

THE POWER OF FOCUS



A MAN'S GUIDE TO FOCUS & PRODUCTIVITY

CHAD HOWSE

THE POWER OF *FOCUS*

The Man's Guide to Focus and
Productivity

Dare Mighty Things Inc.

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Be Careful What You Focus On

You are what you give your attention to.

There are things in our lives that benefit us, that make us tougher, smarter, happier. Our work is one such thing, and it doesn't matter what we do.

If we take pride in it, if we choose to allow it to fulfill us, then it grabs us, fulfills us.

There are a lot of things in our lives that bring us away from who we need to be and what we need to focus on.

I don't watch the news, for example, and I'm thinking about not *reading* it either. There's so much I disagree with in those pages or articles online, policies, things that our leaders are doing, that it sheds a negative light over my day.

Facebook and Twitter are filled with negativity.

They're dominated by people who don't work, who don't hustle, who have enough time to troll and complain, seemingly as a calling.

I'm heavily thinking about shutting down both my twitter account and my personal facebook account.

So there are things to remove, but what should we focus on?

That's the big question in everyone's life, and there are a few things to consider when determining what warrants your attention.

Using my own life as an example, I write.

That's essentially what I do for a living. Everything else in the business is done by others. I write posts, articles, books that are being worked on, newsletters, programs, sales copy, and so on.

The focus, then, must be writing, but it *has to only be writing*. It cannot be attention divided. It cannot consist of multiple things being worked on at one time. The work, to be beneficial to the individual, must be deep and focused. It must be tough, difficult, and extremely challenging, but it cannot be deviated from.

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If you have a skill that's a part of your work, that skill must take up your best hours and there can be no distractions that accompany it.

If you write, you cannot also have the internet on. You can't have your phone on. You can't have links tempting you or meetings pulling you away from your craft.

If you're an artist, a metal worker, a blacksmith, a mechanic, a builder, an architect, a garbage man, a soldier, a fighter, the same thing applies.

You have your craft, that thing you need to perfect, to dive into, and you have everything else.

When you're in your craft that is all that matters.

Even more profound is that the depth of your focus transcends time and doesn't allow your brain to focus on the myriad of things we previously mentioned, the negatives that add cynicism to your days.

Whatever it is that you do, do it, and nothing else, for periods of your days, and happiness will be yours.

The Morning Routine to Improve Focus & Productivity

Energy being our greatest commodity for our training goals. Both it and our ability to focus on important tasks are our greatest commodities for a successful work day.

Therefore, each of the following aspects to a daily routine help us do just that: improve and maintain high energy levels, and improve our ability to focus.

1. START YOUR DAY THE NIGHT BEFORE.

Don't leave the planning of your day to the morning of. When your eyes are half open and your brain half functioning. Plan your day the night before. After you've finished your day's work and you have a firm grasp on what you need to accomplish.

Wondering *how* to plan your day?

I find that focusing on 2 main tasks is vital. These two tasks should be 2 things that will bring you the most success. They are 'the big' projects and tasks that require you to be at your best.

They aren't medial tasks that can be done in front of the TV late at night. They're the things that require imagination, focus, and energy. Do these tasks early in the morning when you're at your best. Leave the medial for later on in the day when your mind starts to wander

2. WAKE UP EARLY.

I get more productive and creative work done before 11 am than I do the rest of the day. The earlier I rise, the better work I get done.

In reading about hundreds of successful people over the years, the vast majority (if not all of them) woke or wake up early. In Robin Sharma's wonderful book, "*The Greatness Guide*", one of his keys to living a great life is being early to rise. Dale Carnegie is of the same opinion.

Hit the ground running. And hit it running *early*.

3. HAVE FISH OILS.

Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish are one of the most powerful “brain foods” we can have. I combine my 3-6 early morning omega-3 pills with a handful of either almonds or walnuts. Both nuts are high in omega-3’s, compounding the brain boosting effect of fish oils.

4. READ. QUIET TIME.

Don’t start your day off with work. The more I *do* start my day by jumping into my work, the less productive and creative I am.

Starting my day off by reading a book in silence, then thinking about what I just read and what I am going to accomplish during the day has proven to dramatically improve the focus. I get a lot more done, on the right things, and I’m more motivated.

In my experience it has to be the right book. But there are thousands upon thousands of ‘the right book’ out there. Here are a few:

- a) *The Greatness Guide* by Robin Sharma
- b) *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill
- c) *The Education of Millionaires* by Michael Ellsberg

5. REVIEW YOUR MISSION.

Every morning it’s important to review 2 things:

- a) Your mission in life. The BIG thing you’re going to accomplish.
- b) How you’re going to get there (your more immediate goals).

Adding this simple step to my day is one of the best things I’ve done in the past few years to improve my focus, and to focus on the *right* things.

Say your mission out loud. State that you’re going to accomplish it. And when you’re *going to* accomplish it. There’s no ‘if’ in this reciting of your mission and more immediate goals. Only a ‘when’ and a ‘how’.

6. READ YOUR FAVORITE QUOTES. REVIEW YOUR 2 MOST IMPORTANT TASKS.

Quotes that motivate you and help you focus are powerful tools that will help you accomplish your mission. However, they're useless without constant review. I find the best time to do this is in the morning.

Here are a few quotes that I review daily:

Many of the great achievements of the world were accomplished by tired and discouraged men who kept on working.

Everything is energy and that's all there is to it. Match the frequency of the reality you want and you cannot help but get that reality. It can be no other way. This is not philosophy. This is physics. ~ Albert Einstein

Things may come to those who wait...but only the things left by those who hustle. ~ Abraham Lincoln

So much time is wasted on tasks that require no brain power. We see them as things *we must do*, but in reality, they're tasks that can either be outsourced, or can wait until later on the in the day when our minds are weary, and our focus, wavering.

Have 2 main tasks within each day. Focus on either one of these tasks first, when your ability to focus and not get distracted is at its height.

These two tasks should be the tasks that will lead to your success more than anything else. They require imagination, focus and energy.

As an example, my two main tasks of today are:

- a) Writing for this site.
- b) Guest article writing.

To do both at their best, I need to be at my best. I'm useless at writing towards the end of the day. A butterfly could fly by my computer and I'd chase it. I have the attention span of a two year old. Both also take me closer to my mission. They're very important to my success.

7. RUN or LIFT.

So you've been working for an hour or so. It technically still is the morning. You're in the thick of things. Your concentration is starting to waver. Your imagination is stale. What should you do?

Head to the gym, or out for a run.

The endorphins we release during exercise are POWERFUL. If I'm ever in need of an idea, it usually comes after a hard training session, or if I head outside to get some reading done in silence.

Yes, training helps us great in better physical condition. It helps lower our degrees of stress. All of which are important and beneficial to other areas of our lives. But a workout really is one of the best things you can do to get your energy and focus back after a long morning work session.

Plan your training accordingly.

Force Focus

The struggle used to be survival, now it's focus.

We used to wake up, grab our spear, and head out into the wilderness to find dinner.

Along the way we'd encounter beasts far stronger than us. We'd have to constantly be aware both of predators and prey, for if it isn't the bigger, stronger animals that killed us, the lack meat could.

Our days were about a singular thing, not enjoyment or wonderment or meaning, but surviving.

Today we have more options. We can sleep in. We can watch other humans do things on TV. We can go out for a drink, hang with pals, read, work, learn, or we can do *nothing*. *Nothing* is actually an option.

There's no danger lurking, no lion or tiger around the corner. The enemy, today, is options.

I'm assuming you're an ambitious human. You're reading this, you're online looking for something, maybe guidance or a pick-me-up, or a lesson. So you're trying to improve.

Maybe you're here when you should be somewhere else?

The simple act of writing has become more complicated. We have links we can click, articles we can read, butterflies we can chase.

If all we did was focus on a single thing for an extended period of time, and *only* a single thing, we'd become more effective, we'd do better work, we'd serve a greater purpose.

Today, however, rather than following the gritty path of persistence, we jump from job to job, focus to focus, all in an effort to find our purpose, our passion, that thing that strikes a cord in us.

The truth is that passion is something we can *create* simply by wanting to be the best at something and connecting it to a greater purpose than mere self-preservation.

People have created their calling in picking up garbage, in selling, in writing, in using their hands to build something in an assembly line. Without focus, however, we don't

give whatever we're doing enough of a chance to grow into something bigger than just a job.

If you want meaning, purpose, money, success, and happiness, try focusing.

Be in One Place

To bring this beyond work, try shutting your phone off when you're with friends or family. Turn the TV off. When you're not working don't have your brain still trying to solve the problems of your work, be present.

You'll find that you stress less and accomplish more.

When you *are* working, shut the internet off for periods of intense focus. Turn your phone off and throw it across the room. Force focus to find productivity.

Or, of course, you can be like everything else and merely be busy.

6 Focus Hacks

Cheat. It's always good to cheat if you can. Cheating in my mind is simply using things that help you either focus or manage your tasks better.

The following are things I use now. I've used a lot of little tools in my time, trying to get more done, trying to find a way to maintain focus for longer periods of deep work sessions, and attempting to keep track of what, specifically, I should be focusing on and what I shouldn't.

1. OneFocus (mac app)

This is a great tool for anyone who does any kind of computer work offline. The big one, of course, being writing.

OneFocus is an app that gives you the ability to shut off access to whatever programs you want on your computer. When I'm working, for example, my ability to access everything but my Word doc is denied. You add a timer to it, which is important (I'll explain why in the next tool).

2. Stopwatch

Focus and discipline needs to be forced and trained to become stronger. Don't just work, time your work on a single thing. Timing your work sessions forces you to focus for a prescribed time. You don't stop when your energy runs out or when you run out of ideas or when the 'muse' leaves you. You stop when the timer runs out.

Studies suggest that our attention span for deep work runs around 90-120 minutes. So you have a maximum of 120 minutes to focus deeply on a given task.

You won't have that 120 minutes in your tank when you begin your work on discipline, but it's something you can build up to with the help of a timer. Increase your work sessions by 10 minutes every week. Start with 60-minute work sessions. That may even be a stretch, but you'll work your way up to it.

One of the best features of onefocus is that it includes a timer. It tells me when my writing session is done, I don't tell it.

3. Trello

Trello is a task manager of sorts. You can create columns, then to-do's or tasks within those columns. You can manually move one task through your funnel of columns, which is what makes it the best task manager I've come across.

How I set my columns up:

big projects – weekly projects – to do today – doing – done

You can see how projects move through that flow. They start at big or weekly projects – like a book or a program in big, articles and emails in weekly – then move to ‘to do today’, then doing, then done.

It’s a visual way of getting all of your work done. You should also only put 1-2 things in the ‘to do today’ column, and never more than one thing in the doing column.

I’m relatively new to using this. It’s only been a few months, but it’s already made a big difference. I’m sold.

4. Evernote

Evernote is a great note-taking and project planning tool. You can scan things with your camera phone using the app. It’s also a great note-taking platform for the books you read.

Taking pictures of articles or quotes or ideas you have while walking the streets or in the mountains, it becomes a visual journal that isn’t so much about creating discipline, but finding focus.

5. A Journal

Journals bring clarity. Often times I don’t know what I’m thinking unless I take the time to work my thoughts out in a journal. They also give us a period to reflect, to find self-awareness and to call ourselves out on how we’re not being disciplined.

I keep two journals and I recommend keeping at least more than one.

One journal is for your story. It’s to write down thoughts and ideas and record your life. This journal helps you find clarity. You write you goals and dreams and processes in this journal.

The second journal is for work. It’s to write down goals for the week, tasks, or even just to take notes on books you’re reading.

One is for your story, the other is for your daily life. Splitting them up allows you to find things in your journal much faster because they’re split into two topics. It also helps you really focus on the two aspects of your journaling without messing one of them up.

6. Big headphones

This is a new but incredibly powerful addition to my writing. I sit down at my desk, put the noise-cancelling headphones on so I can't hear anything but the sounds its playing, choose a soothing, studying or working playlist that doesn't have any words, and begin working.

I can't explain how powerful this has been for my ability to focus on a single thing, whatever I'm writing. If writing or programming or any skill where you should be focusing on one thing and noise can be a distraction – carpentry, art, etc... – try this.

What are your tools?

These tools have worked wonderfully for me. They may do the same for your, but it's important to have tools of your own, little 'cheats' that help you get better at what you're aiming to perfect.

The Power of Focus

To achieve any goal, the ability to focus and concentrate our power of attention is crucial.

The modern world vies for our attention in a million different ways and through a million different avenues- television, the internet, clever marketing, partying, worries about money and existential threats to our survival... just to name a few.

Most people do not take any intentional steps to combat the inundation of information that unceasingly overloads our nervous systems. Instead, we end up getting caught up in the riptide current of noise and confusion.

With attention and focus scattered in a million directions, many are rendered too distracted and impotent to self direct their life course. As a result, the majority of men and women end up taking the path of least resistance – being a product and propagator of whatever direction the culture leads them; a worker and a consumer.

If we don't consciously choose where to direct our attention, we will be unable to push past barriers and persist through the inevitable trials and challenges that life will hand us. Further, we'll have little control over the stories our minds generate about ourselves and the world, and will become easily discouraged.

To combat this trend, we must take active steps in our lives to harness and draw in (concentrate) our powers of attention.

When it comes to achieving goals and creating things of unique value for others, focus and attention are more important than ability or talent.

You could have all the ability and potential in the world, but with a distracted, diffused mind you will never achieve that which requires diligence, persistence, and consistent effort (anything worthwhile).

Your life will be lived on automatic. You'll give up at any sign of adversity, or get lost in the glittery distractions of the modern world.

Success Is A State of Being

When you think of success, what comes to mind? For most, it is the realization of a goal (money, status, prestige, strength, etc.). Success is conventionally defined in terms of

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achievement. Dictionary.com defines success as, “the accomplishment of one’s goals.” Basically, to succeed means to reach a desired finite point in the future.

I’d like to present a different definition of success. To me, success is something that can only be attained in the present moment. Success is a process, not an end result. It is a choice to persevere through challenge and persist *right now*. After all, right now is the only time we can ever take action.

Success isn’t about outcomes and the momentary pleasure that comes with reaching a goal. It is about attitude and action.

In any moment, we can choose to be successful by giving our 100% focus to the tasks at hand. Reaching our goals will be an inevitable byproduct of a successful attitude towards the present moment.

Success is the ability to direct attention and effort towards that which is most essential. A successful person accepts his current position in life without judgment or worry. Obstacles in the way are merely seen as challenges to overcome and grow from. He then works consistently and deliberately, day in and day out, to achieve his goals and change his circumstances.

If you had the choice, would you choose to worry, complain, or feel sorry for yourself? Would you choose to become apathetic and give up when faced with challenge?

Engaging in these mental/emotional habits is true “failure,” since they do nothing except get in our way and paralyze us from taking action.

So, would you engage in these destructive thought patterns if you had the choice not to? Or would you choose to develop a successful relationship towards your circumstances and the present moment?

The Power of The Placebo Effect and Framing

Framing, or the narratives we tell ourselves about the events and circumstances of our lives, is a hugely important determining factor in cultivating a demeanor of success.

Science has repeatedly shown the power that the placebo effect has on our lives. Many write the placebo effect off as inconsequential (“It’s just placebo”).

More stock should be given to this phenomenon, however.

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The placebo effect basically shows that our fundamental beliefs about situations directly affect the outcomes, and oftentimes in profound ways. If we believe that a sugar pill is actually an anabolic steroid, it will have a much more powerful effect on us than if we think it's just sugar.

All else being equal, what we think can literally influence physical matter. Such is the power of our minds.

I do not necessarily mean this in the cliché “law of attraction” sense that merely thinking a certain way completely shapes our reality. But certainly, our consistent mental and emotional patterns do produce certain corresponding neurochemical reactions in the body.

We also selectively attend to information in our environment that validates our frame, which then turns it into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

[Quick example: If we are constantly thinking anxious thoughts, we will produce cortisol in the body, our minds will be less open to seeing solutions, we'll be less charismatic, and be overall less primed for good things to happen to us.]

A lot of times, our internal mental states are determined by our external circumstances. People tend to give more energy and attention to “what is” than what they want to create.

If we're poor and out of shape, our thoughts tend to turn towards how poor and out of shape we are, which only serves to fuel the fire of that paradigm via our daily (lack of) motivation and (lack of) actions.

If we're healthy and wealthy, our thoughts tend to reflect that external circumstance, which also pumps momentum into that paradigm.

Regardless of the present circumstances of our lives, we can maintain consistently positive mental/emotional attention towards our goals. Action combined with a proper mindset/frame will produce the most profound results.

If we realize that to a degree, what we believe to be true can have a substantial impact in shaping the trajectory of our lives, then we can essentially choose helpful frames and omit ones that hurt us. We can then brainwash ourselves into believing these frames regardless of our present circumstances.

Doors will open up where only walls used to exist in our previously undisciplined use of our minds.

Other Real World Effects of Framing

Most of the time, most people are not consciously choosing their narratives. The narratives happen automatically and often are not useful or beneficial. Further, a lot of these frames are deeply embedded into our psyches; they are implicitly and explicitly instilled in us by parents, peers, school, the media, and past experiences.

The Neo-Darwinian “survival of the fittest” mentality, for example, frames the world through a competitive and selfish lens, where species must struggle and compete within and amongst each other for resources (as opposed to a world where species cooperate and live in an interconnected, symbiotic web).

Our relationships to the planet and one another reflects this collective framing of reality, and we come to feel that life is a competitive struggle to survive and gain resources (in essence a scarcity mindset).

In a blog post, Scott Adams (a political/social commentator and creator of Dilbert) talks about the palpable real world effects that framing has had upon America in relation to the presidential election.

He says, About half of the citizens of the United States think they elected a president who will “drain the swamp” in Washington DC and negotiate good trade deals for the public. But the other half believes they are living in 1930s Germany and the next Hitler just came to office. Those are very different movies, yet we all sit in the same theater at the same time. It’s trippy.

In this example, you can see how powerful framing and narratives are in determining our experience of the world. The same baseline reality has generated two entirely different narratives within the American public.

The differing interpretations of the election illustrate that people confuse the narratives overlaid onto reality with reality itself.

Aside from physical sensations, much of the negativity (or positivity) experienced by people is predominantly a result of the story/interpretation (frame) and NOT the event itself.

Frames powerfully inform our decision-making processes and can generate positive or negative emotional states within us without anything changing in our physical environment.

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Any framing of reality is a relative perspective at best and, as in the case of the election, can be replaced with other equally convincing narratives.

Complaining, feeling discouraged or sorry for yourself, despising your current circumstances, guilt and shaming yourself or others, and worrying- are all framings of reality that are counterproductive and hold us back (how much do these patterns reflect the behaviors of the “Social Justice Warriors,” who in my opinion reflect very poor management of the mind and emotions?).

Looking at “setbacks” as challenging opportunities for growth and transformation is also a frame. Seeing yourself, no matter the ups and downs, as on a constant path of growth and development is another frame that is helpful to you.

Some of these frames are useful, and some aren't. What's important is to realize their interchangeability.

With increased focus, awareness, and attention comes the ability to consciously select the frames that are beneficial and stop running the frames that are counterproductive.

The Limitations of Framing

Any interpretation (frame) of reality is, by definition, limited. To frame is to explain, and to explain is to define something in specific terms. When you put full faith in a certain narrative, you have to omit lots of information that would contradict or invalidate that narrative.

This is not always problematic (and can be beneficial in certain instances), but it can cause us to formulate opinions based on a very biased, narrow and incomplete sets of information.

It's not just negative framings of events that serve to limit our perception of reality. Positive frames can be just as detrimental. Hitler once stated, “By the skillful and sustained use of propaganda, one can make a people see even heaven as hell or an extremely wretched life as paradise.”

Being “positive” and “optimistic” is certainly unwarranted in many cases (such as if you were living in Nazi Germany). It often leads to denial and pretending that our circumstances are better than they actually are out of a fear of facing reality.

The sensationalist news media excels at creating narratives based on incomplete or partial truths that have the effect of misleading people about the nature of the world they live in. Imagine that globally, a million good things happen in a day, and 4 bad things

happen. If the media only reports on the 4 bad things that happened (because negative events garner attention), people will be led to think the world is more dangerous and evil than it actually is because they will never hear about the good things going on.

They develop a framing of the world based on very incomplete information. This limited frame is then mistaken for the total picture, when it's actually just a very partial truth based on limited information.

If we believe that the threat of a terrorist attack is always looming over the horizon, for example, we will make much different decisions than if we realize the minimal chances of one occurring. We will be much more willing to give up our civil liberties in exchange for protection from an exaggerated threat.

Throughout history, narrow framings of reality and the accompanying set of agreed upon cultural assumptions have led to mental enslavement and the control of the masses by the few.

Cultivating Body Awareness to Use Our Minds Effectively

As Eckhart Tolle says, Strictly speaking, you don't choose to think; Thinking happens to you. The statement "I think" implies volition. It implies that you have willfully chosen to think what you think (or that you think in the first place). For most people, this is not yet the case. "I think" is just as false a statement as "I digest" or "I circulate my blood." Digestion happens, circulation happens, thinking happens.

Most people are unconsciously and automatically interpreting, judging and analyzing whatever is going on around them based on an inability to control their thoughts and frames.

We gain a false sense of comfort in believing we understand the world around us, but the downside is we become trapped inside of a very limited perspective (and life situation). We exchange the uncertainty (and potential expansion) that comes with not knowing for the comfortable prison of certitude.

Simply enough, this pattern can be combated with the cultivation of body awareness. Body awareness sharpens and concentrates our focus, which in turn helps us to refrain from adopting narrow personal and collective frames by activating the witness/observer within us.

When you can witness your thoughts and emotions without completely believing in them, you can choose to stop telling negative stories (and deluded positive ones).

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As we hone our attention, we no longer will automatically put full stock in whatever narratives our minds churn out.

Body awareness cultivates your power of attention. For many of us, our attention is usually scattered outwardly into the external world and in thinking. When your attention is directed internally, you draw it out of distractions and literally concentrate it into bodily sensations.

As you make this a habit, your ability to choose where to direct your attention increases. Not to mention you become much more tuned in to the needs and desires of your body. Attention becomes like a beam of light that's concentrated through a magnifying glass. Concentrated attention literally makes us more powerful and effective.

Indirectly, our resolve and ability to endure is strengthened as we become more “embodied” and grounded in our present moment reality.

This enables us to face life's challenges head on instead of running into a pleasant mental fantasy, distraction or anxiety.

In a 2011 study in the [*Journal of Neuroscience*](#), Dr. Fadel Zeidan and colleagues discovered that an increased capacity to direct attention into the body (via meditation techniques) effectively reduces a person's subjective experience of physical and emotional pain by 27% and 44% respectively (a margin larger than the effectiveness of morphine and anxiety medications).

They go on to say:

*Because meditation likely alters pain by enhancing cognitive control and **reframing the contextual evaluation of nociceptive information**, the constellation of interactions between expectations, emotions, and cognitive appraisals intrinsic to the construction of the sensory experience can be regulated by the meta-cognitive ability to nonjudgmentally sustain focus on the present moment.*

Much of the time, thinking (and framing is an aspect of thinking) distracts us from feeling and inhabiting our bodies.

To achieve these results, I'm not necessarily asking you to sit in the lotus position and meditate. I don't do this and it's not necessary to achieve the results found in the study (although it could be helpful for you).

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Simply making a habit of feeling into the body, fully engaging the senses, occasionally paying attention to the breath, and sitting with our emotions while going about daily life is all that's required to generate focus and presence.

By making this habit a part of your daily life, you begin to separate your awareness/attention from stories and narratives and become aware of the neutral, baseline reality.

It is only at the point that we transcend frames/stories that we develop the power and ability to choose frames that are truly useful to us. When we can sense the world without judgment of it, we can then choose constructive judgments that serve to inspire and motivate us.

The Future Belongs To Those Who Can Focus

Now more than ever, the ability to choose where to focus our attention is the most important commodity we have. It is the highest determinant of success or failure.

We must develop the ability to choose our frames while at the same time practice drawing our attention inward, thereby increasing our powers of awareness observation and objectivity.

It takes concentrated effort and personal will to go against the current of culture and pave your own path.

If you are not in control of where you put your attention, the momentum of culture and society will literally consume you. A lack of focus and vigilance allows for external entities like corporations and manipulators to swoop in determine our opinions for us, as is being done currently in our consumer society (If you have time and interest, I highly recommend watching this four part BBC documentary on the matter).

I probably don't need to convince that we are currently entering a brave new world. Technology has made many jobs obsolete, and the middle class is being hollowed out. Economic uncertainty continues to increase, and working for a corporation and having your livelihood dependent on factors out of your control is no longer a sustainable path. **As a result, the world increasingly belongs to the creators and innovators.**

In order to thrive in a rapidly changing world, we must grab the bull by the horns and take our lives into our own hands.

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Learning to unplug from the multitude of distractions that vie for our attention and regain our powers of concentration and focus are essential to thriving in the coming years.

How to Create The Perfect Day

Life is but a collection of days.

A great life is nothing more than a collection of days won.

I have the habit of thinking about the big picture a bit too frequently.

I'm always thinking about the end game, the dreams and the goals, the life I want to create and the man I'm aiming to become.

There's good in this, but to constantly have your focus set on the distant future brings you away from the only thing that actually matters, today, the present.

This past week offered a unique opportunity to find clarity and focus in my mission and what I'm doing on a daily basis because I've been sick.

It's been years since I've gotten sick for more than a day, but this one's been rough.

In this case, that opportunity is something I got in the mail the day after the sickness took hold...

Like many of you, the other week I bought [The Perfect Day Formula](#) "how to own the day and control your live", by Craig Ballantyne.

Craig's a guy I've met only a couple times, but followed for years. And not even his fitness stuff, but his work focused on, for the lack of a better term, getting shit done.

Craig is the master at getting shit done and getting shit done at a high quality.

I've wanted him to write a book for years because of the value I get from his newsletters and articles.

For example, it was his routine that gave me a blueprint to create my own.

Largely because of his lead I began waking up at 4:30am and going to bed at 8:30 pm. Through his advice I was able to define what distracts me throughout the day and have the ability to focus on the single thing that's most important to my success, happiness, and effectiveness as a human.

THE POWER OF FOCUS

His *Gratitude Journals* – something he gives you along with the Perfect Day Formula – have helped me create more effective to do lists, but also define specific things within my day that I'm grateful for. The ability to find what I'm grateful for when I'd have otherwise simply went to bed without thanking my Maker for a single specific thing has helped me live a happier life.

Craig's articles and his advice are always simple, clear cut, and actionable.

He's figured out how to not only get a ton of stuff done, but to determine what among the myriad of "things" that need to be completed are the most important and demand his – and our – best hours of the day, something he calls Magic Time.

Think about those initial sentences I put at the beginning of this article.

If you're able to win today, that is, get important work done, spend some quality time doing something you love be it on a hobby, time with your family, or whatever, and you're able to do this every day because your effectiveness isn't born from chance but the result of habits that have become second-nature, then you're going to create a great life.

This is powerful, especially for a daydreamer like me. If I'm able to determine the right goals, spend more time on the most important tasks, get better work done, focus on things that really matter, it's only a matter of time before those lost-in-the-future-dreams become my reality.

That's what Craig's always helped me do in his newsletters and articles. He's helped me become a more effective human. He's helped me create the best habits. He's showed me how freedom requires more discipline and how success really is habitual, and if I'm not creating what I want to create or if I'm not building the life I want to build with the success I want to attain, I only have to look at the decisions I'm making on a daily basis and the habits that make up those days to find the source of my failure.

So as soon as [The Perfect Day Formula](#) came out, I bought it.

And since I've been sick for the past week, I figured there's no better time to study, learn, and reflect on the habits I've slid back into, where I'm headed, and to point myself back in the right direction by creating the best day possible based on the right habits I need to form.

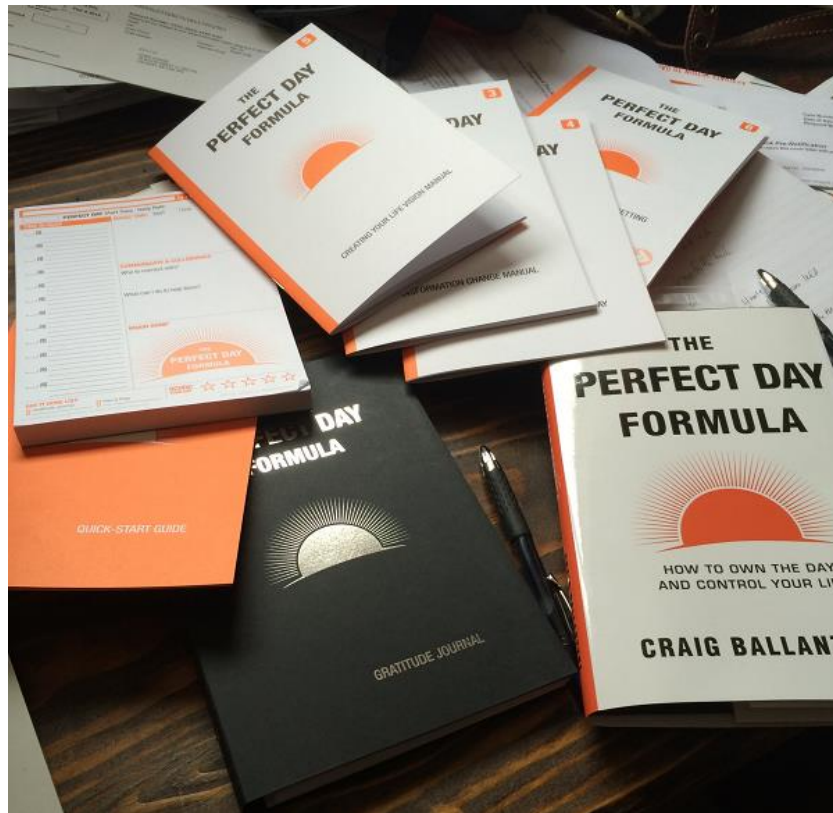
Even this act of reflection, planning, and re-tinkering my rules is something that should be done habitually.

THE POWER OF FOCUS

So, in the quest to create a great life, you must first create, then live, your perfect day, day in and day out without excuse.

Here's how *the Perfect Day Formula* will help you do this....

The Perfect Day Formula



Buying the book I was expecting the book, nothing more. But the package includes far more than just the book, but guides, journals, and calendars needed to keep your rules, habits, and actions focused on the right stuff.

1. Your Vision

There are four booklets, one journal, and one calendar or daily planner of sorts that make up the package.

They range from planning big picture things to nailing down the nitty gritty of how your perfect day should go. The big picture stuff is found in the book, of course, but also two booklets, one that focuses on goal setting, and the other that focuses on your bigger vision of who you're trying to become and what you're really trying to accomplish.

He asks you questions, forces you to think about both the bigger picture and your more immediate goals and the steps you're going to take to bring this bigger mission to fruition.

From here, you can really begin to focus on the rules of both your life and your days that will help you become that man and create that legacy.

2. Your Rules

Rules are necessary if you're going to stay the course and become the man you're aiming, aspiring to become. Rules are who you're trying to be. They're what keeps you on track, focused, always improving and accomplishing.

Rules like avoiding gossip prevent you from delving into the idiotic conversations had by small minds. Rules like avoiding email before noon keep you focused only on the work you need to do not the people you need to respond to or keep happy.

He talks about it in the book, which is important to read before you make your way through the manuals, but without rules your days are left to chance, and thus, where you end up in life is more lottery than archery.

3. Your Routine

The calendar he's created where you write your time blocks, the single most important thing you need to accomplish on a given day, is incredibly powerful and well-laid out.

For those of us who tend to procrastinate, even using research or reading as avoidance, this piece of paper does wonders.

When you know where your time is going and you have only a single focus for each time block, there are no reasons nor excuses to remove yourself from this path.

What you end up with after going through the different notebooks, the book, and the journals, is a day that you can live every day that will both bring you more freedom, far more success, and yield much greater returns for your time.

You're going to become better by implementing what this book and this package has to offer. It's impossible not to. It makes you answer questions that we rarely ask ourselves, create rules that we're afraid to create, and take control of our lives in ways that we didn't know we could.

Most of us think we're slaves to our desires, but we're not. We allow ourselves to become distracted, what's sad is that most of us will spend our lives in distraction, being pulled away from the work we're here to do and the life we're here to lead.

TO LIVE OR TO EXIST

There's an idea that it seems few are in line with, that life, no matter how our lives are going, is a gift. It's a gift in many ways, but in one sense it's a gift because people have died fighting so we can pursue happiness, so that we have some semblance of freedom.

To ignore this gift, to waste it, to slap those who've died and sacrificed in the face, is to simply exist. It's to ignore your choice to work hard, to focus, to make something of yourself in lieu of ease, of distraction, of giving in to temptation at every turn.

It isn't a right to choose to be lazy or even ineffective. **It's your duty to make the best of the life and the talents and the opportunities you've been given by actually accomplishing something day in and day out.**

As I read through the pages of this book and began looking at my life, planning it out, mapping out my perfect day, I realized that this stuff shouldn't be optional, it should be required.

We should teach this stuff in school. But, and there's good in this, it's things that are only available to action-takers. Like anything, the businesses we create, the adventures, the jobs, they're all only available to action-takers.

Thus, I highly recommend you pick up your copy here (action-takers only).