a 5, 10 or 15 places memory palace.

To place an item, we have to visualise it in the room, and to make sure we remember it it has to be an extremely odd image. It has to leave a clear impression and to do so, it has to be surprising, bizarre or sexual, among other options. If the image is dull, remembering it is close to impossible. Think of your history book. Can you remember anything that did not leave a clear impression?

**Begin with the list.** When we enter the front door, we are greeted by Kermit the frog, only that this special Kermit is made of lettuce, like a talking lettuce. Can you see it? Feel the freshness of Lettucit's leaves? In the living room a stampede of pigs followed by Kevin Bacon with a fork should be bizarre and clear enough! In the kitchen, Scarlett Johansson plays hoola-hop with an onion ring.

You enter the bedroom, and to your surprise, the bed is a gigantic SD card: you can hide the bed by pushing it in to be read. Finally, you open the balcony to find that the sun is now a big,

glowing orange. It starts to drip juice over the desert in front of your window!

You should put all these images in a place you know like the palm of your hand: your home, the house you grew up, your office. This is very important.

To get the most of the method you can make a list of houses, cities and walks you can recall. The list may be short the first time you think about it, like your hometown and your home... But of course you can add your friends and relatives homes and the number will grow very quickly. This will serve as placeholders for your data: phone numbers, Second World War events, whatever.

Now you have the framework and know how to fill it. Now is the turn to learn how to code more abstract data like numbers, dates and events. This also uses a neat trick: turn numbers into words. We will apply it to another method, which I use for personal facts. For numbers we will use what is known as the major system. You convert each digit in a number into a consonant (you may have a few to choose) and then the number into a word by filling the vowels between consonants. First and foremost, learn the major system. It is easy:

## Remember!

*"In the living room a stampede of pigs followed by Kevin Bacon with a fork should be bizarre and clear enough! In the kitchen, Scarlett Johansson plays hoola-hop with an onion ring."*

Number	Sounds	Memory tip
0	s, z, soft c	z is the first letter of zero
1	d, t, th	d and t have one downstroke
2	n	two downstrokes
3	m	3 downstrokes
4	r	last letter of four
5	l	L is the roman 50
6	j, sh, soft ch..	script j looks like upside 6
7	k, hard c, hard g, q	capital script K looks like a pair of 7's
8	v, f	think of a script f (which has two loops)
9	b, p	p is the mirror image of a 9, b is a rotation of 9
-	vowels, w, h, y	WHY+vocals: use them anywhere to fill the gaps and form words

Now let's pick an example: some information from the Wikipedia entry about Michael Jordan. For example, his date of birth (17th February, 1963) and the day when he made his record scoring of 69 points against the Cleveland Cavaliers in overtime (March 28, 1990). This is just a sample to learn to use the system and its power.

**To remember facts** related to someone it is far better to not use a memory palace but a close cousin: an associative chain. You place the person (in this case Michael Jordan) in a place you can link easily to him, and here is where you put the data. For Michael Jordan, I will choose the tee of a golf course, as he was very fond of golf playing. I don't like to use memory palaces in this case because it is harder to connect a palace to a person, unless it is that person's home!

Now it is your turn to convert numbers into words. Let's start with the date of birth, 17th February 1963 is (via the major system) the set of letters d/t/th+k/c/g/q for the day and j/sh/ch+m for the year (63). For the month it is easier to assign images to each month... February is easy: my birthday, thus a birthday cake is good. If this was August, I'd picture a meteorite (for the Perseid meteor shower). Now come up with some images: dogo for the day and jam for the year. The image: Michael Jordan wearing a bib (to mark "date of birth") throwing a birthday cake to a dogo, it splashes covering the dogo in strawberry jam. Is it bizarre enough to memorise it?

Now we want 69 points, Cavaliers 28th March 90: j/sh/ch+b/p, stallion, n+v/f, falling snow for the month (we had an amazing snowfall here in

Barcelona in March) and b/p+s/z/c. Imagery: jeep, stallion, nova (this was hard to come by!), snow and peas. Now we have to arrange this stuff in a way that orders it correctly: a jeep hanging from the scoreboard in a basketball court to relate "number of points" and the concrete number, and a stallion punching said board (not happy!). In the sky above a brilliant supernova lights the sky while snow falls over a field of peas across the court.

**Observe that** every time we have a date, the story follows some kind of order (dogo splashes in cake, supernova lights snow). This follows my date ordering of DDMMYY. Your mileage may vary here, do as you usually follow dates.

Now it is just a matter of placing all this in a golf course: the running dogo in the tee and the pea court in the green. And you'll remember this for a long, long time believe me!

A final test: can you remember the shopping list? Can you see what's going on in the kitchen or living room? I bet you can. Sky is the limit now!

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