

Don't Say I Never Told You

A guide to life from an ageing father to his millennial daughters

Series 1

This series contains chapters and E-templates on:

Chapter 1: Family and Friends

Chapter 2: Personal Habits

Chapter 3: Personal Development

By Pat Storm

Introduction

Girls, over my life I always sought counsel from my parents. It is very rewarding to see that you are doing the same with your mother and I, long may it continue. However, the sudden death of a friend, who was younger and fitter than me, has been a reminder that there is no guarantee I will be around. So, just in case, here are some of the things that might be useful to you on your journey. Whilst this three-part series was written with you in mind, I hope it is also useful to any of your peers who happen to come across it.

Throughout the three-part series, I have designed checklists and evaluation tools to help you get started. These E-templates are available to all readers free of charge.

Varied and I hope interesting topics

I hope there are topics here that hit you 'left field', that push you in a direction that changes your life for the better. I have no idea which ones will resonate the most with you so I am simply firing a shotgun in your general direction and hopefully some pellets will surely hit the target.

The first series warms up with chapters on 'family and friends' and 'winning personal habits' before moving onto the heavier stuff of 'personal development'. Content includes:

- The six types of friends
- How to find good flatmates
- Being more effective with your time
- How to face tough times
- How to complete your life's purpose (your Ikigai) and your treasure map so your life has a direction you have actively chosen
- How to handle your personal baggage
- How to ascertain your natural talents

The second series covers 'your other half', 'you and your money', and 'health and well-being'. Content includes:

- Finding Wally - tips to help you find a life partner worth keeping
- Guidelines when weighing up 'Should I stay or should I go' from a relationship
- How to separate without funding the legal profession
- The twenty tips when buying your first home
- Tips to secure your financial future
- How to avoid buying a 'lemon' of a car
- You and your mental health
- Simple things to do to increase your survival odds when driving

The third series covers 'winning work habits', 'forging a career worth having', and 'some tips for millennial managers'. Content includes:

- Embracing abandonment
- Creating strong and healthy work relationships
- Handling office drama and a 'bully of a boss'
- Develop a safe haven, a respite from stress
- Making sure your career is as secure as a hedgehog
- Steps to help you find the right job and avoid being conned
- What to check when intending to make a major career change
- Tips to spending less time in unproductive meetings
- Tips to improve workflow and reduce waste

Caveat

Girls, the advice contained in this book has come from a variety of sources. From discussions I had with your grandparents, attending self-development courses, making mistakes and absorbing information from those much wiser than me.

I have not always followed the advice laid out here. I don't see a problem in that. Do you? For this book is not about me, it is about you and your future.

Note of thanks to the reviewers

Girls, besides your valuable contribution, this book has also been reviewed by millennials amongst our family friends. I am immensely grateful to all of you for your help in shaping the content. I hope you recognise your contributions.

About the author

Pat Storm is the pen name for an author who was educated at Liverpool University where he studied Commerce. He spent his working life solving complex business problems and has published nine business books for an American publisher. He has written over 100 articles covering management and life issues and realised that his daughters would never see them. As a COVID 19 project he planned this book, using new and existing content, formatting it to be more palatable to his daughters and their peers. He lives with his wife and their cat (Tigger). His millennial daughters fledged early, are fiercely independent although ring for advice when the 'shit hits the fan'. They make him immensely proud.

Comments

Throughout the book I have included the comments made by my daughters and the other millennials who help shape this narrative.

Who the hell is Pat Storm, Dad?

I found this book very clear and practical. Really good meander through different themes, places, experiences and resources.

Good humour and connections with us millennials, endearing parts and sections where you want to roll your eyes and go "Oh Dad".

Has companion pieces that are a great way to navigate through the book when you're looking for particular advice.

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Family and Friends

Family and friends are your greatest support network that can bring great joy. Many approaches to living advocate the importance of spending quality time with family and friends.

Girls to be successful in this area you need to invest time to strengthen this support network whose support is fundamental in any crisis you may face. This section covers:

- Maintaining family bonds
- The six types of friends - have you got it covered?
- Old lessons on friendship that might apply to you
- What you need to know before playing the rescuer
- Finding good flatmates
- You can always find time to attend a funeral
- How to buy a good wine for your friends

1. Maintaining family bonds

You never choose your parents or your siblings, however in most cases fortunately the relationship is one of love, care, nurturing and support. I was lucky to have such. Girls, please make more of an effort to phone the key members of your extended family who would appreciate a call. You know that it is even free using WhatsApp.

It is especially relevant for older relatives and friends. A call made may well be your last one. At least once a month is a good target to reach.

Never wait for a return call

I learnt long ago that I would do most of the calling. I did not resent that. Partly it was because calls were cheaper that way.

It is best to be the initiator and don't take it personally that the calling seems to be one way.

Your mother and I chose to live 12,000 miles (17,000 kms) away from our family and friends and thus we committed to a significant investment of time phoning and emailing. Our relations did not suffer from the distance.

Never confuse social media engagement with a one-to-one catch-up

Facebook posts are part of the 'Look at me, look how lucky I am. I bet you want to be me' movement. Make the time to make a call. I have never had an interest in any of my family members' Facebook feeds. If there is a special photo, then I assume they will email me a copy.

It might appear to be more efficient to communicate to all, at once but for a start it is the wrong type of communication.

Don't you want to know how they are? Set a target on your Treasure Map of the frequency of your calls and keep to it.

Holiday with your parents

In our late teenage years we wanted to exit the family holidays as quickly as possible. Yet when in a stable relationship I found holidaying with my parents very rewarding. Short trips sometimes and longer ones when we went for winter sun on a Christmas UK visit.

Visits to family and friends

There is a saying, 'Fish, relatives and friends go off after four nights'. I believe what happens is that you are no longer the surprise guest, your idiosyncrasies begin to clash, and you have now disrupted their routines for long enough.

So girls when I stayed with Grandma and Grandpa I always organised a side trip somewhere so I did not over stay my welcome. I would then return for another short stay and be greeted, once more, like the prodigal son.

Remember birthdays

The most painful part of family life is when close family members forget your birthday. It unfortunately says, 'Other things were more important'. With electronic diaries it takes half an hour to get mega organised and ensure you flag a week or ten-day warning, so you get that card off.

With online personal card services you do not even have to post the card.

Handling past conflict

Not all family relationships are sound. If you have suffered get counselling to sort out your baggage and seek advice about what to do. You will never be able to change their behaviour. In some cases, you have to consider what damage they may still be doing to unknown others. In such cases take action when you have processed the past and have a supportive regime behind you.

Companion pieces in other chapters

Minimise your personal baggage

Comments

If you can, turn your family into an unconditional rock of support. My sister, who once was the 'bane of my life' is my best friend.

Dad, I get the message, you want me to take you away somewhere. However, there will be no golf or you are on your own.

Of course, Dad you would say holiday with your parents.

Dad, you forgot a paragraph on always picking up the call when you can see it is your Dad ringing for the third time in a morning. Whilst you are retired, I do have a job.

2. The six types of friends - have you got it covered?

Girls, I know you have many friends. Your Facebook indicates that you have many friends. However, as you know, some friends are more equal than others. Having done some research I believe there are six types of friends:

- Your 'bury the body' friends (I will explain later)
- Your 'hobby' friends
- Your 'mentor' friends
- Your 'love to see you XOXO' energizer friends
- Your work friends
- Your distant past friends

To add to this complexity Robin Dunbar is an anthropologist and psychologist from The University of Oxford. From looking through time and at our close cousins, the apes, came up with this scale based on the amount of time we spend with people.

- 1500 is the number of people you can recognise.
- 500 of the 1,500 is the number of people who are acquaintances.
- 150 of the 1,500, is the number of people we could and would invite to a large party. You know them by face and name. This limit is set by the cognitive challenge and a time challenge.
- 50 of the 1,500, is the number of people who you have or would like to invite, over time, to dinner parties.
- 15 of the 1,500, is the number of friends that you can turn to for sympathy when you need it, the ones you can confide in about most things.
- 5 of the 1,500, is the number of your "loved ones".

Let's look at the type of friends we have.

Your 'bury the body for' friends (these are in the top 5)

Meaning if they called you, late at night, and needed help, you would be there trusting them that it was for the right reasons. You would take that risk. That is how much they would mean to you.

You share a bond that is virtually unbreakable. When something big happens in your life — good or bad — these are the first friends you call. At times, they even sense where you are headed — your thoughts, feelings, and actions — before you know it yourself. Your siblings may not fit here, they often can be found in the next two categories. That is the truth. Don't sweat on it.

Typically, you have invested hundreds of hours with these friends, sharing many past experiences, and whilst distance can alienate you, as soon as you are together the good times roll. I have four such friends.

Your 'hobby' friends (these would be in the top 15 and some maybe in the top 5)

These friends have similar interests. You might share a passion for sports, hobbies, religion, work, politics, food, music, movies, or books. In many cases, you belong to the same groups or share affiliations. Your siblings can fit here as you have many shared experiences together.

Your 'mentor' friends (these would be in the top 50 and sometimes in the top 15)

In a separate section I have asked you to think about getting a mentor or two. Naturally, these people get close to you. They take on several roles:

- Pushing you toward the finish line, helping you see your strengths and use them productively.
- Standing up for you and what you believe in, praising you to others – they have “your back covered”.
- Connecting you to people who can help your future career.
- Opening your mind expanding your horizons and encouraging you to embrace new ideas, opportunities, cultures, and people. In their company you are free to express new ideas and controversial opinions that you might not be comfortable sharing with other friends.
- Giving you sage advice from their past, guiding you so that you find the answer by yourself.

Your ‘love to see you XOXO’ energizer friends (these would be in the top 150 and some maybe in the top 50)

These are your ‘good time friends’ who can make a good day great. However, when times are tough, you are ill, or even in hospital do not expect them to be around. They are addicted to good times not hard or sad times.

As long as you know who they are then enjoy them for what they are. You are only in trouble if most of your friends fit into this category. I have seen cases when the tide turns, people are jettisoned by these so called close friends.

Your work friends (these range across the spectrum albeit many would fit in the 50 and 150 categories)

You spend so much time at work that it is normal to find many like-minded people either at your office, at clients or other connected parties.

These friendships can be very beneficial as you have support at work when things are not going well.

Your distant past friends (these would be in the top 150 and some maybe in the top 50)

Whilst you may not have made contact for 5,10,15 years you will often be surprised how quickly you can rekindle an old relationship. The reason why you have temporarily lost contact is simply you ran out of time. Maintaining friendships takes time, a lot of time.

These old friends are often the best source of friends if you are finding a depleted support group in times of trouble because:

- They know you, by the age of seven your character has formed, and you have not changed that much since.
- You have many shared memories.
- They did not ghost you - they like you just got too busy.

Never forget these friends.

I met the other week a friend who I worked with 44 years ago. Yes 44 years ago. We had never gone out to dinner when we were workmates, it did not matter back then, albeit we always had a fun conversation.

I was part of a group of graduates in 1976 who had joined Arthur Andersen & Co, a now defunct firm of accountants. At around the 30th anniversary I made contact with my ex-colleagues and we had an amazing gathering and two more followed in the next five years. It was great fun catching up and reliving old memories.

I am going to do my list Dad. As it so happens, I caught up with a school friend just recently and it was so nice reliving the past. She reminded me that I had designed her wedding dress when she was only 16. Am now committed to helping her through a difficult period.

I loved this Dad. I have moved around so much that I have many friends from my distant past . I will do better to reach out to them, one person a month.

3. Old lessons on friendship that might apply to you

Girls, I know I am out of date with the modern world. I prefer opera to TikTok. What do you expect? However, some of the things I have witnessed with younger people disturbs me.

Here are some old rules on friendship that still apply to your generation.

Always buy someone else a drink when you go to the bar

If finances are tough the last place you should be is drinking with friends in a bar. Suck it in and hibernate. Invite them around for a potluck dinner party, at your place. What's that going to cost?

Never, go to the bar and buy yourself a drink. Always look for someone else to include in your round. If it is a big group obviously only suckers or alcoholics buy a full round. Split yourself into smaller drinking groups.

Life is too short to be known as mean. I have an acquaintance from way back who would never go to the bar. My father, your granddad was always first at the bar. He was known as a generous man. Yes, he in his life would have paid for more drinks, but not a whole lot more as things often even out. And, at his funeral the pews were full whereas my acquaintance's funeral will probably a quieter one. The choice is yours.

Never ghost a friend

Girls, I doubt whether you would do this but it has happened to me. I always have a young talented student to run my IT systems, carry out research tasks and keep me connected to modern times.

I have had some wonderful times with them, and I am on my sixth millennial. Your step-mum, as you know even provides lunch for them, and I throw in the odd opera or play tickets and genuinely see them as part of the extended family.

Yet, one of my previous students, after 1.5 years of a close and very productive bond, ghosted me. He had simply moved on. I was of no relevance to him nor were the myriad of half-finished tasks that resided on his computer.

The student had no idea that the business world is a very small place and it is always prudent to act professionally.

This ghosting technique is carried out by a person whose morals are compromised, a person who would think cyber bullying is a sport and a light relief from the pressures of daily life. I say to all those millennials who think ghosting and cyber bullying is an appropriate activity, "Love thy neighbour as thyself" develop your spiritual side and gain some values.

Share knowledge, do not brag

Avoid bragging about your latest achievement, holiday, meal or weekend on social media.

When my father and mother travelled abroad the last thing on their mind was to brag about it. They kept the enjoyment to themselves.

Shakespeare offered this bit of advice in *All's Well That Ends Well*, when Parolles observed, "Who knows himself a braggart, let him fear this, for it will come to pass that every braggart shall be found an ass."

What happens when we showcase that wonderful picture with the caption, "This place is beautiful #blessed" are you not saying, "Look at this fantabulous photo. I am so artistic and well-travelled, aren't I?"

If you did not want to brag you would not take selfies and would not use Instagram. A social media commentator, Roxanne Batty worded this caption to illustrate this point.

"Look at this amazing shot of me where my skin and hair are flawless! But oops, I actually wanted to talk about how life is a struggle and being a social media influencer isn't all it's cracked up to be...#selfcare #love #mentalhealth."

Always return calls no matter how busy

Probably the easiest way to lose credibility at home and at work is not to return calls. How does one do this yet be efficient at work. My suggestion is to set aside specific times in the day to do this, such as straight after lunch and in the last hour of the day and book these times in your schedule. Naturally there will be those return calls to the CEO or your partner that are done immediately, the rest however can wait.

One of the nicest CEOs I have ever met would always, I mean always ring me back on the same day. He was very busy, I was not important to his organisation, but we knew each other. That was enough for Mike to make the effort to return the call.

Entertaining your friends, flatmates and neighbours may be the greatest gift you can give

Your granny from as long back as I can remember, always had a space at the table for guests. She would even go and collect two overseas students studying at Reading University and bring them home for our traditional Sunday roast. I suspect it was at these meals, listening to fascinating stories, that my appreciation for other cultures and countries was developed. My first Sunday roast was for 14 friends. As the day dawned I realized I knew nothing about cooking a roast. A brief phone call home, as it was in pre-internet days, supplied all the information I needed.

Cooking is so much easier these days with chefs freely sharing their takes on meals that can be prepared with minimum fuss. A good target girls is to organise a gathering of friends at least six times a year as the host.

Don't forget your neighbours. The annual neighbourly gathering, at our place, is always looked forward to and has a 100% attendance record.

An interesting point to note is that the better the host you are the less likely you are to receive reciprocated hospitality. There appears to be a fear of all the work that it involves. It has never bothered us as we see hosting as a gift from us to them. A gift that does not have to be returned.

Comments

*Dad, loved the point 'Share knowledge, do not brag' on social media.
#Gotit#Stayhumble*

Hah! Sister why do you post so many selfies?

4. What you need to know before playing the rescuer

Friends are there to help when times get tough, well that is what the top three layers of friends are, as discussed in "The six types of friends - have you got it covered?" However, you will have already or are about to have friends who see your role as the dumping ground. They might rise above a problem only to have it again. It may be the partners they have chosen or the jobs they have taken etc.

Before you know it, you have let them stay at your place so they can dump their problems on you every night while emptying your wine collection. Great, just what you wanted!

You are a friend not a counsellor

We all like giving advice. Some more than others. As you can see by this book, I have an advice addiction. I apologise. Anyway, you don't have to read it.

As an amateur counsellor it is worthwhile remembering:

- They may not want advice just an ear to listen, see "Tips on just listening" in this section.
- You can never really know the totality of another person's situation. What they tell you will not be the full story.
- The other person has to live with the decisions they make. You don't.
- You have likely made some bad decisions in your own life, so be careful with your advice.
- Professional counsellors only get stuff dumped on them for one hour and then the client's session is finished. Maybe they know something about time limits that we can follow?
- You can take a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. Some people like being victims of their own demise. You will eventually find out that they are addicted to it and that your problems are of no real interest to them. Are they the friends you want to keep?
- Never let a friend in trouble be a long-term stayer.

There is nothing quite as addictive than a person who is showing their vulnerability

Many years ago, a wife left her husband for another man. The husband did not see it coming and fell upon his friends for help. It was not long before his friend's wife was giving regular counselling sessions and the conversation may have gone like this.

"Sarah, I am utterly useless in relationships I can see why Barbara left me."

"Tom, don't be so hard on yourself, you are a lovely man and Barbara is a fool to leave you."

"Sarah, I never could have these sorts of chats with Barbara. She was not into the soft stuff. She would tell me to grow up." Tears flow and Sarah reaches over and hugs Tom.

"Tom, you are a beautiful, sweet man who can show his feelings."

Tom looks up and suddenly breaks the barrier and kisses Sarah. The rest is history. Tom ran off with Sarah leaving another male loose who was counselled by my friends. Well, you guessed it. That relationship broke up. Leaving a tearful man on a friend's doorstep with his wife being the willing counsellor.

8. Allocate time to your rocks

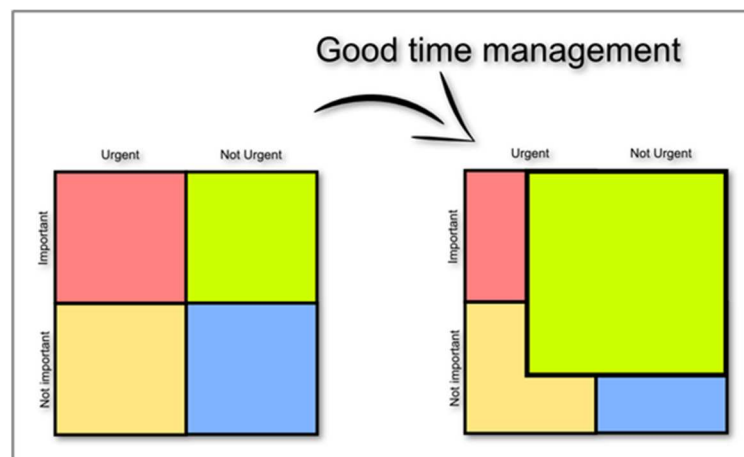
Girls, it is very easy to be busy, it is harder to be efficient and effective. Here are some tips from the past that are relevant today and for your foreseeable future.

Stephen Covey's four-time quadrants

One of the fathers of time management is Stephen Covey. In his book "First Things First", he observed that great leaders appear less stressed and seemed to have more time on their hands.

He adopted the Eisenhower matrix which helps to sort tasks based on the principals of urgency and importance. When assigned to each task, those two factors place the task at the relevant quadrant of the matrix. Covey pointed out that far too often we are firefighting in the "urgent and not important" quadrant. We should, instead, allow such fires to burn themselves out, redirecting our time to the "non-urgent and important" quadrant.

He was adamant that the key was "not to prioritise what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities."



As you can see in the diagram, we should spend more time in the "non-urgent and important" quadrant, the green zone. When you do this, you will find yourself having fewer looming deadlines.

The rocks, pebbles and sand lesson on time management



A philosophy professor is lecturing to his students. He brought out an empty jar. Filling the jar with some small rocks, he asked, "Is it full?". "Yes", they replied. Then he lifts a container of small pebbles and pours them in. "Is it full?". "Yes", they replied. Then he lifts a container of sand and pours it in round the rocks and pebbles. "Is it full?". "Yes definitely", they replied.

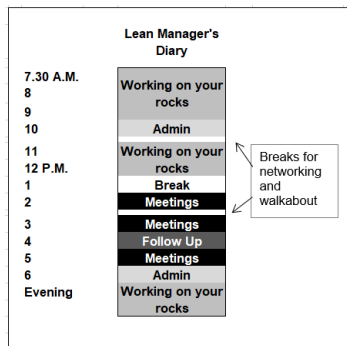
Then he pours in a cup of coffee into the container and it fills up all the spare space.

He explained, "Rocks are the important things in your life — you must give them priority each day otherwise you can't fit them in. Small pebbles — are the next important things. The sand (your emails, routine meetings, daily chores) — are the least important activities and should be made to fit around the more important tasks".

"So why the coffee?" a student asked. "To remind you that you should always make time, every day, for a coffee with either a work colleague, a client or a friend," the professor replied.

The rocks are, of course, the "important but not urgent" tasks that Covey was pointing us to.

Have two, two-hour blocks of time every day to move a project forward



Girls, your Grandpa, changed his career in his thirties, moving from a clerk of the court to train as a lawyer. He had a full working day, four children under seven and a requirement to take seven exams together. Failing one exam meant a re-sit of all seven. As he only had the opportunity to study in the evenings and at weekends, my father had to undergo a rigorous study timetable which he then introduced to me when I began to study for my university entrance exams. He took me aside and told me how he managed to study effectively.

He said the sweet spot for being productive was to work in a series of 1.5-hour / 2-hour blocks of time, free of interruption where you can concentrate on a key task, a Stephen Covey "rock". Ensuring that you have a 10 to 20-minute break between blocks of time.

I have applied this technique during my exam study, when writing and when preparing presentations. I normally manage three to four blocks each day and have found it to be most beneficial.

Looking at the typical working day it would make sense to start the day off with two of these blocks; hence moving meetings to the afternoon.

If you have projects, reports to write and research to read then do not expect any major progress unless you achieve this benchmark every day.

Limit your rocks to no more than five

Joel Spolsky, co-founder of Trello and CEO of Stack Overflow, developed the Rule of Five. The concept is that no person should ever have more than five tasks on their to-do list at any given time. Whilst your list may hold more tasks, it might be useful to highlight your five key tasks.

Companion pieces in other chapters

Embrace SCRUM meetings on all projects

Invest time to explore "Action Meetings"

Comments

This piece is a good life lesson which I will apply.

Dad, I have realised that I prioritise the sand too much. Great advice, thanks.

9. Become a time master

Girls, a dear friend who sadly died, prematurely, gave me this advice "*Be ruthless with time and kind to people*". He was one of the most efficient people I have ever met. Yet, he always made time to communicate. Here are some tips to enable you to become more efficient.

15 second rule for short term "to do" actions

I am a member of a dining club and I need to pay fees at each dinner I attend. It is a task I always leave to later, until I get chased up and am embarrassed into action. Murray, a successful businessman, told me about the '15 second rule'. When you realise you must do something you have 15 seconds to take some action or resign yourself to having to think about it again, some other time.

I researched this suggestion and found that the prefrontal cortex holds a thought for 15 seconds, these thoughts are like "the brain's Post-it notes", and they fall off if you do not action them.

I am now an avid follower of the 15 second rule. When working on an important 'rock task' I am normally focused enough to avoid these thoughts. However, when working on general issues, if a thought crosses my mind, I now ask, "Do I want to complete this easy task or think about it again?" Invariably I do the task.

Move to a stand-up desk with three screens

One common response I find when asking workshop attendees who have three screens, if they would go back to working with one or two screens is a resounding "*Hell, No!*"

In this picture you see that I have a stand-up desk with three screens. The middle one being my laptop. I would have four, except it would cut out my sea view.



If you have only one or two screens you are driving a model T Ford in the 21st century. Try three screens for a week you will never go back. Please note I am not suggesting that you use one for your emails. I have suggested in the third series that these are to be reviewed only two or three times a day starting at 10.30 am.

Research points out that stand-up desks will increase life expectancy and your productivity. Interestingly, from a reputable study, the findings were quite damning. They found if you sit for more than eight hours a day you have a:

- 91% increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- 14% increased risk of heart disease
- 15% increased risk of early death

Interestingly, no amount of exercise in the early morning or after work can eradicate the damage caused by sitting for this length of time.

I now only use my chair for 40% of the time. Search the web for "Health benefits + standing desks" for more information.

Never move a meeting because you are busy

I learnt this lesson when I was a consultant in London. It had snowed and the four inches that settled on the road brought chaos, laughable to those in snow ravaged countries of Europe. We were to meet the client at their premises. The client cancelled as he was stuck at home.

The executive said we can visit you at home. We spent the whole day getting there and back. On the trip back I asked the executive, *"Why did we not move it to another day, it would have been more efficient."* He responded, *"When you move a meeting, you have rolled that commitment into another day."* These words have resonated in my mind for the last 30 years. Every time when it looks easier to move the meeting to another date the executive's advice comes back to me and I avoid the temptation to cancel the meeting. Every time, afterwards I reflect and thank that partner for the sound advice.

Have a meditation walk, swim, or run during the day

In order to create some thinking time in a busy day we can learn from the naturalist, geologist and biologist, Charles Darwin. Besides working in two-hour blocks, he always went on a meditation walk every day. The importance here is that it is done during the day and is not to be seen as a workout. It is a simple 20-minute mental exercise. A lunchtime run and swim can also do the same albeit you need to remember what you have thought about.



In Darwin's case he walked on an all-weather track around his property. The importance of the repetition is that you can perform the task in a semi hypnotic state, leaving your mind to wander. He always had his black book with him where he would note down his thoughts. This is where he first came up with the "tree of life".

Limit your bingeing on boxset series if you want to achieve

I have a Netflix subscription and I have enjoyed a series or two. Nothing more than four episodes.

The problem is most series are not four episodes but forty. They are in reality Coronation Street but in medieval times, or in a war story or in a space odyssey. In other words, the story is so stretched out that it is designed for people who have watched at least three episodes on the straight and are thus zombies.

Don't complain that you do not have time when one series has chewed through 90 hours of your time.

Companion pieces in other chapters

Embrace SCRUM meetings on all projects

Invest time to explore "Action Meetings"

Once a week take two hours out to shape your future

Comments

Uncle, meditation has been a new and valuable addition to my life. I have also reduced my Netflix time giving me a huge increase of 'me-time'.

Some of the best moments of my life have been bingeing a series. Get a life Dad, give it a go.

Dad, I often move and re-arrange meetings in the aim of optimising, but I see now that it's putting off the work to later.

10. Why you should eat a frog every morning

Girls, How often do you have a task that you need and want to do but you find every reason why you should not start it? This is procrastination. Studies have revealed that procrastination is an issue of self-regulation failure and is a risk factor not only for poor mental health, but also poor physical health and other aspects of well-being.

"Nearly 25% of adults around the world are chronic procrastinators," according to research conducted by Joseph Ferrari, Professor of psychology at DePaul University and author of the book *"Still Procrastinating: The No Regrets Guide to Getting It Done."*



Here is a cure. Eat a 'frog' every morning. It will change your life.

Mark Twain once said that, "If you eat a frog first thing in the morning, you know that the rest of your day will be better because the worst is behind you". Your frog is your worst task, and you should do it first thing in the morning.

Far too often we dread a task (Mark Twain's frog), perceiving that it is either nearly impossible or we simply hate doing it. It creates a dark mood that impacts our ability to focus and complete other tasks.

I learnt on a self-development course to ask myself, when I wake up in the morning, *"What don't I want to do today"*. The subconscious will answer you back honestly. Your task, when you arrive at work, is to do that very thing that is unpalatable to you. Make that call, organise that appointment, give that reprimand or write that report you have been avoiding. Two things will happen: the feared task will not be so hard to complete, and you will feel much lighter as this great weight is lifted off you. Try eating a frog a day – I hope you find it as useful as I have.

Comments

Watch out frogs I am on to you.

I am vegan, but I get the point, Dad.

I hate how much I procrastinate on tasks I inevitably have to do. Good advice Dad.

17. Use the law of attraction to turbo charge your life

As I approached my thirties it became clear that I was carrying a lot of baggage. It was affecting my work and home life. Your mother, who had studied psychology at university, suggested that we enrol in a course called "Turning Point."

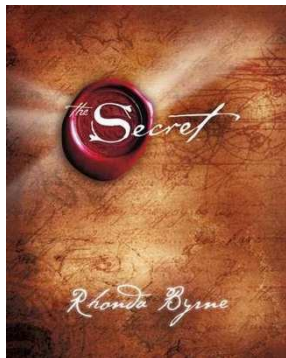
We assembled in a large room with around 60 others. We were to spend the weekend together from 9am to 9pm and go through numerous exercises designed to bring our guard down and deal with any baggage with anger, love (too little or too much), sadness, negativity, grieving etc.

The "Turning Point" coaches had created such a safe place throughout the weekend that individuals "came-out" for the first time about the drama that was holding them back from leading fulfilling lives.

In this same course, we talked about the importance of the subconscious and Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP). It was explained that it is such a primitive part of the brain and that it had not evolved for over 100,000 years. The coaches talked about how visualisation is so important to the subconscious. They even fixed my parking problem forever. They told us if we all, before we set off in the car, visualised a free parking space, we will find it. I tried this technique and became so good at it I went to the next level visualising a parking space with money still in the parking meter.

Learn to picture the future you want to have

If you picture no spare parking spaces that is what your subconscious will deliver. You will miss the person crossing the road who has just unlocked their car door, you will miss the reversing lights of a driver preparing to leave, you will even drive past an empty space. That is what you asked for, a parking problem.



Your subconscious never sleeps. If you place visions in there it will work away 24/7 and guide you in your waking hours towards these visualised outcomes. View Tony Robbins "The Magic of Visualization - Law of Attraction" on YouTube and read Rhonda Byrne's book "The Secret" which has sold over 10 million copies and received very positive feedback.

Surely you can remember a time of peak performance, working on a major project or training for a sporting event, when you were so time efficient. Now, when you look back you wonder how was it possible. You had simply gone into that period with the positive mantra "I can do this." That mantra had then become the reality.

NLP training

As a bare minimum I recommend you re-programme your brain by having some sessions with a recommended NLP specialist regarding:

- Areas in your life that are full of negative thoughts or caught in a spiral of addiction. Where you are programming yourself for failure. The NLP specialist will help you create a barrier to these thoughts and replace them with an "I can do this" attitude.
- Your daily commute. Consider it now a treasured time. Use train and plane trips to listen to audio books and car trips to practise your next presentation or interview.

- Your ability with a hobby, sport, or technology.

Comments

This section inspired me to review Tim Robbins "The Magic of Visualization - Law of Attraction" on YouTube. I could not stop and have seen many more of his recordings. A must review for all us who are looking to improve ourselves.

Dad, what if I imagine a surfer hulk at the beach who becomes besotted with me, can the law of attraction work on that for me? Joking aside I will attend a NLP course.

18. Have a reason to jump out of bed every morning

Girls, thank you for pointing out *Ikigai* (pronounced Ick-ee-guy). Translated it means "life's purpose". It is a holistic, altruistic way to see more meaning in your life. *Ikigai* is also about finding joy, fulfilment, and balance in the daily routines of life. In other words, it is a guiding force.

The Japanese island of Okinawa, where *Ikigai* has its origins, is said to be home to the largest population of centenarians in the world. Studies have shown that people with a greater sense of purpose live longer, sleep better, have less strokes and less depression. Let's get a piece of this magic girls, let's do our *Ikigai* as a priority.

Ikigai is seen as the convergence of four primary elements. In *Ikigai* nothing is siloed, everything is connected. The four elements are:

- What you love to do (your passions)
- Where you can help your community / the world (your legacy to the world)
- What talents you have that could be turned into remarkable strengths (your vocation)
- The meaningful work you can do that will reward you adequately.

The exercise will require you to document your thoughts in a secure area of your computer. The visual side of this will be a treasure map for the next 12 months which is discussed in the next section in this chapter.

My first experience of having a life's purpose was when at aged 16 I knew I would never be a professional golfer, my initial focus for the previous three years. I simply was not good enough. Besides, I realized after working in a golf professional's shop, on a school sponsored job experience, that as a career it had no future, and I would be bored. Shortly afterwards I knew that I wanted to be an accountant as it was like getting a passport, that I wanted to obtain qualification through the degree route and needed desperately to get out of Reading which back then I saw as a prison.

Getting to University, a task which was easy for some, was made difficult as I am dyslexic. There was no extra reading time during exams, no special quiet room, or a reader /writer sitting next to me. The only way I was going to be one of the rare pupils from my school that made it to university was to be totally focused on studying, often saying 'No' to my friend's invites to the pub or card games.

How to get started on your *Ikigai* map

From the study I have done I would recommend the following steps.

1. Write your life's purpose as you currently would like it to be. A story with you in it. What you want to achieve, what differences you want to make, what legacy you want to leave. You will need to rewrite this at least once a year and eventually be able to say it with conviction in a 20-second elevator ride. The more altruistic it is, the more you picture it, the more it will become a reality. The key to this process is that it will help you break free from any self-defeating cycles of negative thinking. The future story will energise you to take action in the intended direction.
2. Make plans to start your journey while in your current situation. The experts suggest you start a side-hustle, to gain some skills. You actually have more time than you think if you cut down on TV and other escapism activities and utilise the hours from 6-8AM and 6-8PM.

When I found that nobody, in the world, had written a book in a special area of performance management I planned a new life story. It included writing the definitive book on how to develop, implement and use _____. I would leave my office in the early afternoon and head home to do more research. The first edition took me seven years. The subsequent editions less than a year each. The delay in the first edition was because the book was a side-hustle and had to be fitted around my consulting and writing articles. Eventually these side-hustles became income generators. Four editions later I am getting closer to the finished product but am still on the journey.

3. List what you love to do (your passions), and what talents you have that could be turned into remarkable strengths (your vocation). I have a section on ascertaining your talents so this step should not be too difficult. You now have two parts of the puzzle worked out. Your future lies in doing something you love to do and that utilises your talents.
4. Now to start the search, if necessary, to finding that job that suits you better. I have a section on this so you are not alone on this journey. In the meantime, start thinking about what meaningful work you can do that will reward you adequately and be in the general direction of your life's journey. Now you will, after time, start to get closer to that type of work. This journey takes time.
5. Attend a course and learn through others to ensure your life's purpose is robust. To find a course search Ikigai + workshop+ _____ (the city you live in or the nearest one).
6. With your Ikigai now break the direction you want to go into a series of goals that you attend to achieve in the next 12 months. I call this a treasure map, and this is explained in the next section.

In my life I have found that many of those side career journeys I took suddenly made sense when my Ikigai became clear, which is in reality, your 'Road to Damascus' moment. In my career I took the following side journeys:

- As an auditor I saw how many different businesses worked, gain a skill of being able to sift through data to get to the core reasons. And I learnt how to communicate with executives.
- As an accountant for small businesses, I met a variety of entrepreneurs.
- I spent a year marketing three inventions into large markets – unsuccessfully.
- I set up a benchmarking enterprise where I learnt more about better practices that gave me much content for my workshops, articles and books.
- I wrote many articles that honed my writing skills that eventually led to me writing four different titles for an American Publisher.
- My love of travelling had exposed me to many different cultures so going on speaking tours was less threatening.

So I ended up where I am now wanting to change how progressive organisations, around the world, measure and manage performance.

How to stay true to your Ikigai map

To stay true to your Ikigai here are ten simple things that have been suggested by a collection of writers.

1. Update your Ikigai every year along with your goals in your treasure map.

2. Invest time in mastering time management, especially working in the non-urgent but important quadrant, embracing abandonment, and learning to saying no to activities that are sharing your Ikigai pathway. See the relevant sections on these points.
3. Only eat until you are 80 per cent full. This appears to be a Japanese way of eating. Being overweight will seldom find its way on to your Ikigai map.
4. Develop hobbies, interests and organise social events so you are surrounded with friends who are also on a 'life pathway', albeit different to yours and who are joyful to be with.
5. Embrace some form of daily regime where you get some gentle exercise. As well as the obvious health benefits, it will be an activity that is consistent with your Ikigai and thus helping reinforce your self -regulation and self-control.
6. Smile and acknowledge people around you. It is interesting to note that a human being is wired to return a smile.
7. Reconnect with mother nature. Be like your Auntie and hug a tree. Smell the roses, close your eyes and face the sun, let a sunset envelop you. You know what I am talking about.
8. Give thanks to anything that brightens your day and makes you feel alive. I like to sing the Who's "Love rain on me rain on me when I enter the sea, especially when it is cold or raining. See the YouTube clip of the song from film 'Quadrophenia'.
9. Help strangers, write letters of appreciation, help organise gatherings of your neighbours or local community. Studies have shown that 'random acts of kindness' to others strengthen the well-being in the person performing the act.
10. Every week review your treasure map and undertake those tasks that you can do that week. This will ensure that you are on your Ikigai.

Companion pieces in other chapters

Become a time master

Develop healthy regimes that work to support you

Play to your natural talents- and stop focusing on your weaknesses

When should I change my career

Comment

Dad, I should get some of the royalties as I introduced you to Ikigai.

19. Have a treasure map to give your life direction

Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) is based on the premise that the subconscious is programmable. Read any self-help book and ask any achiever, and they will tell you that visualization is the key. The more you picture the precise goals you want to achieve, the more you will achieve. You can use this trait to your advantage by building your own treasure map.

For a treasure map you need an A3 page, where you set out how you envisage success will be like with your life partner, your family, your friends, your home, your hobbies, your self-development and spirituality, your health and wellbeing, your career, your savings and your life's legacy. State the goals and glue pictures to help you visualize the outcomes you seek. The more pictures the better, pictures from magazines and journals are an excellent source, e.g., If you want to be fitter, then a picture of a person similar to you with the body shape to which you aspire. If you want to practise yoga daily, then a picture of a person, like you, doing yoga, etc.

My first treasure map had a picture of a particular motorbike, a BMW R100RS, which is reasonably rare. Two years later I owned the exact replica of the bike in the photo, even the same paint combination. It has now been in my possession for over 25 years.

Three years ago, I fell in love with a rare car, I put the picture in front of my desk. After searching for it for three years I, being reminded to again look for it, found it on a car site. It was the very car that I had found a year prior but missed it by a couple of months. The car is now in my garage and brings me immense joy.

In his book, "To the Top", Sir Edmund Hillary comments that he had visualized summiting Mount Everest in his own mind many times. The great golfer, Jack Nicklaus, commented that he always visualized the precise flight of the ball before he commenced his swing.

Have the treasure map somewhere you can see it every day

The treasure map needs to be stuck on a door or a wall where you can see it each day. Whilst you will probably only look at it two to three times a week it will move you into taking action. Making that call, reviewing the internet, booking that one-way ticket to your new country.

Have a special day, once a year to set up next year's treasure map

Initially, you may want to change and amend your treasure map two or three times in the first year; in subsequent years you may find that an annual update is sufficient.

A useful technique is to pick a special day each year to update and revise your treasure map. I use my birthday to redo my treasure map and make a point of never working on it.

The treasure map is for you

While you will want to have things on it that your partner agrees with, it is not meant to be a treasure map for two, as this typically will delay the implementation.

It is important to note that this treasure map is yours and thus it is put in a private place for your eyes only. I used to have mine on the inside of my closet door.