

STUCK IN A RUT?

TOP 8 STRATEGIES FOR GETTING MORE **OUT OF YOUR LIFE**

*Half empty
or
Half full?*



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INTRODUCTION

Have you created the life you intended? Or are you stuck in a rut of living a far cry from what you planned? It's so easy to get just a little bit off-track each year.

After a decade passes, you can be so far off-course that you don't have any idea how to get back. Even worse, you might not even be sure what you really want anymore.

This short book provides 8 excellent strategies to help you get more out of your life. All of the strategies are very simple; some are even quite easy.

You'll discover how to find your passion, simplify your life, set goals, get back in shape, and be happier and more positive as you live your life according to what's most important to *you*.

Applying these strategies consistently is guaranteed to result in a more fulfilling life that you'll be happy and proud to call your own.

Let's get started...

FINDING YOUR PASSION

Following your passion can sometimes be challenging, as well as rewarding, but it can be even more difficult to figure out what it is in the first place.

As children, we all wanted to be an astronaut or fireman, a princess or ballerina. Right? No child said, "I want to work in a warehouse someday." ***Our passions got lost along the way.***

If you love your work, you'll never have to work a day. Think about how much better your life would be if you actually enjoyed getting up and heading out the door each day. Consider how much the people around you would benefit if you were happy and excited about your life.

Try these tips to find your way back to your passion:

1. **What do you get really excited about?** Maybe there is some small aspect of your job that you really love. Maybe it's a hobby or some facet of volunteer work that you do. Spend a day or two pondering the stuff that really gets you excited and motivated. ***Make a list of what you love most.***
2. **What do you fantasize about?** Do you secretly dream of being an actor or a pilot? Would you like to own a nightclub? Maybe you want to go back to school and become a doctor or a lawyer. Put these

items on the list too.

3. **Do some research.** Pick the most exciting option from your list and look into it. Talk to some people that are already doing it. Would you have to go back to school? How long would it likely take before you could support yourself? Read and study.
4. **Try it out.** In whatever way you can, try actually doing it and see how you like it. Granted, you can't pretend you're a doctor, but you can volunteer at a hospital or a clinic. You can even shadow a doctor or med student. If you think you'd like to be a pilot, pay the \$100 and take a short flight lesson at your local municipal airport.
 - ◆ Get enough experience to figure out if it is something you'd really like to do every day.
5. **Repeat the previous two steps with 2-4 more options.** Don't pull the trigger until you've checked out at least a few more of your choices. You don't really know for sure what something is like until you've tried it firsthand.
6. **Pick one.** Think about which activity you could happily see yourself doing for the long-term. Pick the best one and then go with it.

Finding your passion is one of the keys to enjoying your life.

Don't think that you have to continue doing what you're doing for the rest of your life. Everyone has more options available than they realize.

Discover your passion, make it an important part of your life, and you'll have a life that you truly feel is worth living.

*"The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line
between work and play."*

- Arnold Toynbee

SIMPLIFYING YOUR LIFE

Most of us have more stuff, obligations, priorities, people and mental clutter than allow us to perform optimally.

If you can get rid of all the excess in your life, it's much easier to focus on the things that are most important to you. Odds are you have a significant amount of various types of clutter that you can purge from your life.

Consider cleaning out your clutter in these areas:

1. **Surroundings:** Few things make it easier to concentrate than getting rid of the physical clutter in your environment. The easiest way to do this is to go one room at time. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - ◆ *"Do I really need/use this item?"* If it's not something you've used in the last year and you don't really see yourself using anytime soon (be realistic), then it's probably something that you would be better off without.
 - ◆ *"Do I love this item?"* Sometimes we have things that we truly love even though they might not be useful things. ***If you love it, then keep it.*** If it's just 'okay', then get rid of it and consider replacing it with something that you love.
 - ◆ ***Ideally, everything you own should either be genuinely useful to you or something that you love.*** Anything else is just getting in your way.
2. **Mind:** Unless you're very fortunate or have a lot of practice, odds are that you have a lot of mental clutter that dramatically limits your ability to focus. The ability to focus on the task at hand not only makes you much more effective, it's much more relaxing than the alternative.
 - ◆ ***Consider learning to meditate.*** While meditation looks like a person sitting on a pillow trying not to fall asleep, it's really about learning to concentrate 100% on what you're doing at any given

moment. So, if you're at a movie with a friend, you're not thinking about anything except that movie and being out with your friend.

- ◆ Make a list of all the little annoyances in your life. Maybe your car pulls a little to the left or the front door to your house sticks when it rains. Perhaps you have a phone call that needs to be made but you just don't want to make it. Write down all of these minor, nagging things and vow to resolve at least one each day.
- ◆ Come up with a plan for dealing with the larger stressors and uncertainties in your life. Whether it's family, work, or something else. You might as well deal with it now instead of 6 months from now. Get rid of as many distractions as you possibly can.

3. **Schedule:** Most of us are over-scheduled. ***If you have too many things to do, you won't have sufficient time to dedicate to the truly important things.***

- ◆ The solution is to prioritize. If a stranger looked at your schedule, he should be able to figure out what your priorities are. So prioritize the items you currently have in your schedule. Odds are that the items at the bottom are optional.
- ◆ Eliminate the items from your schedule that don't really need to be there. Perhaps some of them could be deleted by enlisting some help with some things. Maybe someone could do your

shopping or run other errands for you.

- ◆ Remember that the truly successful person is the one that spends as much time as possible on things he enjoys.

It's important to get rid of all the clutter in your life, whether that clutter is physical, mental, or your schedule. Getting rid of all this background noise and time constraint is a key component to getting more out of your life.

*"The simplification of life is one of the steps to inner peace.
A persistent simplification will create an inner and outer
well-being that places harmony in one's life."*

- Peace Pilgrim

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Most of us have a lot of chatter going on in our minds and much of it is negative, resulting in a feeling of "I can't."

Obviously, this isn't good if we're trying to get the most out of our lives. If you can't tame your self-talk, life is much more difficult. However, ***if you create a mental environment full of positive self-talk, you'll be happier and much more successful.***

These techniques will help you get your negative self-talk under control and foster a positive mental environment, instead:

1. **Learn to focus on what you're doing.** At all times, make an effort to only think about what you're currently doing. In spite of what many people believe, we can only effectively think about one thing at a time. We are good at rapidly switching back and forth between multiple items, however.
2. **Recognize negative thoughts.** No matter how good your focus is, there will still be times that negative thoughts make their way into your consciousness. ***The trick is to recognize that it's happening and then calmly turn your thoughts back to your current task.***
3. **Take control.** If you're doing an activity that lends itself to a wandering mind, like driving down the highway for 300 miles, you can intentionally focus your thoughts on positive self-talk. A good place to start would be the opposite of the negative self-talk that you too often experience. Your positive self-talk becomes the truth over time.

4. **Think of times the opposite is true.** So the next time you think, *"I'm not good at being sociable,"* think about the times in your life when you *were* sociable. Strive to find proof of the opposite and remind yourself of those times every time the negative self-talk pops up.

Negative self-talk is extremely common, but it's largely just a bad habit. ***You can control your thoughts.*** Have the intention of focusing on the task at hand and replace the negative self-talk with positive. It takes time, but it really is that simple.

"We all have voices in our heads, which talk to us on an almost constant basis. Our voices give us messages continually, and what they say to us affects us."

- Juliene Berk

OPTIMISM

While being a little skeptical can prevent others from taking advantage of us, taking it to the point of being pessimistic has no positive value. Not only is it unpleasant to have that perspective on life, but it can also

cause you to miss numerous opportunities. Pessimistic people have even been shown to have a greater chance of developing serious illnesses.

If you've been pessimistic for a while, it can take time and effort to shift your focus. Here's how to do it:

1. **Understand that the world is *not* against you.** You are no more special than anyone else, but you're not any less special either. You can be confident that the universe is not conspiring against you. Make the right decisions and good things are likely the result. Make poor decisions, and things tend to not go well.
2. **The past has nothing to do with the future.** However, it does equal the future if you continue doing things the same way. ***Change your actions and your results change.*** But the fact that you've been unsuccessful at something in the past means nothing about your ability to be successful in the future. Each day is a new day.
3. **Realize that you are a cause, not an effect.** Your current life and surroundings are a result of your past actions. They're not something that happened to you; things are the way they are usually because of something that you did – a choice that you made. You can do things differently and get better results.

4. **Regularly repeat positive affirmations.** Pessimistic folks have a lot of negative self-talk. Get some positive self-talk going in your favor. Think about some positive beliefs that would serve you well and then develop affirmations to support them. Repeat them morning, noon, and night.

5. **Life is short.** Take advantage of the time you have to create enjoyment in your life. ***The more you consciously choose what you want to do with your life and do it, the more optimism you develop toward your future.***

6. **Measure yourself every day.** Come up with a scale to measure how positive you were during the day. Make a note of the times you were pessimistic and create a plan to do better next time. Also make note of the times you were optimistic and be proud of yourself.

Having an optimistic view of the world is not only more enjoyable for you, but it also makes it more enjoyable for others to be around you, too. You're also in a much better position to spot the opportunities that life constantly presents to you and take the best advantage to get all the gusto you can out of life.

Just like negative self-talk is a habit, being pessimistic is a habit, too. It's a more pervasive habit, so it will require more time and effort to change. But you *can* change.

*"For me optimism is two lovers walking into the sunset arm in arm.
Or maybe into the sunrise - whatever appeals to you."*

- Krzysztof Kieslowski

FEELING GRATITUDE

A great habit to have in your life is thinking about all the things for which you're thankful. ***It only takes about 2 minutes a day and can have a profound impact on your life.*** You'll feel happier and attract more things to be grateful about.

Gratitude:

- ◆ ***Serves as a reminder of all the good things in your life.*** If you're focusing on good things, life just feels better. But it goes beyond the short amount of time that you spend thinking about the things that make you grateful; it permeates your whole outlook on life.
- ◆ ***Makes the bad things better.*** If work has gotten you down, think about the aspects of your job for which you're grateful. You'll be surprised how your attitude and feelings change when you focus

for a few minutes on the positive aspects of something that you don't feel great about at the moment.

- ◆ **Helps you see the big picture.** It will remind of what's most important, whether it be your family, friends, church, hobbies, or something else. It's a lot easier to deal with a grumpy boss when you remind yourself of your beautiful children and the fact that you're healthy. These are much more important to you than his grumpiness.

Using these strategies can bring you a life full of gratitude:

1. **Have a daily gratitude session.** Take 2-3 minutes on your way to work or on the way home. Ask yourself what you're grateful for. If you can't think of anything, then ask yourself what you COULD be grateful for.
 2. **Get in the habit of saying thank you.** Be grateful for things and you'll receive more things for which you can be grateful.
 3. **Be thankful for the negative stuff, too.** We are all much more than we would've become because of the negative things that we've experienced along the way. Think about the challenges you're having now and try to see the good in them.
- ◆ If you feel overworked, you're being given the chance to learn how to organize and prioritize your work. If you're having a health

challenge, perhaps you're being forced to diet and exercise properly for the first time ever. We grow the most when under some sort of duress.

Cultivating gratitude is being focused on the good parts of your life. It will help with your optimism and help you to see the potential advantages of the challenges that you're currently facing.

Remember to find a few minutes each day to remind yourself about all the great things in your life. Before and after work is great time since those might be the two times you need it the most.

"Develop an attitude of gratitude, and give thanks for everything that happens to you, knowing that every step forward is a step toward achieving something bigger and better than your current situation."

- Brian Tracy

TAKING TIME FOR YOU

Just because it's not all about you doesn't mean it's never about you. We all need time for ourselves to unwind and enjoy doing the things we like to do. It sometimes seems impossible to find the time, considering the obligations with work, family, community obligations, friends, children, and more, but it's important to carve that time out of your schedule.

Try these ideas to make it happen:

1. **Put time for yourself on your schedule.** It's common to take whatever time is leftover after all the other obligations have been met. This also just about guarantees that there won't be any time leftover for you, so put it into your planner. A failure to schedule it suggests that it's not important and things that aren't important don't happen.
2. **Find something worthwhile to do with the time.** It should be something that you love to do. Maybe it's just 30 minutes to watch the news in peace, and that's okay. Ideally, you'll find something fun and interesting. Perhaps you could take up a musical instrument or peruse the local bookstore. It's your time; it's up you.
3. **Realize that much of the time you spend really is your time.** For example, time spent with your children really is your time. If you'll

keep yourself in the moment and genuinely try to enjoy it versus thinking about 10 other things, you'll see that it really is your time and not just theirs.

4. **Understand the importance of “me” time.** When we don't have any time to ourselves, we tend to feel overwhelmed and out of balance. Realizing just how important it really is will lessen any feelings of guilt and make it more likely to be scheduled.
5. **Get the rest of your life organized.** If the rest of your life is less chaotic, it's easier to find the time for you. There are tons of great books and resources out there about how to get organized; use them.
6. **Consider how it will benefit those around you.** This isn't just for you; it's for everyone around you, too. You'll be happier and feel a better sense of balance in your life. If you're happier, everyone around you will be happier, too. If you're more patient, your partner, children and work associates will benefit, too.
7. **It gives you the chance to change your life.** Thirty minutes a day might not sound like a lot, but it's about 175 hours a year. That's over 4 full workweeks. Think what you could accomplish with that time. You could start a business or learn a language or some other skill. ***175 hours dedicated to one purpose that's important to you could be huge.***

Take time for you. It not only benefits you, it benefits everyone else in your life, too. Remember, sometimes it *is* about you.

"Training gives us an outlet for suppressed energies created by stress and thus tones the spirit just as exercise conditions the body."

- Arnold Schwarzenegger

ACHIEVING GOALS

Not having goals is choosing to live by default. If you don't have anything that you're choosing to move toward, you're just living in limbo. The only time you'll really leap into action is when something goes wrong that needs to be fixed.

Life is like a sand castle; it slowly disintegrates unless you keep putting energy into it.

It's much better to put the energy into making your life better, rather than waiting for disaster and then spending the energy to get back to the status quo.

Following these strategies will have you achieving goals on a regular basis:

1. **Make a goal.** Consider the following as you reflect on the lifestyle you desire:
 - ◆ What would you like to be doing every day? Would you be going to a specific type of job? Do you want to work for yourself? Do you want to work at home? How much free time would you have? How would you spend that free time?
 - ◆ How much money do you want to make?
 - ◆ Where would you like to live? What state / city? Would you live in the city or the country? Small house? Big house? Condo? High-rise?
 - ◆ What kind of body would you have? Would you be big and muscular? Thin? Average?
 - ◆ Now make some goals that will support having that lifestyle. Look at the ultimate result, but **set goals that can be reached in less than 12 weeks**; it's tough to stay focused longer than that. So divide your longer goals into multiple smaller goals of less than 12 weeks.

2. **Remove the obstacles.** Obstacles can be physical or psychological. If you want to lose weight, get the junk food out of the house. If you want to exercise, schedule time and join a gym. If you're filled with doubt, work on strengthening your confidence and optimism.

3. **Imagine successfully achieving your goal each day.** This is critical. It helps to prioritize your goal so that it stays in the front of your mind at all times. It also gives you the opportunity to spot any resistance.

4. **Deal with any resistance.** Think of resistance as any negative feelings you associate with the achievement or the process of achieving that goal. For example, you might want to earn a million dollars. But when most people think about accomplishing that, their thoughts aren't all positive. They might think:
 - ◆ *"I'm going to have to do something scary to earn it."*
 - ◆ *"My friends will treat me differently."*
 - ◆ *"My ex is going to take a lot of it."*
 - ◆ *"It will be hard."*
 - ◆ *"The taxes will kill me."*

- ◆ People that are naturally successful tend to lack a lot of these mental obstacles. People that struggle have a ton of them. Work on your mental objections and you'll be much more successful.

5. **Measure your progress.** Give yourself feedback on how you're doing. If you're trying to lose weight, weigh yourself and take some measurements regularly. If you're trying to earn a certain amount of money, then keep a daily total of how much money you've earned.

Keep track of where you are and how far you've come toward your goal.

Setting goals is huge part of being successful.

Determine your final destination and then set goals that support that vision. Visualize success and deal with the obstacles. Measure yourself. Then feel the pride of your accomplishments!

*A man has to have goals - for a day, for a lifetime -
and that was mine, to have people say,
'There goes Ted Williams, the greatest hitter who ever lived.'*

- Ted Williams

DIET AND EXERCISE

This might not be your favorite topic, but it's critical to getting more out of your life. A fit, healthy body will serve you in so many ways and makes everything else you want possible.

Diet

We'll start with diet because that seems to be the area with so much controversy. Eating right doesn't have to be complex.

Just keep a couple of things in mind:

1. **Eat the food that you know is good for you; limit the bad stuff.**

No unhealthy person is unhealthy because he or she eats too many fruits and vegetables. There is no sane diet that tells you that eating doughnuts and chips is the way to a healthier body. You know what's good for you and what's not.

◆ Your issue isn't lack of knowledge; it's usually a lack of self-control. Unless you're training for a bodybuilding contest or the Olympics, you probably already know enough about nutrition to maintain good health.

2. **Avoid drinking calories.** It's easy to get an overabundance of calories by drinking them. Try to limit your intake of high-calorie

beverages. Water is the best thing for you; green tea is great, too. Take it easy on the soda, juice, and alcohol.

3. **Eat slowly.** If you'll eat slower, you'll eat less. ***Take your time and enjoy your food.*** It's not a race.
4. **Eat a balanced diet.** There are so many vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients that you can't expect to get everything you need by eating the same things all the time. Eat a variety of foods.

*"Do you know how many calories are in butter
and cheese and ice cream?"*

*Would you get your dog up in the morning
for a cup of coffee and a donut?"*

- Jack LaLanne

Exercise

Exercise can be simple, too. **At the end of the day, you need 3 things:**

1. **Flexibility.** Most of us are not as flexible as we should be, and it seems to get a little worse each year. So take some time to do some simple stretches every day. You can attend a yoga class or follow a class on TV. It doesn't matter how you address your flexibility, but spend some time on it each day.
2. **Strength.** We lose muscle mass as we get older. This means you need to do some strength training or calisthenics on a regular basis. You can do this at home or the gym. Join a class or get a personal trainer if that helps. ***Just remember to work your entire body and strive to do a little more each week.***
3. **Cardiovascular fitness.** Four sessions of 30 minutes is about the best that you can do. Doing more than that has no positive impact on health; in fact, it has a negative impact on health because you increase the probability of suffering an injury. Unless you're training for a physical event, there's no reason to do more.
 - ◆ You could swim, walk briskly, ride a bike, use a treadmill, do aerobics, play tennis, play basketball, or other enjoyable sports. ***You're a lot more likely to do it if it's something that you have fun doing.***

- ◆ Remember that there's a difference between health and performance. A person that runs 2 miles a day can be every bit as healthy as someone that runs 15. In fact, the person that runs 2 miles a day is potentially healthier.

Diet and exercise tend to be controversial, but that's largely because it's a huge industry and all the gurus have to find a way to differentiate themselves. What else would they have to talk about?

Get the basics in order and see where that leads you. You can get more advanced as you see the progress you're making with just the basics.

"Happiness comes only when we push our brains and hearts to the farthest reaches of which we are capable."

- Leo Rosten

CONCLUSION

If you want to get more out of life, change the way you're currently living. Many folks fail to recognize that simple fact. You have to change what you do if you're going to change your circumstances.

A spectacular life is a life that is planned and lived with intention. Find your passion, design your future, and set your goals accordingly.

Goals are easier to achieve if all of the excess is removed from your life. This not only includes your physical environment, but also your mind and schedule. Don't get bogged down with things and thoughts that aren't essential to your happiness. Too much stuff just gets in the way and is distracting.

Be healthy. You have more options when you're in good shape. For best results with diet and exercise, food shouldn't be your sole source of entertainment and your source of exercise should be fun for you.

It's your life, and your journey is to see how great you can make it.

Remember that you are a cause, not an effect. You can create nearly anything. Even your challenging circumstances are often results of your own doing. That's great news! Since it's your 'fault', you can fix it!

Use these 8 strategies and your life will never be the same.

"Lead the life that will make you kindly and friendly to everyone about you, and you will be surprised what a happy life you will lead."

- Charles M. Schwab