
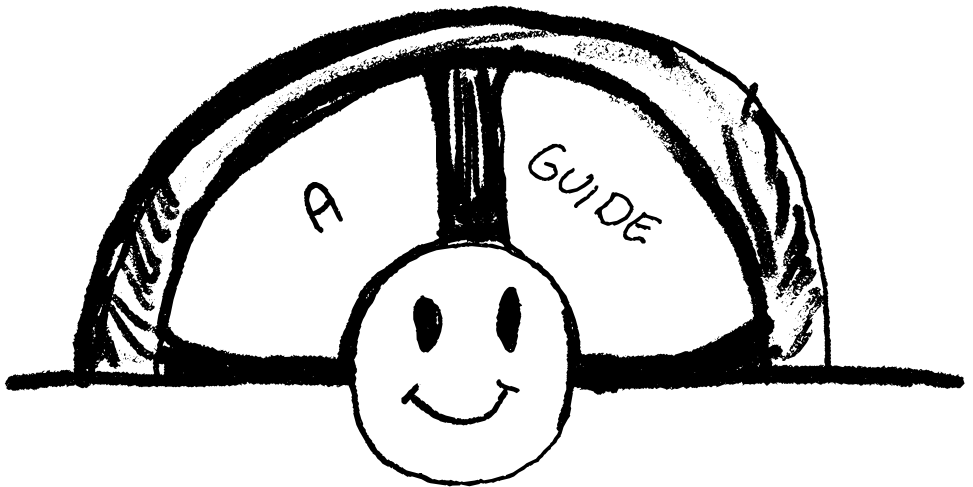


Grabbing
the 
wheel.



Getting off autopilot
and being happy in a
high anxiety time.

By Matt Durante


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Don't forget
to feed the fire.

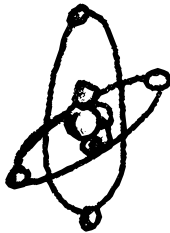


By Matt Durante

A dark, textured, hand-drawn shape, possibly a scribble or a stylized container, containing the text. The shape is roughly rectangular with irregular, feathered edges. The text is written in a white, cursive script. The background is white.

At the start
of everything
there is
nothing

And then it
happens.

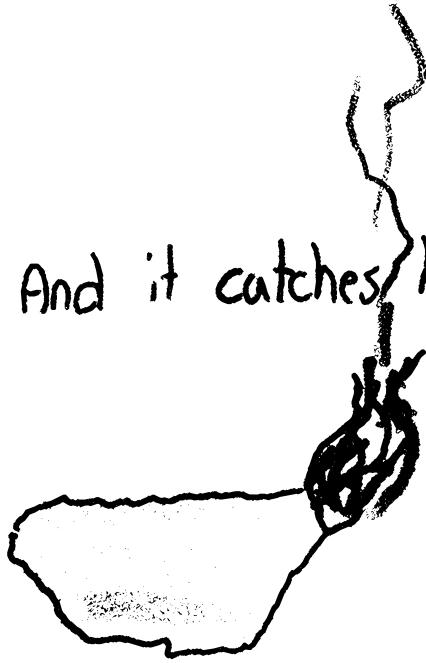


It starts small.

A little spark
of something.



And it catches hold.



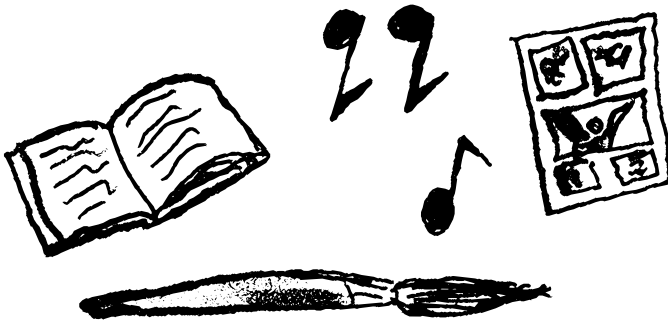
Like fire on a small
piece of paper.

)
And it grows.

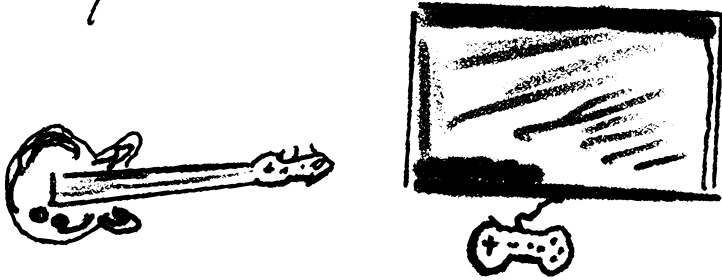


And will continue
to grow.

But...



Only if you feed it.



Then a
curious thing
happens...



A mystery for
the ages.

The fire.

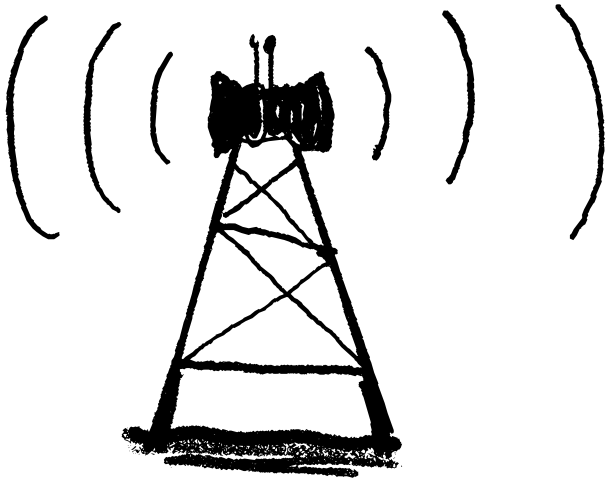
Whatever fire it may be...

It will continue to
grow.

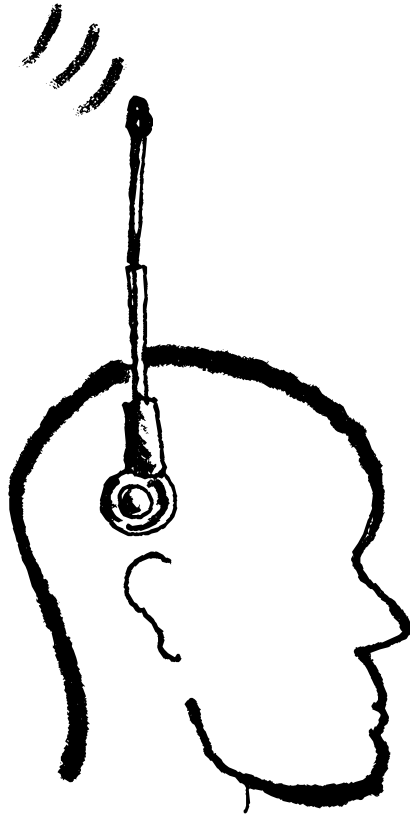


Until it outgrows you.

And it will start
to run through you
rather than from you.



Like it was broadcast
from a radio tower.



And you just
happen to receive it.

- And what started as nothing.
- And became a spark.
- And grew into a blaze.
- And took over your whole being.
- * Has become

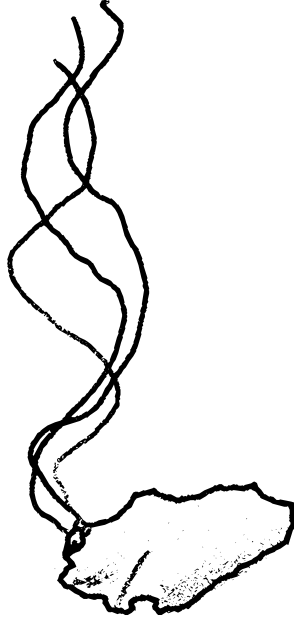
PURPOSE.



Explosive.
Unstoppable.
Immovable.
Inevitable.
Purpose.



So don't forget
to feed the fire.



The end

or...

A new beginning.

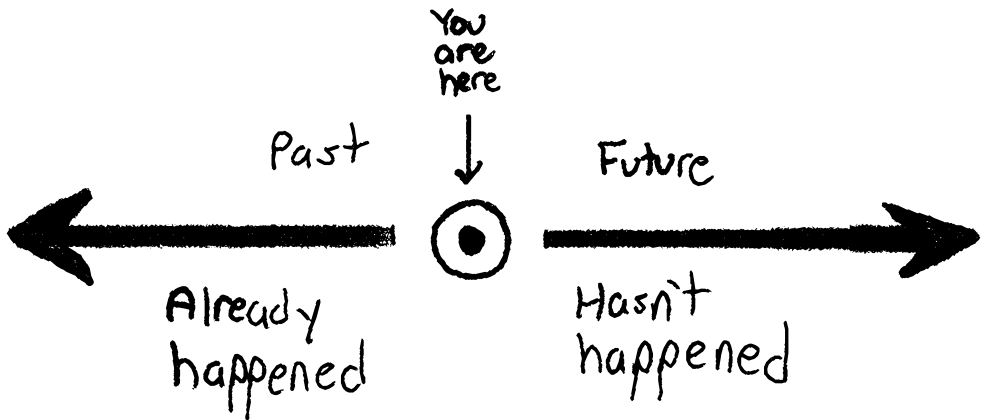
Right Now



A GUIDE

By Matt Durante

Right now,
The only thing that's
REAL.



Why would you spend so
much time worrying about
things that don't exist?



That's the
dumbest thing
I've ever
heard!

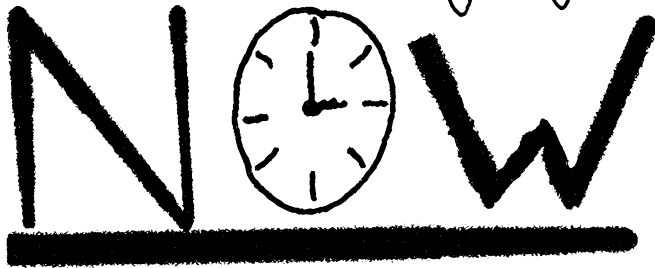
You mean to tell me
that the past and
the future don't mean
anything?

←
The past can help to
inform your present.

It teaches us lessons.

Both as a society and
individuals, the cumulative
choices over time led to
what is happening right

NOW



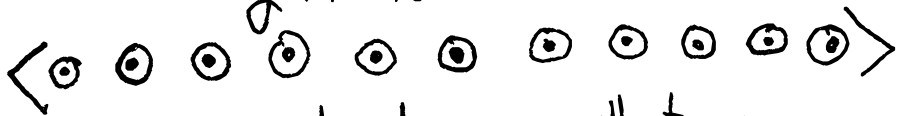
It is important but shouldn't
be worrisome because there
is NOTHING you can do to
change it.

It's over.

Gone.

No longer real.

We are, therefore, the
consequence of a series
of "right nows."



Things do happen that are
out of your control.

some good. some very bad,
😊 ☹️

Some might not seem fair.

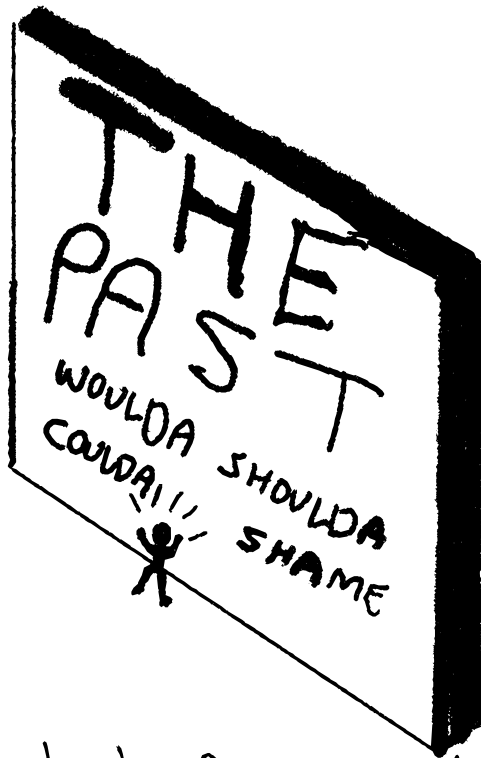
But no matter what.

When a moment ends, it is gone.

And if we choose to **rage**
against the past.

We are blocking progress
and our own happiness.

A person who wishes to change their past (regret) cannot move forward because they've built an impassable wall.



Instead of letting it go AND using it to inform their choices NOW.

Then there is the other
side of the coin.

worrying about the future. →



BUT!

#! \$ #

The future
is important.

Are you saying that my
goals and aspirations don't
matter?

What about the environment?

Make no mistake,
the future → matters a great
deal.

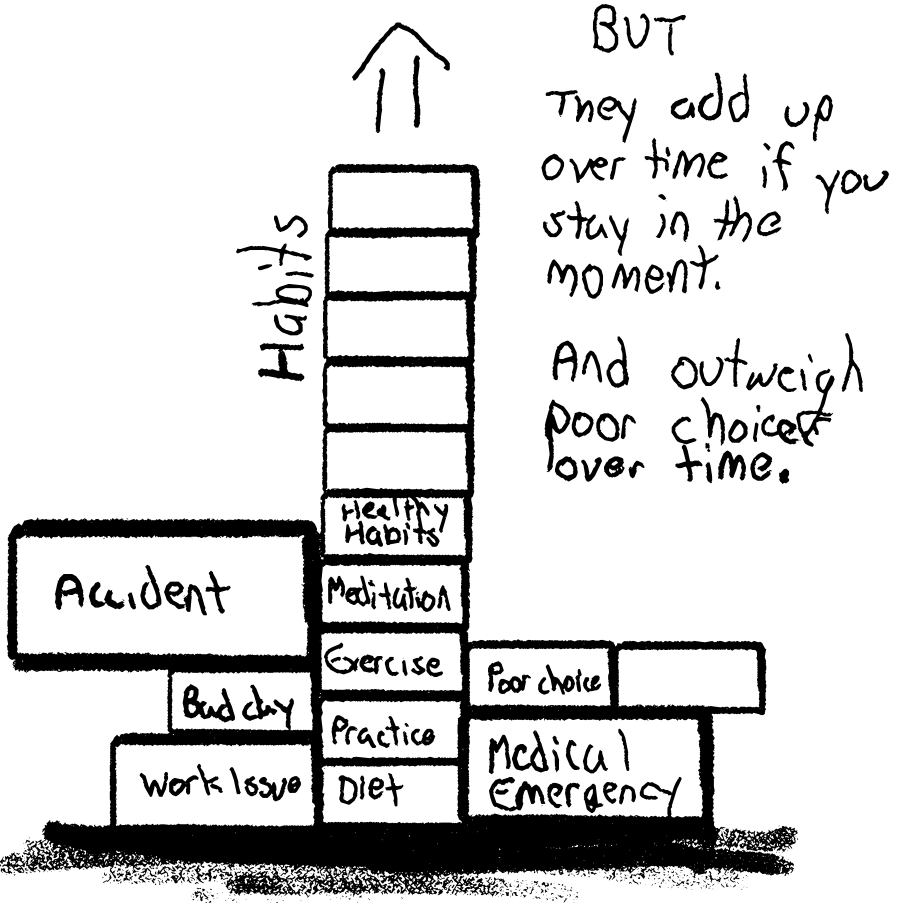


But it is our choices
NOW that affect it.

We use what we know
(including the past), to
inform the right choices
NOW to make the future
we want.



When we CHOOSE a healthy choice in the moment it's not always fun.



But you can't do that
if you don't move forward
from the past...

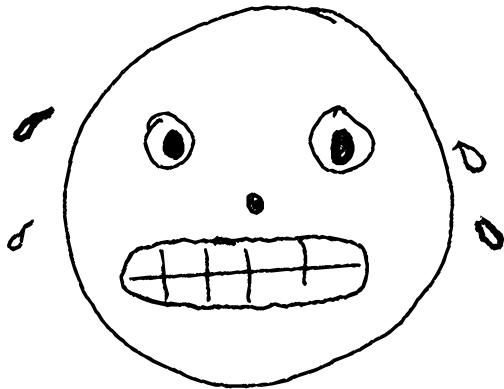
And BUILD for the future,
using what you learned
(good and bad)

Letting go is hard.
But you can.

You build for the future,
by doing the right thing
now. ☉

And that isn't the same
thing as worrying about
the future.

Or pulling the past with
you.



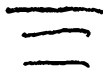
It's okay to consider
the past and the future.

BUT

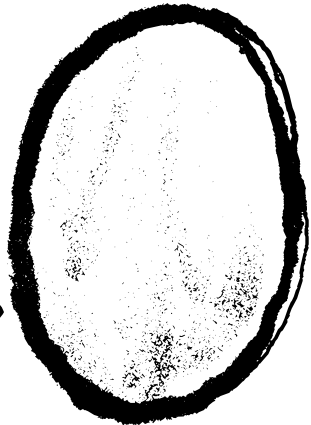
You waste effort by
spending too much time
focusing on it.

Because the ONLY
thing that's actually
real — the only thing
you can actually CONTROL

Is YOU.



Mirror →



- Not the "idiot you" that messed up yesterday.
- Not the you that had the accident.
- Not the you that got screwed over last year.
- Not the you that got fired.
- Not the you that drank too much.
- Not the you that wasted time.
- Not the you from 2nd grade that peed their pants.
- Not any past version of you.
- And not any imaginary future version of you.

Just the you that's

here ↓

Right now.

And now.

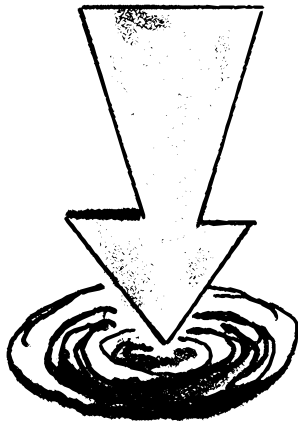
And now.

And now.

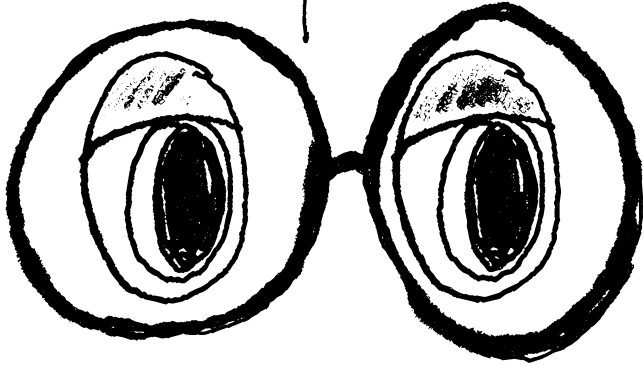
And now.

AND

NOW



Perspective




Framing your thoughts
and goals for optimal
RESULTS.

By Matt Durante

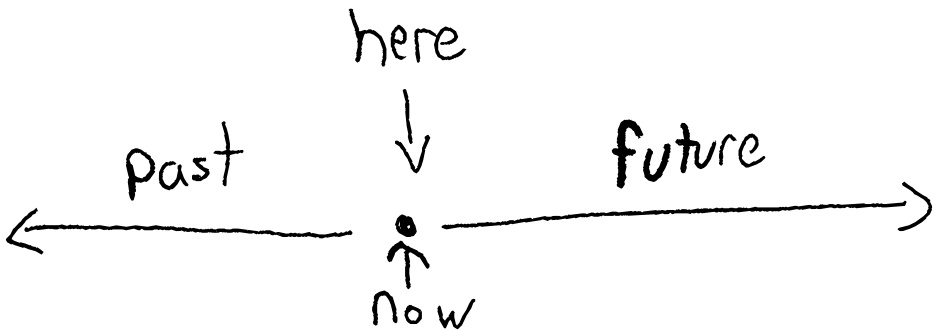
First off...

And I cannot stress this enough,

Staying in the moment will eliminate MOST of your issues, generally speaking.

Learning to be here  now, is absolutely essential for combating anxiety.

It helps you to stay



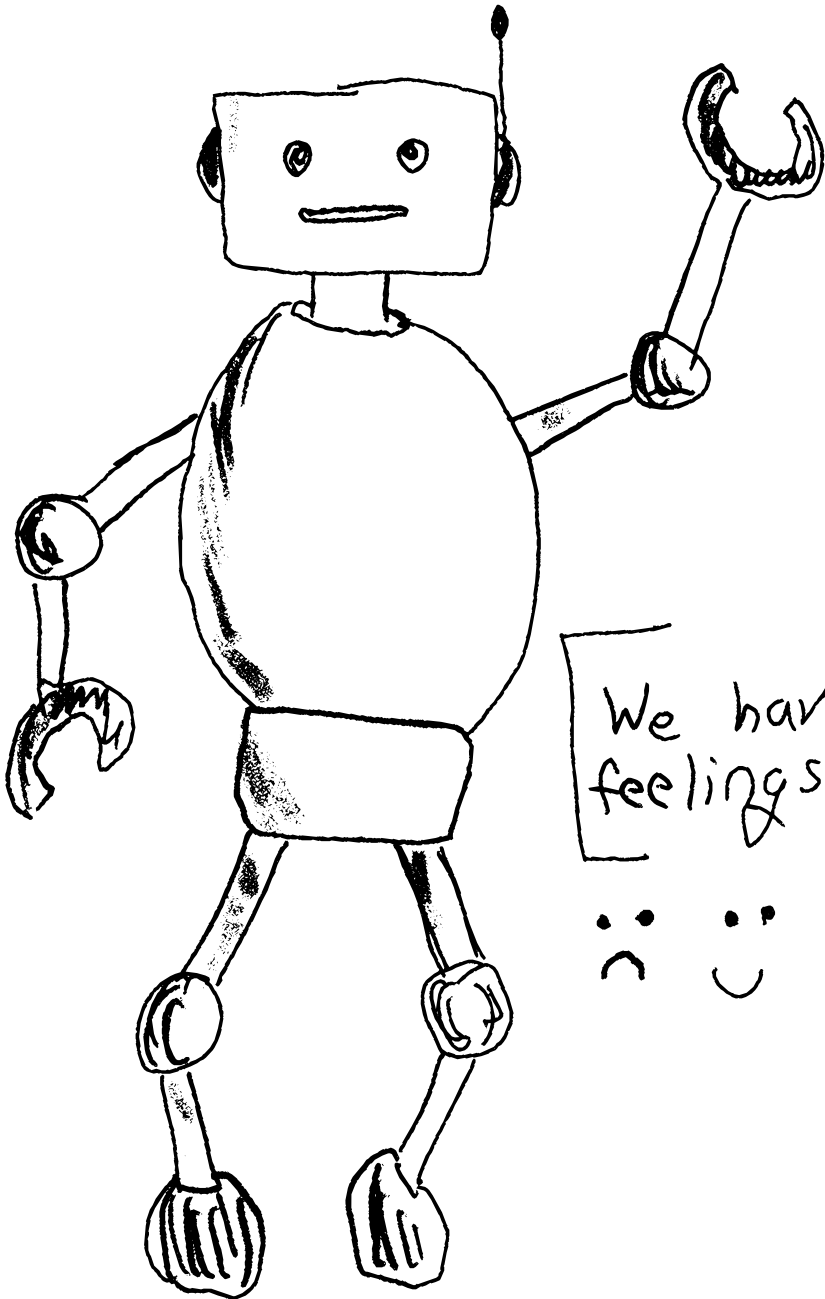
Staying focused on what you're doing now makes sense.

Because...

- It's the only thing that builds toward the future you want.
- It's the only way to move forward from the past.
- It's actually the only thing that's real.

BUT

Of course we aren't robots. (Although some of you GPT users..)



We have feelings.



Feelings add a lot of weight to our actions.

[Passion. Inspiration. Fear. Anger
Depression. Motivation. Shame]

And even though staying in the moment helps.

We still need to pick the future we're working towards (AKA... goals).



And even when you're
doing everything right,
Life provides obstacles,
surprises (good and bad)

And day-to-day B.S.

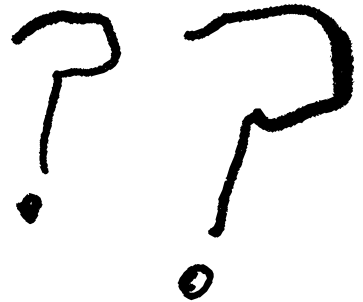


And let's face it,

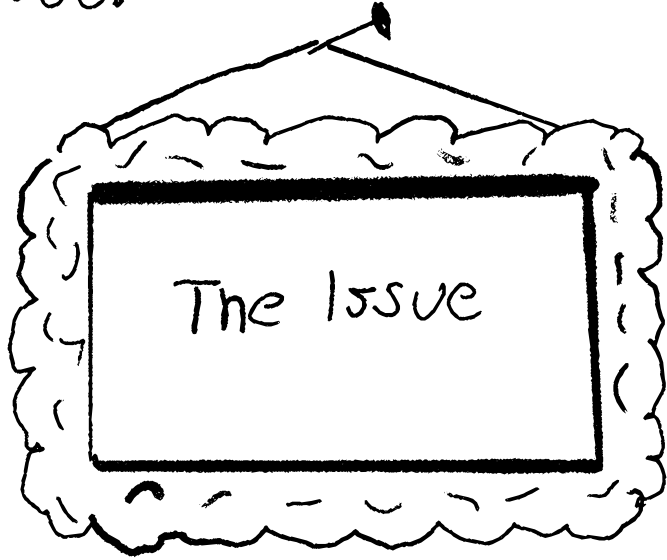
Motivation and passion and
inspiration... the muse
is fleeting. It isn't always
there.

So what do we do when
we've picked our
long-term goal and
feel like we're getting

NO-WHERE?



It's often a question of how you're framing the issue.

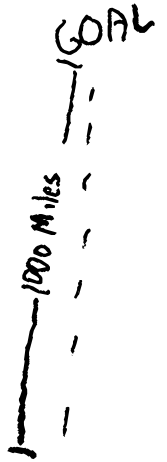


Hold on, don't get mad.
It's not woo-woo nonsense.

We get so hung up on what we want to achieve that we forget a few things.

- ① You won't be inspired every day.
- ② You still have to show up and do the work.
- ③ The work is what it should be about for you anyway.
- ④ Worrying about the goal is taking you out of the moment.

I think we feel most
upset when progress
isn't apparent or obvious
and when there isn't
any reward for what
we're doing.



The goal seems so
far away out of
reach.



So how do we re-frame?

① We affirm our goal and our reasons for doing it.

- I write the same five lines at the end of every journal entry and say something I'm thankful for no matter what.

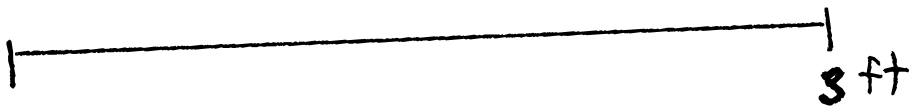
- Say it out loud. Hang a reminder.

- Actively think on it.

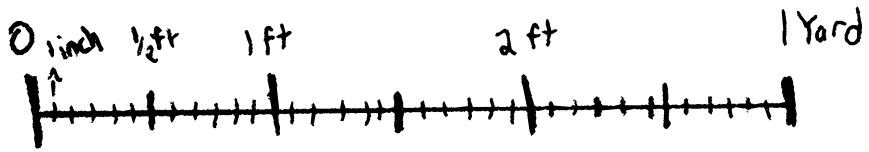
② Determine your
Least
Measurable
Unit
of
Progress

LMUP

What are your milestones?
After all a yardstick isn't just:



It's more incremental

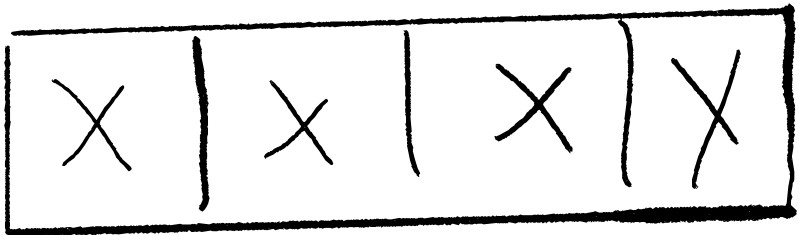


- For instance I write 500 words a day for my writing goals.
- A fitness "inch" might look like
 - 1000 steps
 - 20 minutes elevated heart rate
 - 1 set, rep, etc
 - 10oz water, 60 per day
- Or it could be learning an instrument
 - 10 minutes of practice
- More reading
 - 5 pages of a book

But you determine what works for you, your goal, your life, your effort.

③ Take your
LMUP and
mark your calendar.

This evokes a sense
of progress.



Build a streak.

Streaks are **momentum**.

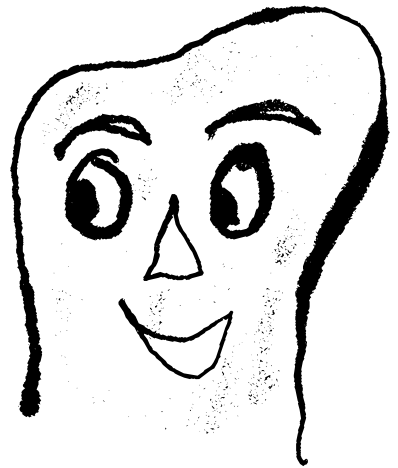
Streaks are **habits**.

④ Reward yourself
for larger milestones:

- completing a chapter
- two week streak
- learned a song

* And while it's good to
celebrate things like
"losing a pound" I recommend
setting your initial goals
based on the doing.
Celebrate your actions...
Not the result (yet).

⑤ Semper
Gumby
(stay flexible)



Life happens.

If you miss a day,
a week, whatever...

Reaffirm and begin again.

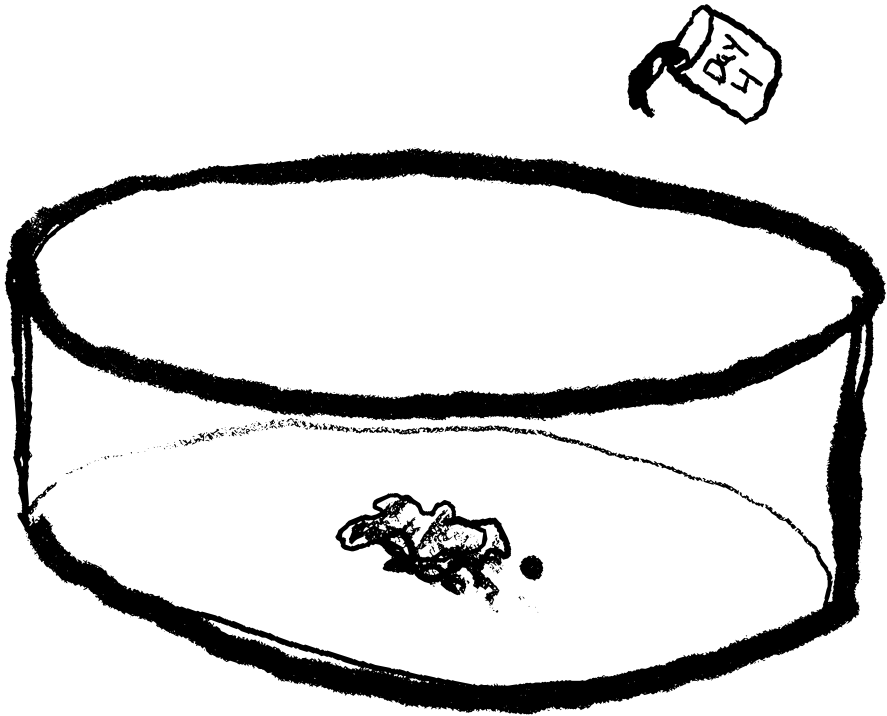
Don't beat yourself up

• Stay in the MOMENT.

Reassess and adjust your
milestones but keep moving.

The LMUP is important.

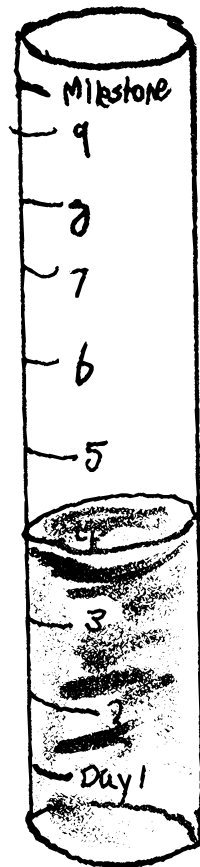
Imagine if you poured a bucket of effort into a pool (your goal) every day.



You'd barely notice.

But if you framed it differently you'd see and feel progress.

And even though we should just stay in the moment.



Looking at things this way makes your effort measurable.

Makes even your biggest goal attainable.

And if you keep the goal about the doing rather than the getting.



You'll always have something new to shoot for.

while (hopefully) feeling good about it too. ♀

① Show up and do the work.

② Make it about the work.

③ Stay in the moment.

- The past is over

- The future hasn't happened.

④ Reaffirm daily.

⑤ Reframe.

~ Make progress visible

~ Build momentum.

⑥ Be kind to yourself. Life happens.

⑦ Adjust as needed.

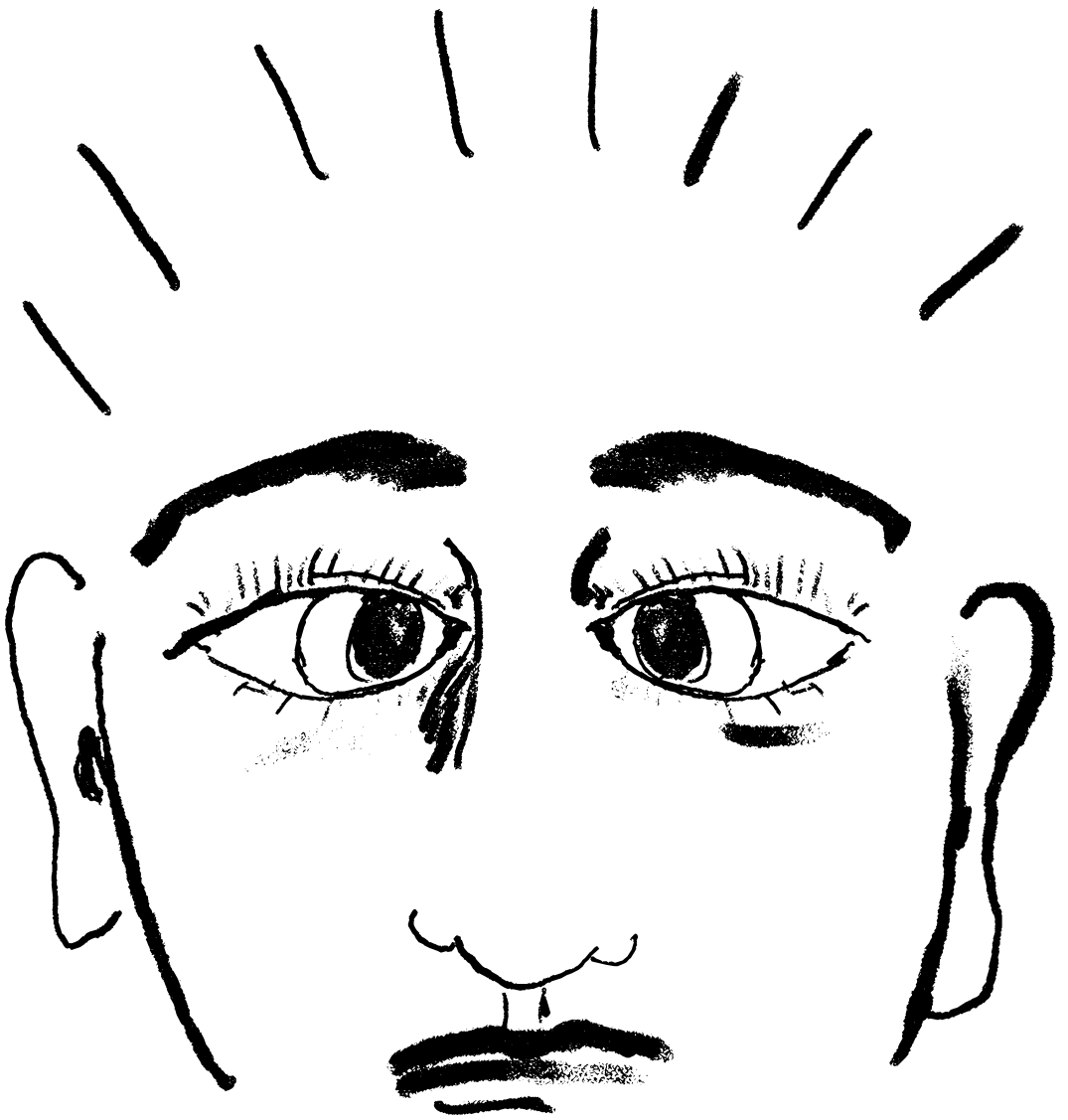
⑧ Just keep moving

Clarity
and

FOCUS

Winning the battle
for your own attention.

By Matt Durante



Whether you know it
or not you are part
of a competition.



The winner of the
competition gets your

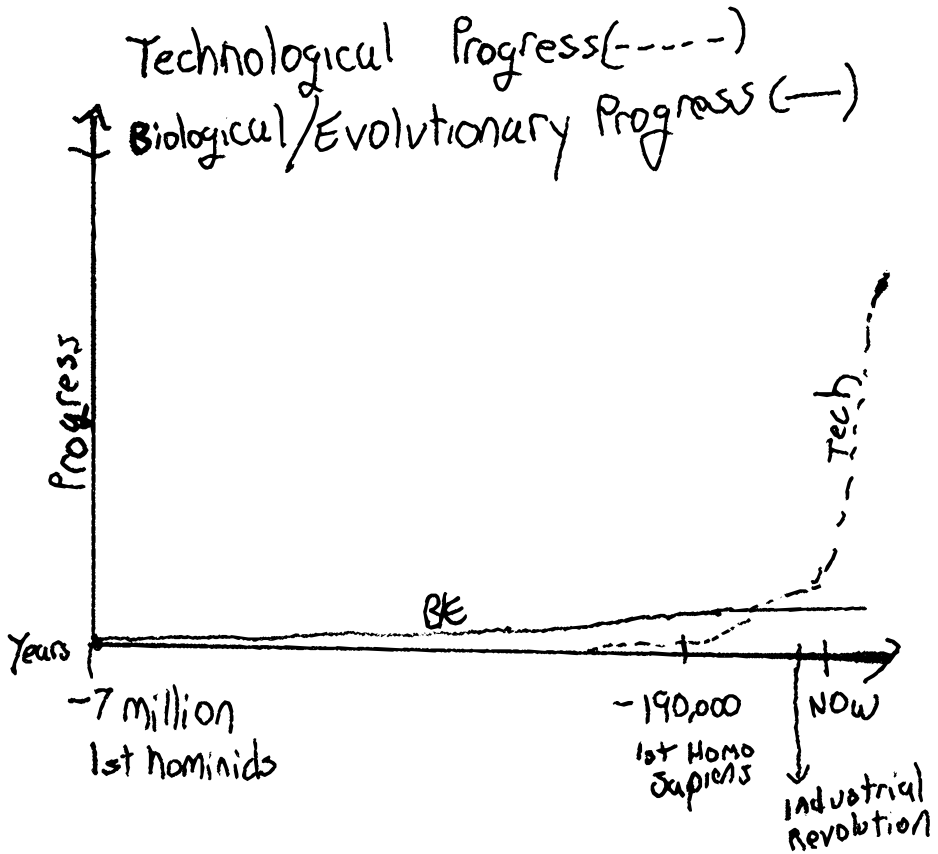
ATTENTION

* You are also a contestant. *

↓
Competing for your own
attention → your focus.

MOST of us are losing
the battle.

The reason is simple:



Our technical capability
has far surpassed our
natural biological progress.

For 99% of human existence we've lived in small groups with survival being the number 1 priority.

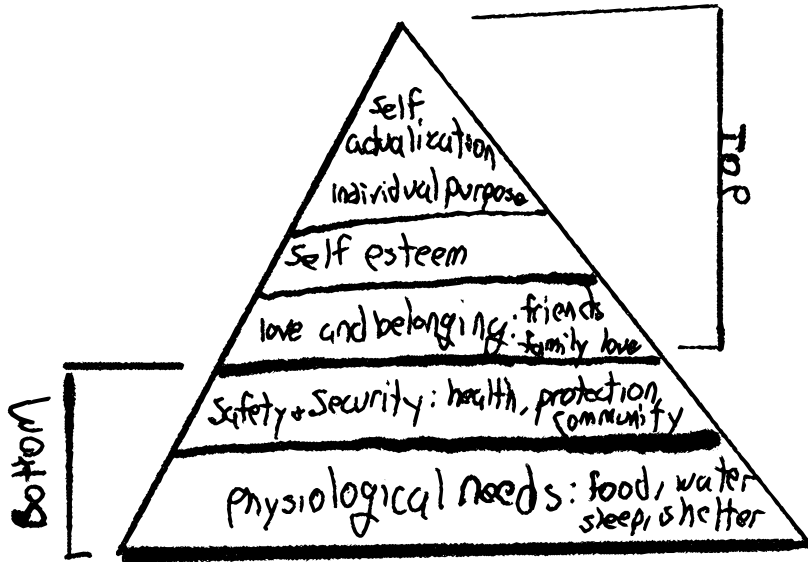
(Maslow's hierarchy of needs)

- With advances in tech, for many of us, survival is a given, taken for granted, assumed.
- We are, on the one hand, very lucky that we aren't concerned with predators, shelter, food, etc.

* side note: this does not apply to the less fortunate.

- Never undermine real struggle, war, famine, disease, disaster, poverty, tragedy, etc.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



With the bottom part of the hierarchy mostly taken care of, technology creates an overemphasized stimulation in the top portions.

Who else is in the competition for your attention?

- Social Media
- YouTube
- Netflix - wordle
- Amazon - Candy Crush
- Clickbait articles
- Custom Ads - slotomania
- The news (now radicalized)
- Radio on all sides
- All other people posting
- Hulu
- Trends
- Chat-GPT
- Your actual problems
- Work/emails/slack
- Texts
- Video Games
- Podcasts
- Smart TV
- Spotify
- Smartphone
- Smart watch
- laptop
- calls
- Print media
- Billboards
- AND MORE


Each piece of technology
has been made to:

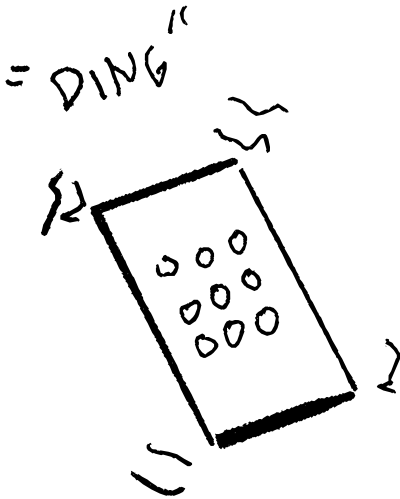
- ① seamlessly integrate with your life!
- ② interrupt you every time something new happens.
- ③ Be extremely easy to use (and frequently).
- ④ Create a new dependency.



"I need it!"

And what are the interruptions making you aware of?

- Your devices have created a false sense of urgency.
- A bad case of FOMO (fear-of-missing-out).
- A Pavlovian  response.



To literally everything you have on it

- Most of it preys on the top sections of your hierarchy of needs.

- Social media makes everyone have a glamorous, happy looking life...

→ Except you. ←

- A thousand ads personally targeted and preying on your wants, needs, desires.

* Side note: It's not ALL bad. It's just a lot and ALL the time.

"You'll feel better, look sexier, be better, more likeable if you get this product."

At its worst, the things
on your phone prey on
the BOTTOM part of the
hierarchy.

The algorithm feeds off
of your fear, your anger.



The WAR!

The [insert political
party]
is coming for your
kids! ♡

Terror!! Your RIGHTS
are in danger!
CONSPIRACY!

And even "legitimate" news has been forced to stoop to this level in order to compete.

- The more you engage with it, the more it gives you, the more it has you. The less happy you are.

~ Which is a shame, because global connection is a miracle.

And there are REAL issues that we need to talk about. But the current system has made it incredibly unconstructive and divisive.

- Like I said the technology has outpaced our ability to use it naturally.

One thing is certain.


Your attention = \$\$\$ Cash money

(Believe me... I'm a marketer)

- You click = the platform gets \$
The source of the content gets paid by you the platform gets paid by the source of content.

- More devices get bought to more easily be able to

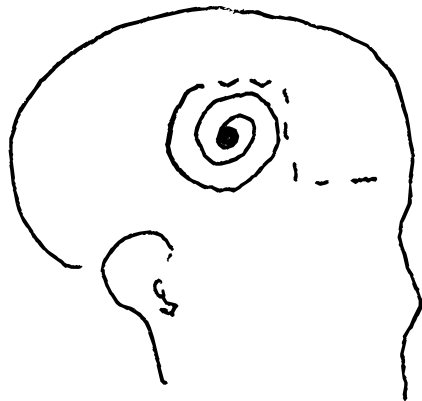
CLICK CLICK \$ CLICK \$
\$ CLICK \$
\$ CLICK \$



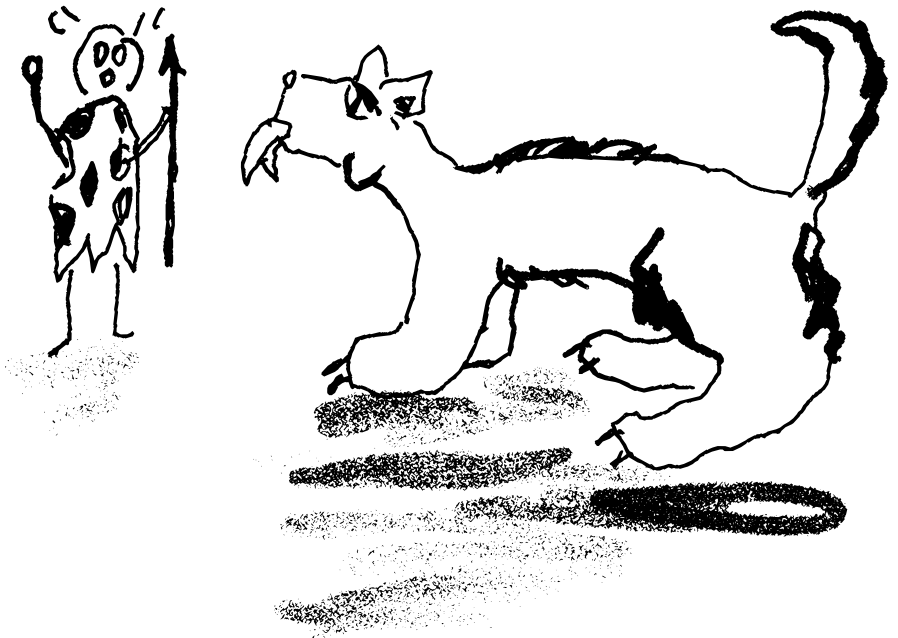
- And you are bombarded constantly.

- And much like the "algorithm,"

you have created a neural algorithm that gives you a release every time you reach for your phone.



- And maybe you've even began experiencing the same feelings of fight or flight that a caveman might feel when faced with a predator.



But instead of there
being a predator....



"Can you believe
that comment on
my post! I'll
kill whoever
wrote it!"



"Oh, no, my phone
died! I won't be
able to respond for
THREE WHOLE MINUTES
ABOUT JALLY'S INSTA PIC!!"

Long story short—

We've really #@!\$ed up
our wiring.

- We've tricked ourselves
into making everything
an emergency.
- Even objectively silly or
inconsequential things
register way higher
than they should.

THUS...

Many of us are
losing the battle. ☹

No wonder it's been so hard to pay attention, read for a long period of time, be present...

TO

FOCUS
=

And the competition is well equipped and systemized

SO...

W.T.H. can we do
about it???

I believe that technology
is valuable, useful, important,

BUT

- We must return to a more conscious and deliberate use of our mind.
- We must choose what we do or others will decide for us.

HOW?

I offer a simple 4 step strategy.

① TECH FASTING

- Pick a specific period of time and put your phone, smartwatch, etc in another room for a designated period of time each day.
- Build up that time.
- Try to put it away for an entire weekend.
- Set boundaries!

② TIMING

set miniature goals
with times attached.

- Get a physical timer (important)
or set your watch and
use that time for one
activity alone.
- Mark on a calendar each
block you complete (keep a streak).

Examples:

- 20 minutes for writing
- 10 minutes for reading
- Exercise

Build up to longer time blocks.

* This is similar to the "Pomodoro Technique"
except I believe you should start
with whatever amount of time works.

③ IGNORE NOISE

- Arguing on social media is pointless... you can't win.
- Things that bother you are done on purpose.
- The block/unfollow button is your friend.
- When something you read bothers you, don't go into the comments.

Experiment: After searching for only puppies every day for 2 weeks on social media, all I get is puppies.

YOU CAN TRAIN THE ALGORITHM

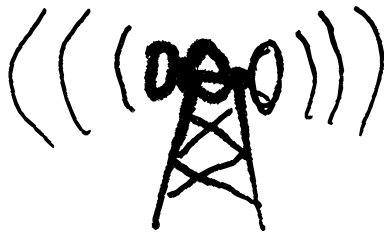
④ PRACTICE

MINDFULNESS

(CULTIVATE SIGNAL)

Mindfulness and meditation seem like trends, ↗

- But they are becoming more relevant these days because those that practice know that it is a "workout" for the mind that directly combats the symptoms of the problems discussed.



We should take a moment to dispell myths on what the purpose of mindfulness meditation is.

IT IS NOT:

- Difficult.
- About "blinking the mind."
- Religious (although it could be).
- Just for monks sitting in a cave.
- Mystical or magical.
- Just for hippies.

WHAT IT IS:

- Mindfulness is your ability to stay in the moment, be present, and choose what you focus on.
- If you try to blank your thoughts, you'll never succeed.
 - Your thoughts happen whether you want them to or not.
- The goal is to not let the thoughts drag you with them.

NOW WORK OUT:

The most practical way to learn to combat this is to focus on your breath.

set a timer, use an app,
(Calm, Headspace, etc.)

For 1 minute, 5 minutes, 10 minutes

- Breathe in and say "IN"
- Breathe out and say "OUT"
 - Count "ONE"
- Repeat for 10 breaths.
- Do it over and over for the duration of your timer

When you notice
you're not thinking
about the breath ~~&~~
your mind wanders.
(which is normal)

- Don't beat yourself up.
- Gently remind yourself
to return to the breath.

→ The idea is that you
build up a tolerance
for MANUAL control for
your thinking.

By doing these 4 activities you'll begin to build up your focus.

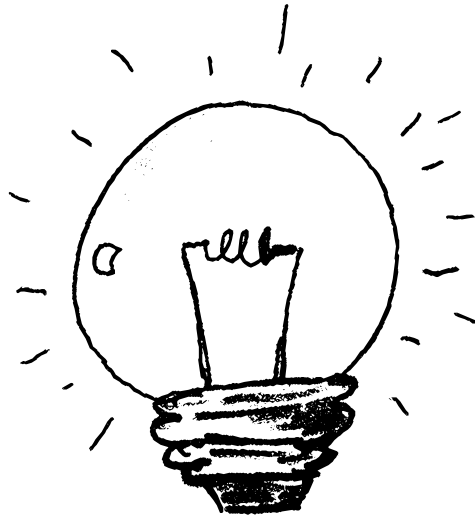
- Much like lifting weights your mind needs to exercise.

- And you need to undo a lot of the damage we've done to ourselves.

- ① Acknowledge the problem.
- ② Commit to your mental welfare.
- ③ Choose to cultivate focus through exercise.

WIN THE COMPETITION
FOR YOUR ATTENTION!





Reignite the Light:

A guide for grown-ups
that have lost their way.

By Matt Durante

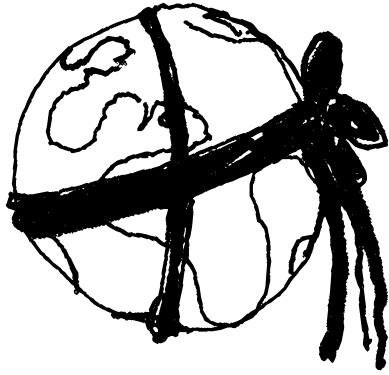
"The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it."

~ J.M. Barrie, Peter Pan

"Peter, you've become a pirate."

~ Wendy Darling, Hook

When we're children,
the world is brand new.



A new present to open
everywhere you looked.

And we were
encouraged to have...

FUN!

- To be silly.
 - Not take things so seriously.
- Not take ourselves too seriously. 😊

And to follow our
curiosity.



There is no shame in asking questions for a child.

Who?
Why?
Where?
How?
What?

what if we put a rocket on it?



How big is a whale?

What's the fastest truck?

Can I learn to fly?

- Children look around, consume, absorb, and find what interests them.
- Then they seek out more information about it.
- Then they place themselves in the interest and PLAY.



Could I dig up
a dinosaur?



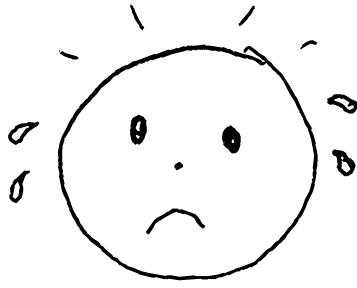
And it just starts with
finding something "neat."

And using your imagination.



Woah! Cool!

Wow! Awesome!



But then at some
point as you grow.
THINGS GET SERIOUS

The weight of
RESPONSIBILITY

Money Bills Job Shame
Injury Kids Professionalism
Death Health Reputation
Taxes Bosses Employee
Policy Limitations Embarrassment
Romance Career

For many good reasons
we leave childish things
behind.

We want to protect
and care for people we
love.



BUT

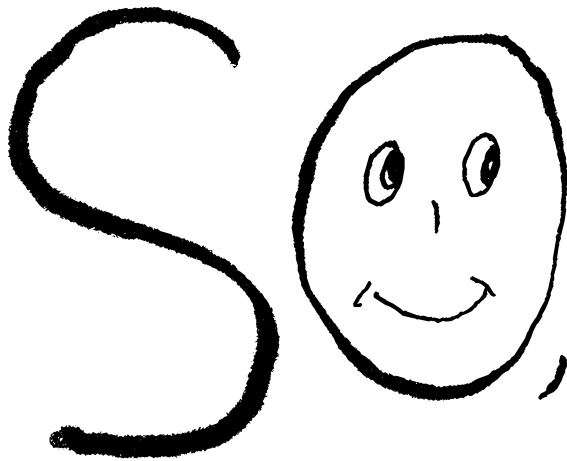
We often become too
serious about the wrong
things.

And our inner child
becomes smothered,
crushed under the weight.

Our imagination gets
smaller. ♪

And soon we forget what
made us happy. ♪

And our tie becomes a noose.
The office becomes a prison.




let's get our curiosity back.

Let's get back to happy.

Despite all you've learned I want you to remember 4 things:

- ① The world is an amazing place.
- ② You and your existence is unique.
- ③ You can be very serious about what you do - be the best in the world, and still not take yourself too seriously.
- ④ It's not too late.

Now an exercise.

- Grab a sheet of paper.
- Think about when you were a kid. 
- Set a ten minute timer.
- Write everything you were into as a kid... be specific.
- There are no wrong answers

The Muppets

Batman

Vampires

Transformers

Cartoons

Comics

Movies

Fast cars

MAD magazine

Triceratops

Ninja swords

Space Nintendo

Rocket ships

Skateboarding

BMX bikes

Horses

Fishing

Drawing

James Bond

Guitars

Climbing

Trees

Bond

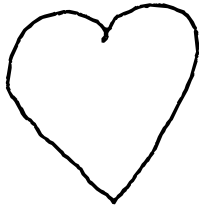
After you're done flip the paper over, set another ten minutes and go again.

This time include recent things (movies, books, topics, experiences) that made you go "woah!"



I call this activity:
The Nostalgia Bomb!

You will start to feel
the hardened walls around
your heart start to crumble.



Let them.

And remember to keep
it open when you look
around.

From there we...

Follow the process
of curiosity!

- ① That's neat
- ② I'd like to learn
more about that.
- ③ Look a lot of stuff
up. Read/watch/consume
- ④ Decide if you want
to try.
- ⑤ Determine S.U.K.
- ⑥ Get beginners stuff.
- ⑦ Try.
- ⑧ Seek community
around your passion.

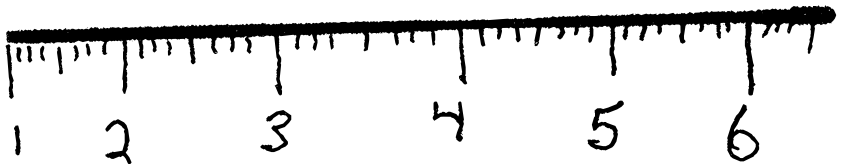
S. U. K.

Smallest

Unit

Knowledge (or effort)

The smallest unit of knowledge is the smallest unit of activity or learning to show progress.



If, for example, I wanted to be a writer (and I do), writing x number of words a day might make sense.



If I wanted to run a marathon it might mean running at least x amount of minutes (or taking x amount of steps).

The point is for you
to actively pursue whatever
makes you smile.

You have to CHOOSE it.

Then you have to make
space for it. ((•))

Ten minutes might be
enough.

But you have to make
it your play time.

Want to learn to draw?

Then draw every day.

Want to learn to write?

Write every day.

Want to make a movie?

Film something with
your phone every day.

Want to get in shape?

Do some kind of exercise
every day.

Take a course.

- Go to udeMy
- Go to Khan Academy
- Go to Skillshare
- Join a club.

And remember...

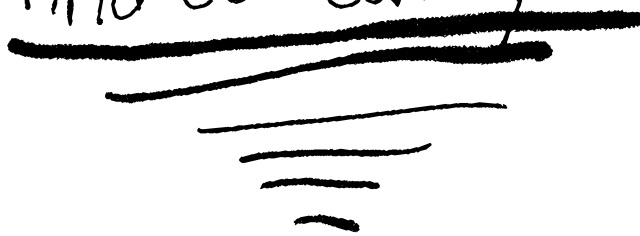
- Do it because you're interested.
- Do it because it's important.
- Do it because it's fun.

• And don't worry about sucking at it!

Kids suck at everything...
have you ever seen a kid's drawing? .. awful.

But they get better
if they keep doing it.
And they have fun
while they're doing it.

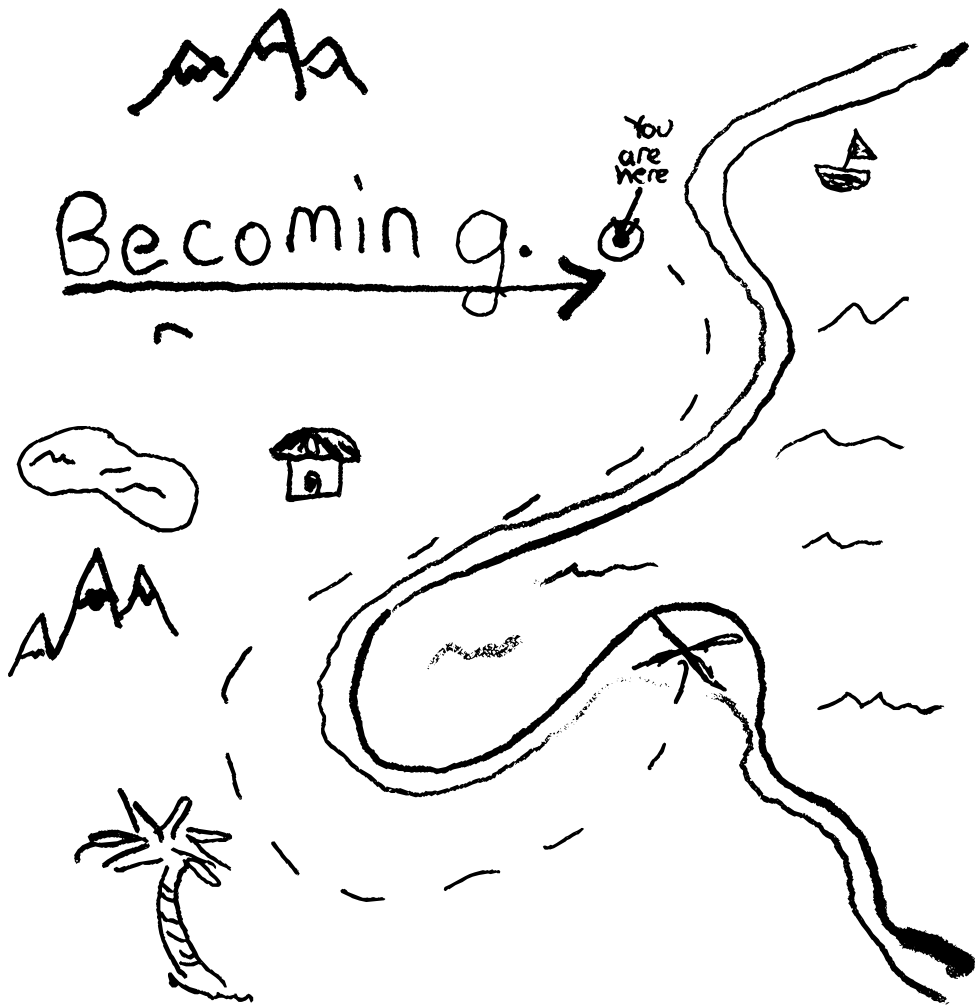
And so can you.



So follow your curiosity.

And maybe you'll
remember how to fly.

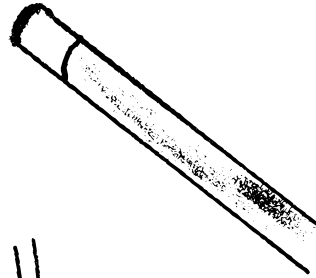
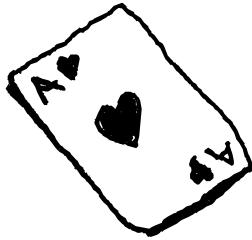
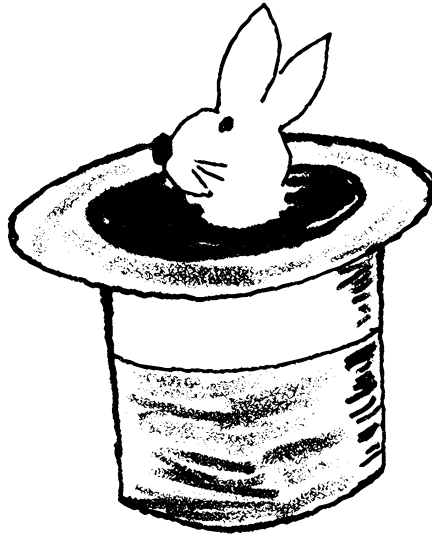




Enjoy the destination.
Live for the trip.

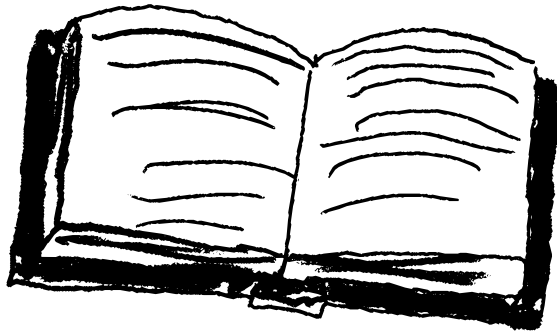
By Matt Durante

At some point



We've all
been tricked.
Sold on an idea.

Stories we're fed give a
happy-ever-after.



We are delivered an
outcome.

OUTCOMES OUTCOMES
OUTCOMES!

We obsess about outcomes.

We work so we can
earn money. \$

We need money to survive.

But we also use it to buy
other things:

CARS

TOYS

BIG HOUSES

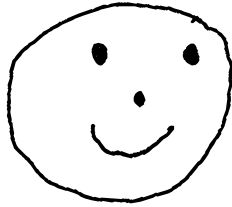
TRIPS

TICKETS

1ST-CLASS SEATS

ETC.

These things, we hope,
will deliver us happiness.



That's what we're being
sold after all through:

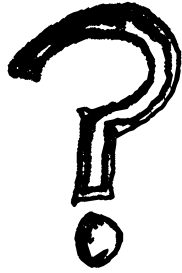
- Stories
- Advertisements
- Social Media

If only I had [Fill in the blank]...
then I'll be happy.

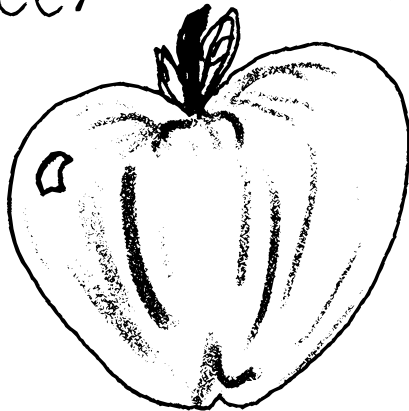
- The next raise
- The next promotion
- The next destination
- A million, billion, etc.
- The next OUTCOME.

BUT...

What comes after
happily ever after...



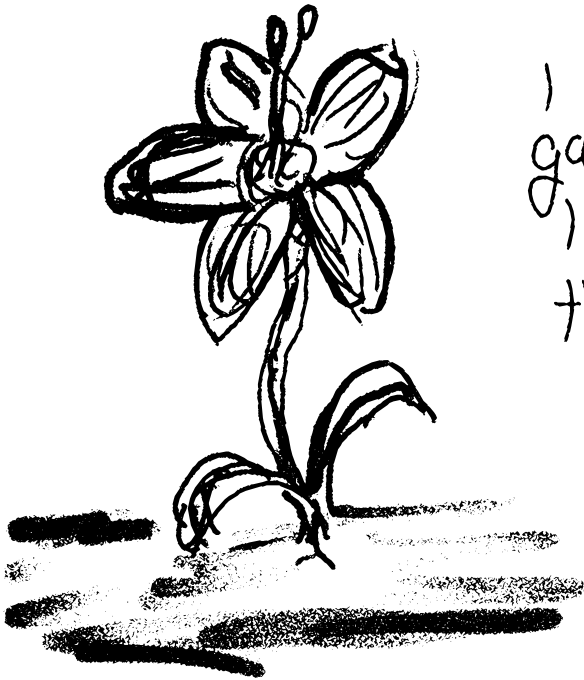
• No one ever talks about
Snow White and Prince Charming's
divorce. It was ugly.



The root cause of being unsatisfied
often comes from staking
your happiness on an outcome.

An OUTCOME is fleeting.

It is ephemeral (my fav word).




I think of my
garden when
I think of
the ephemeral.

We toil, move the earth,
water, prune, sweat so
that the plants have the
best chance at flowering.

And then they DO.
AND IT'S GLORIOUS.

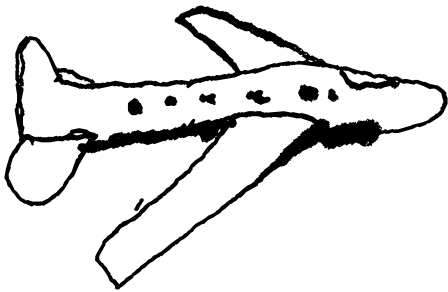
But many flowers don't
stay long.



So why do it? 

I toiled for eight years
and got promoted over
and over.

I went from a floor-level
manufacturing technician to
the COO and Directing Manager
of a big business that was
part of a multi-billion
dollar conglomerate.

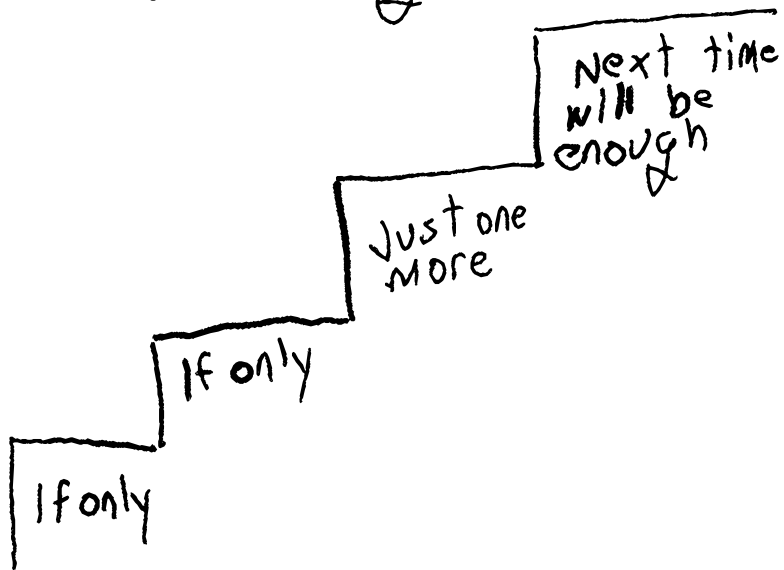


International Travel

Salary \$

"Mr. Important" Title

Each step I grinded away,
convinced that I'd feel some
kind of lasting satisfaction.



But sure enough, I'd quickly
become dissatisfied.

I'd start to yearn for something

MORE MORE MORE!

AND BEFORE YOU KILL
ME...

- Having goals are good.
- Celebrating your wins is good.
- Enjoying the moment is good.

And yes, all of this is easier
for me to say in hindsight.

Money is important.

Struggling to pay the bills sucks.

BUT...

If you rely on the next

"THING"

to make you happy.

(Assuming your basic needs are met)

You're setting yourself
up for disappointment.



- The "thing" may never come
- The "thing" may suck
- The "thing" might not live up to what you painted in your head.
- YOU WILL WANT MORE

And it's okay to want more,

And it's good to stay in the
moment.

And it's good to enjoy an
outcome, a win, a promotion,
a trip.



But seriously, where does
it end?

Imagine

You've been named the:

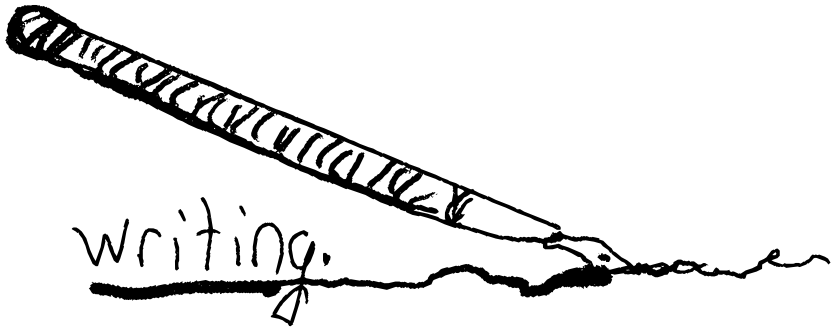
- Sexiest
- Richest
- Most Intelligent
- Funniest
- Most accomplished
- Important
- Strongest
- Emperor of the Universe

What now?

And when I look back,
my greatest satisfaction
came from becoming, not
getting.

- Learning
- Grinding
- Actually doing the
thing.

Let's look at something
I love as a solid example...



* side note: Prompting AI does not count as writing

I love writing. I've written many books (nerdy, long, novels).

I HOPE to be traditionally published one day.

So far it's been a pile of rejections 😞

BUT

That's okay.
seriously.

- ~ And yes, rejections suck.
- ~ And yes, I have a big, lofty goal (and I want it ^{bad} bad)
- ~ And it might not "happen."

But I'm not tied to the goal.

EVEN IF **NOTHING**
EVER COMES FROM IT.

BECAUSE...

It's the writing I love.
Finishing is great, but
finishing just means I get
to start another. 😊

- Becoming the COO was great.
↳ But it was building things and mentoring others that was amazing.

Learning is always great.

Becoming is great. 😊

So live moment to moment,
Because moments pass,
And while being present
for the moment is good.

Don't rely on a single outcome.

Because it's gone fast,
And you can't hang onto the past.



And when the satisfaction
of the outcome fades.
(It may take a day, month, years)
It can be devastating.

Depressing. Awful. Draining.

SO

Make sure you always
have more becoming,
more doing in the queue.

Have another goal but
make it about ^o what you
do vs. what you get.

If you can master this
mindset shift AND be
mindful, I promise to
infinite ∞ with a cherry
on top that you may start
being satisfied. Maybe even



HAPPY