

30 Days of Getting Results

By J.D. Meier

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What Others Say



"Getting Results the Agile Way delivers know-what, know-why and know-how for anyone who understands the value of momentum in making your moments count."

– **Dr. Rick Kirschner, bestselling author**



*"JD is the go-to-guy for getting results, and Agile Results demonstrates his distinct purpose – he shows **how anyone can do anything, better**. This book has simple, effective, powerful tools and ideas that are easy enough for everyone to apply in their work and lives, so that they get the results they'd like, even the impossible and the unexpected."*

– **Janine de Nysschen, Changemaker and Purpose Strategist, Whytelligence**

NOTE – You can read more testimonials at <http://gettingresults.com/wiki/Testimonials>.

About the 30 Days of Getting Results

Getting results in today's landscape is tough. The world changes faster than we can keep up. Worse, we don't always have the best practices for focus, managing our time, managing our energy, or even personal productivity.

My book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#), is a simple system for **meaningful results**. It combines the best practices I've learned for thinking, feeling, and taking action. It's the same system I use to mentor individuals, leaders, and teams for improving their results. It empowers you with an unbeatable system for making things happen with skill. It's a story-driven approach, and by using three stories to drive your day, your week, your month, and your year, you write your story forward and respond more effectively to your ever-changing world.

Key Problems Addressed

Here is a short list of the problems we'll tackle during the 30 Days of Getting Results:

- *How to improve your personal productivity and personal effectiveness*
- *How to achieve work-life balance*
- *How to focus and direct your attention with skill*
- *How to motivate yourself with skill and find your drive*
- *How to use a simple system to achieve meaningful results*
- *How to manage your time*
- *How to spend more time on the things that really matter to you*
- *How to play to your strengths and spend less time in weaknesses*
- *How to change a habit and make it stick*
- *How to make the most of your your moments, days, weeks, months, and years*
- *How to be the author of your life and write your story forward*

The 30 Days of Getting Results at a Glance

Here are the names of each of the lessons that are part of the 30 days:

- Day 1 – Take a Tour of Getting Results the Agile Way
- Day 2 – Monday Vision – Use Three Stories to Drive Your Week
- Day 3 – Daily Outcomes – Use Three Stories to Drive Your Day
- Day 4 – Let Things Slough Off
- Day 5 – Hot Spots – Map Out What’s Important
- Day 6 – Friday Reflection – Identify Three Things Going Well and Three Things to Improve
- Day 7 – Setup Boundaries and Buffers
- Day 8 – Dump Your Brain to Free Your Mind
- Day 9 – Prioritize Your Day with MUST, SHOULD, and COULD
- Day 10 – Feel Strong All Week Long
- Day 11 – Reduce Friction and Create Glide Paths for Your Day
- Day 12 – Productivity Personas – Are You a Starter or a Finisher?
- Day 13 – Triage Your Action Items with Skill
- Day 14 – Carve Out Time for What’s Important
- Day 15 – Achieve a Peaceful Calm State of Mind
- Day 16 – Use Metaphors to Find Your Motivation
- Day 17 – Add Power Hours to Your Week
- Day 18 – Add Creative Hours to Your Week
- Day 19 – Who are You Doing it For?
- Day 20 – Ask Better Questions, Get Better Results
- Day 21 – Carry the Good Forward, Let the Rest Go
- Day 22 – Design Your Day with Skill
- Day 23 – Design Your Week with Skill
- Day 24 – Bounce Back with Skill
- Day 25 – Fix Time. Flex Scope
- Day 26 – Solve Problems with Skill
- Day 27 – Do Something Great
- Day 28 – Find Your One Thing
- Day 29 – Find Your Arena for Your Best Results
- Day 30 – Take Agile Results to the Next Level

Day 1 - Take a Tour of Getting Results the Agile Way

“The only reason for time is so that everything doesn’t happen at once.” — Albert Einstein

Welcome to Day 1

Welcome to **day 1** of 30 Days of Getting Results. Today, we go for a quick walk in the park. We’ll take a tour of the Agile Results system, as it’s described in my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#).

The power of Agile Results is the simplicity. But don’t let the simplicity fool you. It’s the simplicity that makes it work – for individuals, teams, and leaders, at home, at work, and at play.

Agile Results has been battle tested in the trenches of consulting, in the halls of Microsoft, and around the world in various settings from personal productivity to distributed team effectiveness, both in work and in life. For example one non-profit company uses it while helping doctors and patients in extreme scenarios. You too can get the system on your side.

The way I quickly teach colleagues how to get up and running with Agile Results is I show them three simple parts, and it takes no more than a five minute conversation.

The Three Key Parts of Agile Results

Here are the three key parts to Agile Results:

- The Rule of 3
- Monday Vision, Daily Wins, Friday Reflection
- Hot Spots

The Rule of Three

The Rule of Three is a simple concept. Think in three’s. The Rule of 3 helps us deal with information overload. It’s a simple way to set limits and chunk things down. It’s easy for us to remember things in three’s.

You might have heard of the Rule of 3 before. Even if you haven’t, it’s been all around you. You’ve seen it in titles: The Three Little Pigs, The Three Stooges, Three Blind Mice, etc. Storytellers structure their stories with a beginning, middle, and an end. It’s a time tested approach and it’s been used in everything from marketing to the military. In fact, the military teaches survival in threes: 3 minutes without air, 3 days without water, 3 weeks without food.

In Agile Results, we use The Rule of Three to map out what we want to accomplish in sets of three’s:

- 3 wins for the day
- 3 wins for the week
- 3 wins for the month
- 3 wins for the year

This creates a simple **3×3 system** that is easy to use, easy to remember, and easy to get back on track, if you fall off the horse!

Monday Vision, Daily Wins, Friday Reflection

This is the heart of Agile Results. [Monday Vision, Daily Wins, Friday Reflection](#) is a simple pattern for your weekly workflow. It's a weekly system for getting results that helps you get a fresh start each day, and a fresh start each week. Each week and each day is a new chance at bat.

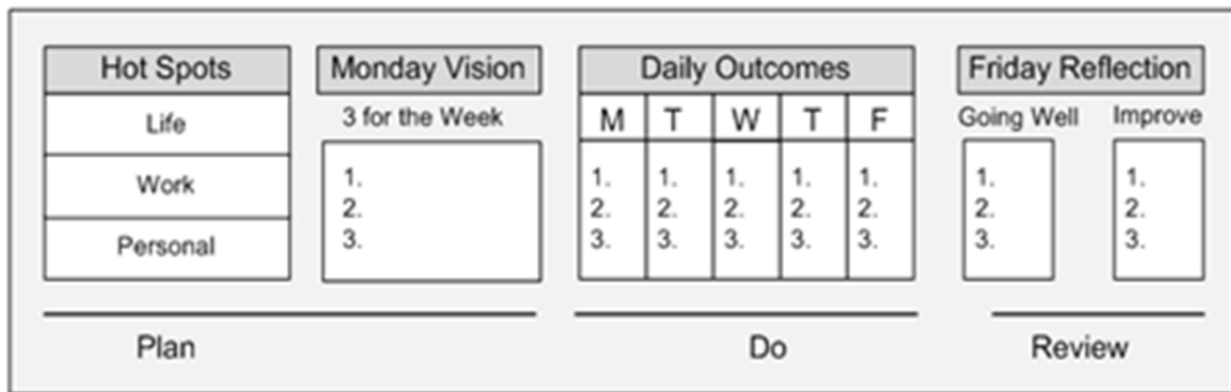
- **Monday Vision** – On Mondays, identify three results you want by Friday. For example, maybe it's "my presentation is complete," "I have a written plan for my project," and "I've spent a minimum of five hours doing what I love this week." Focus on outcomes or achievements over activities.
- **Daily Outcomes** – Each day, identify three results that you want under your belt. If you're having a really bad day, your three outcomes might be as simple as – have a great breakfast, a great lunch, and a great dinner. Some days are like that. Ideally you can see how it connects back to the three results you want for the week. It's this simple check between the day and the week that helps you see for forest from the trees.
- **Friday Reflection** – Fridays are your chance to take a step back and reflect on your results. On Fridays, ask yourself, "What are three things going well? and ask yourself, "What are three things to improve?" This is how you start to see what's working and what's not, as well as learn your own capacity.

The key each week and each day is to celebrate your wins, no matter how small. Are you getting done what you set out to do? This is a quick check on your priorities, your focus, and what's getting in the way. This also helps you carry forward what's working and what's not, so rather than luck into success, you know exactly what works for you – you identify your personal success patterns.

I could go into a lot of details about why this works, but some of the big ideas are that you're making mindful choices, you're using limits of three to better prioritize and focus, and you're using positive psychology practices by shining the spotlight on your wins. You're also using some proven project management and software practices in a very simple way, to help you ***author your life and write your story forward, one day at a time.***

Visual – Monday Vision, Daily Outcomes, Friday Reflection

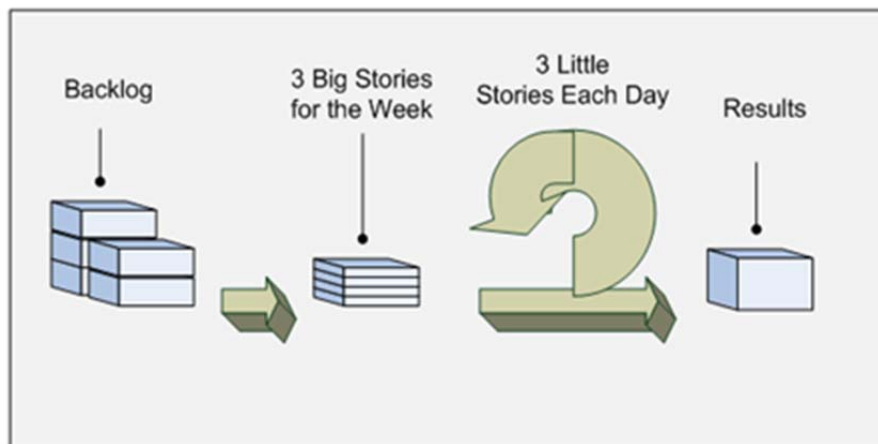
Here is a simple way to visualize what your week would look like, when you apply Monday Vision, Daily Wins, Friday Reflection:



It's a weekly system for getting results that helps you get a fresh start each day, and a fresh start each week.

Visual – Monday Vision, Daily Outcomes, Friday Reflection

Another mental model is to think of it as a story-driven approach to your week:



This is a more story-oriented view of your week. You have a backlog of big things you would like to achieve. Each week you choose three stories to make happen. Each day, you choose three smaller stories to make happen. A story is a simple one-liner reminder of what you are trying to accomplish. For example, one of my stories might be, "Win a raving fan." Another sample be "Defeat my desktop clutter" or "Nail my project proposal." It's a story because you are the hero here, and it's about your specific challenges. Using a story-like, one-liner reminder, you can flash-forward to your victories for the day, or the week.

Hot Spots

When you think of [Hot Spots](#), imagine a **heat map**. Take a moment to pause and imagine a heat map in your mind. On this heat map, think of most important things in your life right now. Chances are they fall under one or more of the following buckets:

- *Mind*
- *Body*
- *Emotions*
- *Career*
- *Financial*
- *Relationships*
- *Fun*

Hot Spots are simply **areas of focus**. They might represent a lot of pain, or they might represent a lot of opportunity. Either way, it's a quick visual way to map out what's important for you. You can also think of Hot Spots for work. Simply list out your top projects or activities that matter most. You can also think of Hot Spots for your personal projects. Again, simply list out your top projects or activities outside of work.

Hot Spots are like a portfolio. They help us balance our investment of time, energy, and focus across our competing demands. What you'll tend to find is that when you invest in your mind, body, emotions, career, financial, relationships, and fun, you improve your ability to respond to whatever work or life throws your way. When you don't invest in one or more of these buckets, you find that it can negatively impact the others.

At this point, all that's important is that you know that Hot Spots are a way to **visualize a map of what's important in your life**.

Recap

Let's recap the key things we learned from our tour:

- Use the **Rule of Three** to deal with information overload and set simple limits each day and each week.
- Use **Monday Vision, Daily Outcomes, Friday Reflection** as a pattern for weekly results. Each week, identify three results for the week, then identify three key results you want each day, and on Friday, identify three things going well, and three things to improve.
- Use **Hot Spots** to see the forest for the trees. Map out the key areas in your life that matter most to you. Map out your key projects at work, and map out your key personal projects. Simply being able to list the items is a great start. It shows you at a glance, what's on your radar. This is important for choosing what to invest more in, and what to invest less in.

Day 2 - Monday Vision – Use Three Stories to Drive Your Week

“Map out your future, but do it in pencil.” -- Jon Bon Jovi

Your Outcome

- *Take control of your week and create a compelling vision to guide you throughout the week.*

Welcome to Day 2

Welcome to **day 2** of 30 Days of Getting Results. Today we take a look at [Monday Vision](#) from [Getting Results the Agile Way](#).

Have you ever had a week fly by and when Friday hits you’re asking yourself, “Where did the week go?”

Not anymore. With Monday Vision, you take a moment to jump ahead to the end of the week, and you ask yourself, “If this were Friday, what are three results I want under my belt?” Monday is your chance to create a compelling vision for your week.

Monday Vision is a simple pattern for helping you achieve more effective results each week. It’s also a great way to deal with *“a case of the Mondays.”*

The Challenges

Monday Vision can help you deal with three common challenges:

- **You’re overwhelmed.** You have way more to do, than you can possibly get done during your week.
- **You’re underwhelmed.** You’re not inspired. You might have a bunch of things you should or could do, but you don’t have the energy for it.
- **You get off track.** You spend your time on a lot of things, but at the end of the week, you didn’t get done the things you really needed to get done.

The Response

On Mondays, you simply identify three key results you want for the week. This is your vision for the week. It puts you in the drivers seat and you get to decide what you want to accomplish.

Rather than get lost among the sea of things to do, you bubble up the three most important outcomes for the week, and these three outcomes help guide you throughout your week.

This simple pattern has a few benefits:

- Each week is a fresh start.
- It's a way to make your week more meaningful.
- It's a way to help you prioritize and focus.
- It's a way to help you improve your results.

Framing Your Results as Compelling Stories

After you identify your three results, you can turn them into stories. You can turn them into simple, one-liner stories, where you are the hero. For example, let's say three results you want for the week are:

- Finish my project plan
- Create my slides for my presentation
- Complete key stakeholder reviews

This might not be very compelling. You can spruce it up as simple stories and connect it to your values. For example:

- Win the race to finish my project plan in record time.
- Create a presentation that sets a new bar for my personal best.
- Turn my stakeholders into raving fans.

You have to play around to find what connects with your heart. What you end up with is **three stories to drive your week**. These stories are hand-crafted and personal – after all, you made them. They are your stories to make happen.

Your Assignment

1. Identify the three things you really want to accomplish for the week.
2. Turn your three outcomes into simple stories that you feel passionate about.

Don't worry if you have trouble figuring out your three best results, and don't worry if you have a hard time turning them into compelling stories. What's important is simply trying the exercise. You might surprise yourself, and in the best case, you'll inspire yourself to a new level you didn't know was possible.

Day 3 – Daily Outcomes – Use Three Stories to Drive Your Day

“Make each day your masterpiece.” -- John Wooden

Your Outcome

- *Take control of your day by connecting your activities to what you value and what inspires you. Turn even the most mundane activities into meaningful opportunities.*

Welcome to Day 3

Welcome to **day 3** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In day 2, we looked at using three stories to drive your week. Today we take a look at using three stories to drive your day. I call this practice [Daily Wins](#) and it's from my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#).

Daily Outcomes is a way to use three stories to drive your day. Before you start your day, simply identify the three results or outcomes you want to accomplish for the day, and work backwards from that. An outcome can be anything from, “I had a great lunch,” to “I enjoyed my day,” to “I kicked arse in my presentation.” What’s important is that you’re jumping ahead to the end result. I like to think of this practice as taking a few *mindful minutes* to avoid going on a *mindless march*.

3 Steps for Great Daily Outcomes

Here are three steps you can use to create your three compelling stories to drive your day:

- **Step 1. Identify your three key outcomes.** You choose what your three key results are. For example, maybe your three most important outcomes are: “I mowed the lawn, I completed my project plan, and I had a great lunch.” If you’re feeling really off, maybe your three outcomes are, “I enjoyed my breakfast, I enjoyed my lunch, and I enjoyed my dinner.”
- **Step 2. Turn your three outcomes into one-liner stories.** Stories help you add an emotional connection to your tasks. You can even be the hero (“Today, I conquered the mess in the laundry room.”)
- **Step 3. Connect your stories to your values.** You can connect your stories to things you value. For example, maybe you don’t like to rake the leaves, but you like to do your part “to help.” Maybe you don’t like doing spreadsheets, but you like “to improve.” Maybe you like “adventure.” Maybe you like “achievement.” To build on the previous example, “Today I conquered the laundry room with skill” which is a contrast to slogging my way through to victory. One of the things I like to do each day is “master my craft.” Get creative. Find the play in your day.

The real beauty of Daily Outcomes is that you can wake up any day and simply ask yourself, “What are the three things I really want to accomplish today?” That’s it.

Make Your “To Do” List More Meaningful

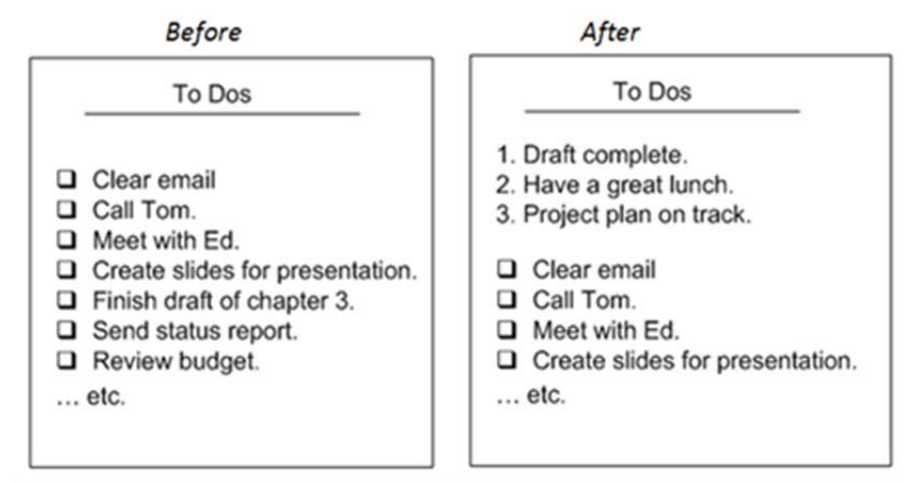
But what if you have way more than three things to do for the day? Simply add your three outcomes (your wins) for the day to the top.

The three outcomes will guide all the rest of your tasks.

These three outcomes are your “tests for success” for the day. It’s your personal way of setting yourself up for success each day.

Visual - Identify Three Wins at the Top of Your “To Do” List

Here is an example of adding three wins or outcomes to the top of your “To Do” list:



Be the Architect, the Author, or the Director of Your Life

Designing each day empowers you to make things happen with skill. You can be the architect of your day or the author of your life, a story at a time, and a day at a time:

- **You get to be the architect of your life.** Design stories that empower and inspire you for action.
- **You get to be the author of your life.** Write your story forward and connect to your emotions.
- **You get to be the director of your life.** You choose where to point your camera and what to focus on.

Always remember that you are the most important meaning maker in your life.

Your Assignment

1. Identify the three results you want for today.
2. Turn each result into a simple story that connects to your passion and values.

Day 4 - Let Things Slough Off

“Sometimes you have to let go to see if there was anything worth holding on to.” – Anonymous

Your Outcome

- *Learn how to let things go with skill. By letting things “slough off”, you improve your ability to focus on what counts and you make room for YOUR best results.*

Welcome to Day 4

Welcome to **day 4** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In day 3, we looked at using three stories to drive your day. Today we look at letting things slough off. Letting things slough off simply means either letting things go from your plate either by design or as a natural process of focusing on higher priorities. This is the key to starting each day with a fresh start.

If you don't let things slough off, the problem is you weight yourself down. This is the problem of big “To Do” lists, which either turn into lists of things that never get done, or you spend all your time managing your list of things to do, but never getting anything done. If you're a slave to your “To Do” list, or if you fear the sheer magnitude of its size, it's not working for you!

Even if you could do it all, you can't do it all at once. You only have so much time and energy in the day. If there's one take away from all this remember that it's the achievements under your belt AND the journey that you look back on.

Three Keys to Letting Things Slough Off

There are three keys to letting things slough off with skill:

1. **Each day, create a new “To Do” list.** Start with a fresh “To Do” list each day. These are your [Daily Outcomes](#). A simple way to do this is use a new piece of paper and write your three outcomes at the top. If you're using an electronic system, then simply create a new file and name it with today's date. For example, for Wednesday, August 4th, 2010, I would simply name it: 2010-08-04. I use this approach so that I can sort it easily and flip back through my previous days whenever I want. Rather than automatically add everything from the day before, only carry over what you think is an absolute priority for today – and let the rest go. The key here is to focus on what's valuable now from today's vantage point, checking against what you want to accomplish for the overall week.
2. **Each week, create a new “To Do” list.** Start with a fresh “To Do” list each week. These are your [weekly outcomes](#). Identify the three results that you really want for your week and write those down. Simply grab a new piece of paper each week and write down your three main outcomes. If you're doing it electronically, then each Monday, create a new file and

name it the current date. For example, Monday, August 9th, 2010 would be: 2010-08-09. This lets you scroll back through your weekly lists of outcomes. This is how you implement the [Monday Vision](#) practice from [Getting Results the Agile Way](#).

3. **Focus on flowing value.** The real key to letting things slough off is focusing on flowing value. Instead of focusing on your list of things to do or just getting things done, focus on flowing value. Focus on your most extreme value and let the rest go. Value is in the eye of the beholder. It could be value to you, or to your family, or to your team, or to your company. Simply by thinking in terms of your “wins” each day, each week, etc. you shine the light on your most important victories. One way to always get back on track is to ask, “What your next best thing to do?” Another question to ask is, “What do you want to accomplish?”

The pattern here is to shift your focus to what’s important now based on what you want to accomplish. The other thing to remember is that if you let something go, and it truly is vital, it will continue to resurface. You can then deal with it when it makes the most sense.

Set Up Boundaries in Time and Quantity

Setting up boundaries is another key to letting things slough off with skill:

1. **Set a limit in terms of quantity.** For example, can you prioritize your top three things? ... your top 5?, etc. Instead of making a laundry list, can you make your ‘short list.’ [The Rule of 3](#) is your friend for setting limits whenever you are overwhelmed by quantity and you have to let things go. If you’re a blogger, you might decide that your post will be no longer than two paragraphs or a list of 10 items.
2. **Set a limit in terms of time.** You can set limits in terms of time. For example, you can decide up front that you’ll spend no more than 20 minutes on that. Or you might decide that after a week, it’s just diminishing returns. You might give yourself a maximum of spending 30 minutes a day doing email. In XP development, there is a practice of a “40 Hour Work Week.” if you’re a blogger, you might decide that you’ll spend no longer than 20 minutes writing your best material and sharing your best insights ... anything after that sloughs off!

This means brutally focusing on spending more time on what you value, and letting the rest go. You might think of it as either “fierce focus” or “driving with clarity.” Remember that you “get what you focus on” so spend more time on what you want, not what you don’t.

Examples of Boundaries in Time and Quantity

Boundaries in terms of time and quantity will help keep your sanity and help you surf your way through producing great results. Here are some examples:

- When I first joined Microsoft, one of my colleagues said that their boundary is “dinner on the table at 5:30” and that’s how they achieved work-life balance.

- When I later joined another group in Microsoft, a colleague told me that their boundary is they “take weekends off.” They’ll work their fingers to the bone all week, but when the weekend comes it’s their time to recharge.
- When I worked at Tiffany & Company, one of our director’s had an interesting boundary – Tuesday nights is date night with his wife. Another one of the manager’s at Tiffany & Company had an interesting buffer he used – “Don’t spend \$20 on a \$5 problem.” In other words, if the problem is only worth 10 minutes of your time, don’t spend more than that.
- For me, using The Rule of 3 to take away three actionable insights from all the books I go through has both saved me a lot of time, and generated a lot of value.

Additional Considerations for Letting Go with Skill

Here are some additional points to ponder that will help you let things go with skill:

1. **Time Changes What’s Important.** “To Do” lists get stale. Backlogs get stale. Laundry lists get stale. Everything gets stale. You can spend all your time re-arranging stale things, or you can spend just enough time bubbling up what’s important and taking action on it.
2. **Fresh Starts.** By creating new “To Do” lists each day and each week instead of one massive one, you give yourself a fresh start. You carry the most important things forward.
3. **Travel light.** Don’t be a beast of burden. If you bite off what you can chew, you can actually get it done. This helps you travel light each day and each week. Rather than start off with an over-loaded pack of things you may never need, you start off with a simple vision and stories of your most important results.
4. **Spend more time doing over “paper shuffling”** One of the worst things you can do is continuously reshuffle the things you have to do instead of just do them. For all the things that you keep reshuffling but not actually doing, admit it. Put them into a “parking lot” or “shelve” them for a later point when you will actually work on them. Don’t keep them in your face, and don’t let them get in the way of your results. Most of all, don’t die the “death of a thousand paper cuts.” (If you’ve never heard this term before, paper shuffling is one way to die the death of a thousand paper cuts.)
5. **Value Delivered Over Backlog Burndown.** Rather than simply burn through your laundry lists of tasks, do the quick reality check and ask whether the task is still important. More importantly, step back and ask the simple question, if you completed it, “Does it matter?” Does it connect back to the outcomes that you care about now or in the future, or was it simply a good idea that’s now past it’s prime or past it’s time? In other words, don’t look at your big task lists or backlogs as what drives you. They are simply input. Draw from them, but focus on delivering value, not simply blind execution of things that were important at some point, but now are no longer, “your next best thing to do.”
6. **It’s a mindset thing.** A large part of letting things go with skill is about shifting your mindset. It’s about thinking in terms of value delivered over backlog burndown. It’s about asking questions like, “What’s the next best thing for me to do?” or “What do I want to accomplish?” It’s about focusing on value and your wins and what you got done, over focusing on what you didn’t get done.

Your Assignment

1. Write down three outcomes for today. This is re-enforcing our daily outcomes AND practicing letting things slough off with skill.
2. Write down your three outcomes for the week. Consider the remaining time and energy you have for the rest of the week, where can you get the most bang for the buck? What would three wins for the week look like?
3. Set one simple limit on something that's been wearing you down. Set either a time limit or a quantity limit.

Day 5 – Hot Spots – Map Out What’s Important

“One reason so few of us achieves what we truly want is that we never direct our focus; we never concentrate our power.”—Tony Robbins

Your Outcome

- Learn how to use Hot Spots to create a simple map of what’s going on in your life. Use your Hot Spots map as a way to invest your time and energy where it really counts, and to know that you’re on your path.

Welcome to Day 5

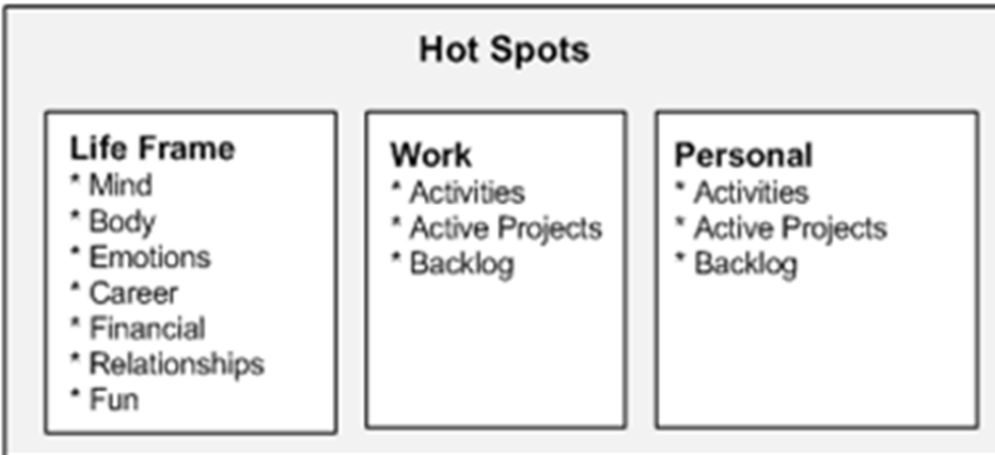
Welcome to **day 5** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 4**, we look at letting things go with skill. Today, we look at mapping out what’s important. I call this practice [Hot Spots](#) and it’s from my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#).

Hot Spots are a way to see the forest from the trees. The simplest metaphor is to think of your life as a heat map. Take a moment to actually imagine a heat map. On this heat map, if I were to ask you, what’s going on at work, what would you see? If I were to ask you, what’s going at home, what would you see? If I were to ask you to step back and look across your life, what would you see?

I used those three levels for a reason: work, home, and life. Your ability to quickly see what’s going on in each area of your life, will help you make better trade-offs across the board.

Visual – Mental Model for Hot Spots

Here is a simple mental model for thinking about your Hot Spot map:



Three Keys to the Mental Model

There are three things to notice here:

1. **There are three separate lists:** *Life Frame*, *Work*, and *Personal*. These are three simple lists that help you figure out what's going on in your life.
2. **Note the "Backlog" category under Work and Personal.** This is a way to put everything that's not active, off your plate. You can acknowledge that you have a lot of projects at work or personal projects, but if they aren't active in your life, then they are part of your "backlog." Don't mix them up with what's really on your plate right now.
3. **The Life Frame is a durable set of categories that is relatively stable over time:** *Mind, Body, Emotions, Career, Finance, Relationships, and Fun*. If you invest in these areas, they support each other. If you don't invest in these areas, they work against you. For example, try being your best when you let your body go, or try doing well at work, if you don't build your relationships, or try having fun if you let your emotions run your life.

Three Steps to Map Out Your Hot Spots

For the purpose of this exercise, just think of your Hot Spots as simple lists. We'll create three simple lists to answer the question, "What's on your radar?"

Here are the steps to follow:

- **Step 1. Map out your Work Hot Spots.** Write down a list of your key roles, your activities, and your projects. Keep it at the macro level. This isn't a dump of all your tasks. It's the buckets, not all the items inside the buckets. For example, for work, I would list my main projects: "Common Catalog," "Simple IA," "Azure Security Notes," "Customer Connected Engineering," etc. I turn themes of work into projects, and I give them a name. Making them projects gives them a start and finish, and helps me identify outcomes for the project, and measure the impact.

- **Step 2. Map out your Personal Hot Spots.** Write down a list of your key roles, your activities, and your projects at home. For example, for persona, I would list some of my main projects: “Getting Results,” “RV,” “Backyard,” .etc. Don’t worry about getting the order right – just dump what’s on your mind.
- **Step 3. Map out your Life Hot Spots.** Write down the key areas or “big rocks” in your life that are important. Make this a quick exercise and simply list out your top list of areas that are important in your life. For example, I tend to list: mind, body, emotions, career, financial, relationships, and fun (I refer to this list as my Life Frame, because it acts like a lens to helps me frame out or look at the big areas in my life in a simple way. Feel free to use my list as a starting point. It’s easy to swap things out or add, such as adding a “Spirit” category or a “Community” bucket. I lump “Community” under my relationships bucket, but what’s important is that the categories make sense for you.

Congratulations – you just created more clarity in your life than many businesses or people do in a life time!

Three Keys to a Great Hot Spots Map

Here are three keys to creating a great map of your Hot Spots:

1. Don’t try to put your lists in any clever order. It actually breaks them.
 - What’s important is that each list actually resonates with you when you look at it.
 - The order things are listed should simply be the order you would rattle them off the top of your mind.
 - Don’t try to alphabetize them or put them in any logical order. They should simply reflect your mind. I can’t emphasize that enough.
2. Stick the things you aren’t really spending any time or energy on under your backlog. You might find that you have really long lists. That’s OK. It’s a process. What’s important is now you have a map of what’s going on in your life, from three views — work, personal, and life. If things on your list, really aren’t active, then move them down your list under a heading you call “Backlog.”
3. Keep your maps out in the open where they are easy to see.

Using Your Hot Spots to Invest Your Time and Energy

You can use your Hot Spots map to easily look or scan across what’s on your radar. Instead of trying to remember what you were trying to do, you can step back and say, what’s worth doing or where do I need to spend more time or energy? In other words, now with your life portfolio at your finger tips, you can choose where to invest and where to de-invest at a glance.

By asking yourself some very simple questions, you can test your investments. For example, are you spending enough time or energy in relationships? Are you giving your body enough rest and relaxation? Are you challenging your body enough? Are you making time for fun or for play?, etc.

The key to investing wisely, is simply to answer the question, “Why?” ... and then cross-checking by asking the question, “What do you want to accomplish?” Your mind can find the answers when you ask the right questions. If your mind can’t find the right answers, then pair up or find somebody you trust how can.

Your Assignment

1. Review your Hot Spot maps for work, personal, and life and improve them until you feel they truly represent what’s going on in your life. They should be simple and scannable. They are not your outcomes, they are not your tasks, they are simply a list of the activities or projects or big rocks in your life.
2. Explore some of the examples of [Hot Spots](#) in [Chapter 4 – Hot Spots](#), from [Getting Results the Agile Way](#).
3. Pick one area that you could invest less in to invest more in another area. Identify why you would want to make this shift. This is your chance to deliberately improve an area of your life through a conscious investment and managing your life portfolio in a smart way by taking a look from the balcony.

Day 6 – Friday Reflection – Identify Three Things Going Well and Three Things to Improve

“I’ve found that small wins, small projects, small differences often make huge differences.” –
Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Your Outcome

- *Celebrate your wins and find your personal success patterns. Learn a simple way to practice your attitude of gratitude while growing your ability to get meaningful results.*

Welcome to Day 6

- Welcome to **day 6** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 5**, we created a simple map of what’s going on in our life so that we could improve our focus and invest our time and energy more effectively. Today, we reflect on our past week. I call this practice **Friday Reflection**. It’s part of the [Monday vision, Daily Wins, Friday Reflection](#) pattern from my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#).
- Friday Reflection is a simple but powerful practice. For Friday Reflection, simply think about your past week and identify three things going well and three things to improve. It’s a chance to celebrate your wins, no matter how small. It’s also a chance to figure out what’s not working for you. Whatever you learn, you can carry forward into the next week, and use this to continuously improve your results each week. It’s a snowball of success.

Three Steps for Friday Reflection

Here are three simple steps to perform your Friday Reflection:

- **Step 1. Ask yourself, what are three things going well?** The key here is to look at your approach. You can’t always control your results. Instead, focus on whether you made smart plays based on what you wanted to accomplish. Pat yourself on the back for making your best moves, independent of the results. No matter how good a baseball team is, you win some, you lose some. The best you can do is play your best. Where you made smart moves, pay attention to why it worked and how you can use it in the future.
- **Step 2. Ask yourself, what are three things to improve?** This is the tough question, but it’s important to own it, and look at it objectively. Once you put it down on paper, you don’t need to over-analyze it. You simply need to see if you can identify the root cause, but then more importantly, identify some specific ways to improve. Brainstorm here and let your imagination run wild. The key is to quickly shift to “how” questions, don’t keep asking “why?” For example, “How can I be more effective in that situation? ... or “How can I be more resourceful when that happens again?” ... or “How can I prevent that from happening in the first place?”

- **Step 3. Identify what you'll change next week.** You'll likely come up with a laundry list of simple things you can test to improve your results. Just pick a few you really care about and add them to your bag of tricks. Rather than over-analyze your ideas, just write down a few things that you can test next week and get feedback on. The idea is to learn and improve, not beat yourself up, or wallow in pity.

I recommend adding a reminder to your calendar and blocking off time for it. If you don't, it's easy to forget to do it. If you schedule it, it will happen, and it's one of the simplest ways to improve your results every week.

Example of Friday Reflection

Here is a quick example of my Friday Reflection:

3 Things Going Well ...

- I got great feedback from a lot of people inside and outside of Microsoft how 30 Days of Getting Results is helping them achieve more meaningful results.
- I added key people to my network at Microsoft that have very effective ways of getting results.
- I effectively anticipated just about every possible surprise this week and had a fallback plan.

3 Things to Improve ...

- I had the wrong lens, model, and map for looking at a few scenarios, which limited my effectiveness.
- I didn't checkpoint a few of my key assumptions with the right people as early as I could have.
- I didn't reset expectations appropriately in a few cases, which would have saved me some extra work and backtracking.

As far as a few things I'll change next week, I'll be asking a lot more pointed questions next week regarding people's their model and their map. I've been quick to expose my thinking and vision, but now I'll be testing other people's assumptions, their operating models, their vision, their timeframes, and gaining clarity on understanding how they test their success or what their rules are for what good looks like. It should be interesting. I'll also be studying up against on effective argumentation as well as rhetoric (the art of arguing without anger.)

Why Friday Reflection

This is the perfect opportunity to take a look at the patterns in your week:

- *If you're not achieving what you set out to do for the week, why not?*
- *Are you biting off more than you can chew?*
- *Are you letting other things get in the way?*
- *Are you figuring out the right things to get done?*

- *Are you making the right trade offs?*

As you pay attention to these patterns, you'll find you will improve your ability to anticipate, you'll get a better handle on your capacity, and you'll improve your ability to focus, prioritize, and achieve the results you want, while responding to things with skill, instead of reacting.

Aside from naturally improving your ability to get results, you'll also improve your outlook.

- Too many people look at only the upside or the downside of their week.
- Looking at three things going well and three things to improve gives you a more balanced view, and your wins will build momentum, while your lessons learned will support you in all areas of your life.

Your Assignment

1. Schedule a recurring 20 minute appointment with yourself for Friday's for reflection on your results. I recommend making this something you do earlier in the AM versus later in the day. Your clarity will serve you for the rest of the day and start you off on the right foot.
2. Identify your three things going well and your three things to improve. Celebrate those wins!

Day 7 – Setup Boundaries and Buffers

“Simply pushing harder within the old boundaries will not do.” — Karl Weick quotes

Your Outcome

- *Create space in your life to renew and recharge. By setting boundaries and buffers, you set yourself up for sustainable results and you take a significant step toward mastering your work-life balance.*

Welcome to Day 7

Welcome to **day 7** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 6**, we learned how to use Friday Reflection to skillfully take a look at what’s going well and what to improve.

Today, I had to ask myself, what’s the most useful nugget I can share with you at this stage? I think the answer is — **setting boundaries and buffers**. This is how you **create space in your life** and **make time for what’s important**. It’s at the heart of finding your **peaceful calm** and finding your **flow**.

A Quick Recap of What We’ve Learned so Far ...

Before we start though, let’s take a moment to recap some things we’ve learned so far:

1. *You can use [The Rule of 3](#) to avoid getting overwhelmed.*
2. *You’re the author of your life and you can write your story forward, one moment or one day at a time*
3. *You can use three stories to drive your day and and light up your day by connecting to your values (Daily Wins).*
4. *On Mondays, you can use three stories to drive your week (Monday Vision).*
5. *On Fridays, you can use Friday Reflection to celebrate your wins and find your personal success patterns.*
6. *You can map out what’s important in your life using Hot Spots to create a meaningful map.*
7. *You can let things slough off with skill ... no more straws breaking the camel’s back .*

[Agile Results](#) is a system that can support you the rest of your life, no matter what you do. I use it for shipping stuff at Microsoft, leading teams, writing books, learning, etc. The beauty though, is not just that it’s simple, or that it’s proven ... it’s that **each day you get a new chance at bat – a fresh start**.

Each day you wake up is another chance to ask the question, *“What are three things you want for today?”* ... and so you **write your story forward**.

Buffers and Boundaries are the Key to Work-Life Balance

Now then, on to setting up boundaries and buffers ...

- If you can master this, **it's THE key to work-life balance**, and it's how you can get **more done, in less time, with more energy**, and it's how you can find your flow.
- If you feel overwhelmed by too much to do, and not enough time, buffers and boundaries will set you free. At the end of the day, it's about knowing what you ultimately want and balancing your competing wants and needs against that.
- Keep this in mind — you have to Protect yourself – and boundaries and buffers are your friend. **Nobody will set effective boundaries for you**, and you know the most about yourself better than anyone.
- This is the ultimate care and feeding of yourself, which sets the stage for everything you do.

Visual: Mental Model for Boundaries and Buffers

Here is a simple mental model for thinking about buffers and boundaries:

Hot Spots	Boundaries
Mind	
Body	Minimum of 3 hours
Emotions	
Career	Maximum of 50 hours
Financial	
Relationships	Minimum of 8 hours
Fun	Minimum of 3 hours

Note that you have to set your own boundaries that work for you. This is just an example of how some people have found a way to perform well at work, spend more quality time with those they love, invest in their body, and find a way to spend time on their passions again ... and remember that one person's minimum is another person's maximum.

Three Steps for Setting Up Boundaries and Buffers

Here are three simple steps for setting up your boundaries and buffers:

- **Step 1. Set up time boundaries for your week.** Keep this at the high level. Decide the maximum time to spend on work. Decide the minimum amount of time you should spend on your body. For example, if you're not getting enough sleep, decide that you'll get a minimum of 6 hours or 8 hours or whatever you need to perform your best. If you want to get your best results and have a sustainable life style, don't compromise on eating, sleeping,

and working out. Trade something else where you can. The simplest rules I've heard for setting limits on work are "Dinner on the table at 5:30" and "weekends off."

- **Step 2. Set time limits for your daily routines.** For the things that you do regularly, figure out how much time you should spend on it. Don't default to how much time you already spend on it. Decide how much time is reasonable based on where you are at and what you want to accomplish. Balance that against your other competing demands and set simple time limits. For example, when I run, it's 30 minutes, but periodically an hour. When I blog, I give myself 20 minutes maximum on average, except for the occasional "heavy hitter post."
- **Step 3. Build in space.** Create space in your life. This is key – if you're always feeling harried or under the gun, then you don't have effective buffers or boundaries. You need to build in some space. For example, I need my alone time on Sundays and either early in the days during the week, or later at night. It's how I recharge. When I drive to work, I give myself 30 minutes to get to there, though it usually takes closer to 15. I don't want to race against the clock. I eat breakfast slowly, I take the back way, and I plan my outcomes for the day, while enjoying the ride (and of course, playing my favorite tunes.) I don't blog on weekends, except for the occasional exception (I'm making exceptions while I work on 30 Days of Getting Results.) Copy machines and I don't get along, so I print off stuff for my meetings well in advance. One of my favorite rules here is "Tuesday night is date night" and everything has to fit around that. Keep in mind there are always lots of reasons and lots of excuses why we can't create space. That's not the challenge here. The challenge on the table is — find a way to make space — "how can you create space in your life?"

Stepping back, I can tell you that the most important pattern I've seen across people that get more of what they want from life, is that they fix time for eating, sleeping, and working out – and everything else fits around that. They never rob themselves here – it's their foundation and platform for all results in their life.

Examples of Setting Boundaries in Hot Spots

Try using "Hot Spots" (Mind, Body, Emotions, Career, Financial, Relationships, and Fun) and setting boundaries like this. Set a max on career and a min on relationships, body, and fun. For example

- **Mind**
- **Body** – minimum of 3 hrs
- **Career** – maximum of 50 hrs
- **Financial**
- **Relationships** – minimum of 3 hrs
- **Fun** – minimum of 3 hrs

You can only spread your life force over so much. **The categories support each other.**

Key Insights

1. When you set a minimum in the right categories, you avoid getting unbalanced and improving other categories. When you set a maximum in the right categories, you learn how to become more effective. For example, if you only have 8 hours to throw at your day, you'll use them wisely.
2. The worst mistake it to throw more time at problems.
3. The key is to reduce time spent, while increasing value and improving effectiveness/efficiency.

So step one is deciding to spend no more than 50 hours each week at work. Now it forces you to bite off only what you can chew. This is how you start improving plate management and pushing back effectively.

Why Use Time to Set Boundaries

It's the simplest way to avoid spending \$20 on \$5 problems. One of my most important lessons is that the best way to set boundaries is to use time. **Treat time as a first class citizen.** It's pretty reliable too – each day you get 24 hours. Each week you get 7 days or 168 hours. And the cycle repeats itself, each day, each week. So if you can master your day, you can master your week – and looking at your time from a weekly standpoint helps you establish a schedule that works for you.

I used to be very “scope-driven.” I wanted to change the world. The problem is that when you drive from scope, **you often run out of time**, then you have to cut corners you don't want to cut. Worse, you often **push past your boundaries** (“I'll eat lunch later”, or “I'll stay up later to finish this one last thing”, or “I can't take a break now,” etc. Worse, when you don't respect time, not only do you **throw time at problems** and re-enforce bad habits ... you **miss windows of opportunity**. I've found that a stitch in time actually saves way more than nine ... and that it's the key to effective results.

This is a key shift from it's done when it's done or it takes as long as it takes, to how much time do you have for it and how much time is worth spending on that and how much is too much time to spend on that?

One way to think about this is that **time is a budget**, just like your money. You only have so much. You can spend it wisely, or you can let it rule you, or you can waste it. **Time is a unique resource that you don't get back** and choosing how you spend your discretionary time is what ultimately changes your life. If you want to spend more time in something, then make more time for something. The way to do so is to set smart limits on the things you know you need to do. Trade your time by design vs. by default.

Your Assignment

1. Choose an area in your life that's not working for you and try setting a new limit. This might mean setting a maximum amount of time in something, or a minimum amount of time in something else.
2. Find one simple way to add space in your life and take it for a test drive next week.

Day 8 – Dump Your Brain to Free Your Mind

“You must weed your mind as you would weed your garden.” — Astrid Alauda

Your Outcome

- *Turn your mind from a carnival funhouse or haunted mansion to your own private den. Free your mind up to focus on better things. This is part of achieving a "peaceful calm" state of mind, as well as getting rid of the "buzz" in your mind, or the nagging reminders that interrupt your focus throughout the day. Rather than use your brain as a depot for random ideas, "To Do" lists, reminders, and general mind clutter — you'll have a place for dumping your brain and unshackling your mind.*

Welcome to Day 8

Welcome to **day 8** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 7** we learned how to setup boundaries and buffers as a way to recharge our batteries, set the stage for work-life balance, and create a foundation for a sustainable life style.

Today, we'll de-clutter our minds and give ourselves space to think, dream, or simply wonder around without bumping into so much mental clutter, mental chatter, and noise.

The Mental Chatter is There for a Reason

Before we start doing any brain dumping, we need to know why this works and why it's so important. All those things on your mind, are probably there for a reason. They're reminding you that you've got stuff on your plate that needs attention. There are things that could threaten your quality of life, or that are blocking you from the quality of life you'd like to enjoy. Many of the things bugging you, are actually useful, whether it's for motivation or simply for reminders.

Thinking on Paper to Dump Your State

Your mind is not where all the things bugging you belong. Stream of conscious thinking is way less effective than thinking on paper. When you dump your state on paper, you can stop trying to remember what you were thinking about, and instead focus on what you want to do about it, or whether you can just let it go, or prioritize something else. When it's on paper, you free your mind. When it's on paper you can slice it and dice it in a more effective way, or sort it in a way that works for you, instead of against you.

Thinking on paper is how you go from soup to sanity.

The opposite approach is to let things lurk in your mind, where every corner you turn, something jumps out at you — surprise!— or each thought turns into a Jack-in-the-Box, or each idea is like looking straight into a Funhouse mirror.

3 Ways to Dump Your Brain

There are three common ways to dump your brain:

1. **Daily brain dumps.** Have a place to write things down. For me, on my computer I keep Notepad (a plaintext editor) open and I dump things down throughout the day. It's a simply a tickler list. Rather than let it bounce around, I write it down. This helps me stay focused throughout the day, without worrying about what I'm forgetting. At the end of the day, before I go home, I dump down whatever "state" I've built up in my mind, such as things I still want to accomplish. If I have a bunch of browser windows open, I simply paste the URLs into my open Notepad in case I want to "rehydrate" my state at another time. I simply save these brain dumps with the current date: "20010-08-06", "2010-08-07", "2010-08-08", etc. This way I can flip back through them if I want, or just let them go. It's my "dumping ground."
2. **Periodic brain dumps.** This is where you periodically dump everything down that's top of mind or tugging at you. It's just a long, flat bulleted list of anything that keeps popping into your mind. You take a few minutes and you just keep dumping until your brain says, "OK, I think it looks like you got everything I've been trying to tell you." This might be many pages, or you might find your mind was simply a broken record and it's been telling you the same five things again and again. Once your mind feels heard, and you've echoed it back by writing it down, your mind can now shift into what it does best – problem solving. In my case, again I use Notepad and I simply title the file today's date ("2010-08-08 – Master List") I tend to add a distinction in case I have my daily brain dump and my mother-load.
3. **Pen and paper on the go.** Simply carry a notepad, a sticky pad, or index files with you. It's nothing fancy, but it is effective. Rather than let things float around in your mind, jot them down. You'll get very effective, very quickly at keeping tight tickler lists to remember gobs of information. A single word might be just enough to help you jump back to that idea you had to change the world. As a key tip, use The Rule of 3 to keep things simpler. For example, when I'm in a meeting or taking training, I'll shoot for walking away with three take aways over a laundry list of things.

In all of these cases, you're factoring your thinking from your chatter and your reminders. This is like factoring editing from your writing – write it down, then edit. (As an aside, Hemmingway edited for an hour and wrote for an hour.) Once you have your lists, you are empowered to turn them into action, and you can simply do so by chunking them into stories, and fitting them into your three stories for the week, or three stories for the day.

Example of a Periodic Brain Dump

Here's a quick example of a periodic brain dump. All I did was dump the things that are bugging me around the house:

- *Clear the growth along the path*
- *Clear the growth around the deck*
- *Clear the growth on the back driveway*
- *Get rid of stuff that's no longer useful*
- *Downsize book collection*
- *Fix the gutters on the house*
- *Fix the gutters on the garage*
- *Fix the front deck*
- *Fix the back deck*
- *Re-tile bathroom 1*
- *Fix the shower in bathroom 1*
- *Add a border to the back lawn*
- *Re-tile bathroom 2*
- *Take down the tree*
- *Get a new fence*
- *Fix the floor in den 2*
- *Fix the window in den 2*
- *Fix the floor in the kitchen*
- *Shred the papers*

That was step one. It's random and it's just a quick dump of my top of mind things. Step two would be sorting it and analyzing it against what I want to accomplish. That's where my map of Hot Spots really comes into play, because I can see at a glance what's on my radar and what's important.

Your Assignment

1. Dump your brain. Simply make a list and dump out everything that's top of mind or tugging at your thoughts.
2. Take a moment to enjoy the fact that you uncluttered your mind and gave it some breathing room. Let yourself play with the possibilities.
3. If you're really feeling gung-ho, then review your list and find some low hanging fruit. For example, the simplest thing on my list is shredding papers, and I enjoy it, so I'm going to tackle that. For the other things, I'll have to step back, prioritize against what I want to accomplish, then make a simple plan.

Day 9 – Prioritize Your Day with MUST, SHOULD, COULD

“Good things happen when you get your priorities straight.” — Scott Caan

Your Outcome

- *Get a handle on the minimum you need to do. Get the minimum out of the way and the rest of the day or week is yours. By having clarity on what you MUST do, you can avoid getting overwhelmed by all the tasks and activities competing for your time and energy. With clarity comes conviction and you set the stage for fierce results. Or simply clear your plate, then do enjoy the rest of the day, Cool Hand Luke style.*

Welcome to Day 9

Welcome to **day 9** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 8**, we learned how to dump your brain to free your mind. Today, we learn how to use some simple language to help us prioritize more effectively.

Prioritizing effectively is one of the most important keys to your success. When you feel like you're working on the right thing at the right time, it's easier to focus and stay engaged. Prioritizing is a continuous activity. It's about taking things on while letting other things go. It's about making trade-offs. It's also about finding synergies. To prioritize effectively you need to be able to see the forest from the trees, and you need to be able to identify the minimum for success. That's where MUST, SHOULD, and COULD come into play.

Must, Should, Could

Rather than prioritize with priority 1, priority 2, and priority 3 (or p1, p2, p3), I've found it way more helpful to think in terms of MUST, SHOULD, and COULD. If you need to use a prioritization system that is number centric, then you can still think of it in terms of MUST, SHOULD, and COULD. If you get really good at focusing on your MUSTs, you'll see immediate improvement.

Where people fall down is they mix too many SHOULDs and COULDs in their work each day and they don't actually ever get anything done. If MUSTS really are a problem for you, The Rule of 3 should help you cap and avoid overwhelming yourself. Getting three MUSTS done each day quickly builds momentum. It's a sense of accomplishment. You may find as you get more effective, you start to bite off more.

Getting a Quick Handle on Your Day

Ask yourself ...

- *What MUST I do today?*
- *What SHOULD I do?*
- *What COULD I do?*

Whittle your list down to three MUSTs for the day. If you have more than three, then limit to three max. You can always up level them or bubble them up into a higher-level outcome. Capping it at three will help you focus and remember them easily.

Getting a Quick Handle on Your Week

Ask yourself ...

- *What MUST I do this week?*
- *What SHOULD I do this week?*
- *What COULD I do this week?"*

Carve out your MUSTs by weighting your window of opportunity, pain points, and best value.

Identify Your Minimum MUSTs for the Day

Here are some ways how having your MUSTs list for the day serves you:

1. If you stay mindful of your minimum MUSTs for the day, then you're in the driver's seat. Having your three MUST results on the mind, gives you a laser sharp path.
2. At an instant, you know how significantly any quick trade offs are, such as doing this over that, hitting or missing a window of opportunity, and trading pain for pleasure.
3. If your boss comes by and has something more for you to do, you can either push back or negotiate your success, "I can do that, if you want to prioritize it over XYZ ..."

What if You Have fewer than Three MUSTs?

Good for you!

Don't upgrade SHOULDs to MUSTs, acknowledge that you got your MUSTs done, and move on to your SHOULDs or COULDs. Remember the whole point of MUSTs is not just to help remind you of what's most important for you, it's about survival

Choose Tos

One thing to note is that if the word MUST for you creates a sense of heaviness or you find you no longer look forward to getting your results, then change your language. Rather than your *MUST dos*, think of your *CHOOSE TOs*. This puts you back in power and this simple reframing can help you get your energy back.

Why Priorities Matter

Here are some key reasons why priorities matter:

1. A laundry list of To Dos where everything is equally important is a recipe for failure.
2. Time spent identifying your three MUSTs for the day is more than worth it because it gives you flexibility.
3. Without knowing your three MUSTs, everything is mushy and you have nothing to steer by.
4. At the end of the day, you will likely wonder how you worked on what you thought were so many important things yet without anything important getting done.
5. MUST becomes increasingly clear under high pressure.
6. People who do their minimum MUSTs each day tend to do well.
7. When push comes to shove, these people pick one MUST each day for themselves, their job, and their family to keep things in check, when chaos, pressure, and overload abound.

Why MUSTs?

There are many reasons for using MUSTs, but here are a few to consider:

- **MUST means something.** Contrast this with asking “What is Priority 1 this week?” Your mind has to translate what Priority 1 really means. With MUST, SHOULD, COULD your mind can categorize the tasks much easier instead of translating into some other systems.
- **Nailing your MUSTs builds a rhythm of results.** Without your three MUSTs to prioritize with, everything looks important. This is the source of overwhelm, shutdown, burnout, and lack of focus. When you start with a firm foundation of MUSTs, then you can drive your day. You can prioritize incoming requests against your three. As you finish something, you can take more on. This is how you find your rhythm for results.
- **MUSTs help you put your most important issues out on the table.** It’s the heart of focus and prioritization and outcomes. If you don’t know you’re on your best path, you can’t commit all the way. When you know you’re working on the most important things right now in the moment for your most important outcomes, then you can fully engage and you’re no longer worried about all the other noise.
- **MUSTs help you quickly identify your minimum for the day.** The MUST is for brutal clarity around the minimum — I’ve never found a more cutting word to get somebody to absolutely focus on just that (and even with *MUST* folks still bite off too much or don’t prioritize their best.) The commitment of MUST forces you to choose definitely doable in the available time and not overstep. Taking on too much is where folks fall down.
- **MUSTs help you create a glide path for the rest of your day.** Take care of your basic needs and MUSTs first in the day so it’s a glide path for the rest. A simple way to think about your day is MUSTs, then SHOULDs, then COULDs.
- **MUSTs enable incredible flexibility.** If you know your three MUSTs for the day, you then can prioritize against them. If something more important comes in, you can bump something out as a deliberate trade, yet still remain agile.

Balance Against What You Want

As you deal with your MUSTs, one thing to keep in mind is that you should balance them against what you ultimately want.

You can use three simple questions to help you checkpoint:

- *What do you want?*
- *What do you want to accomplish?*
- *Who do you want to be and what experiences do you want to create?*

Your Assignment

1. Identify your MUSTs for the day.
2. Identify your MUSTs for the week.

Day 10 – Feel Strong All Week Long

“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.” — Hilary Cooper

Your Outcome

- Get ready. YOUR world’s about to rock. You’re about to become a **powerful force of one**. We all have strengths and weaknesses. It’s time to shift from spending more time in your weaknesses to spending more time in your strengths. By spending more time in your strengths, and less time in your weaknesses, it’s like a combination of simultaneously uncorking your abilities and drinking from the fountain of youth. Finding your vital few set of strengths and spending more time in them is the single most direct way to crank up your energy and your passion, enjoy what you do, and create unique value to your world.

Welcome to Day 10

Welcome to **day 10** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 9**, we learned how to focus and prioritize using MUST, SHOULD, and COULD. Today we learn how to refocus the time and energy we already spend away from the activities that make us weak ... to the activities that make us strong. It’s time to unleash our possibilities. For some of you, this post will sing directly to your heart, as if it’s exactly what you need, right here, right now. You’re going to change your world in your most powerful way ,,, you’re going to change how you spend your time and you’ll have a new lens for unleashing your best.

If there is one thing to remember as you read this, it’s this ... Give your best where you have your best to give.

Get on Your Strengths Path

What if there was one thing you could focus on that would help you get exponential results in all areas of your life? Well there is. It’s getting on your strengths path. When you are spending more time in the activities that make you strong, you automatically do great work, you **renew and rebuild your mind, body, emotions, and spirit**, and you dramatically accelerate your learning and growth. Fighting to get on your strengths path is one of the highest ROI (Return on Investment) battles you will ever win. It pays you back daily.

If there are so many benefits to being on your strengths path, and spending more time in your strengths, then why doesn’t everybody just do it? Because it requires self-awareness and you have to own it. **Nobody comes along and puts you on your strengths path**. YOU have to own it. YOU have to continuously find ways to spend more time in your strengths. **Only you know truly what makes you strong** and what makes you weak. You have to decide you want to

spend more time in your strengths and you have to be deliberate about spending less time in your strengths.

You're the architect of your life. Build a firm foundation. Design how you spend your time effectively. Spend your time on your strengths. Limit your time on your weaknesses. If you get knocked down, get up again. Stay the path. Focus on finding your strengths and finding ways to leverage them. Expect a learning curve, but know that this is **the high ROI path**.

Whenever you get rundown or feel overwhelmed and drained, there is a great chance that you are not spending enough time in your strengths and you're not on your strengths path.

Grow More in Your Strengths

To look at it with another lens, many people mistake the path of weaknesses as the growth or opportunity path. What they don't realize is not only are they robbing from their energy, their best contribution, and their sense of fulfillment, but they are taking away from their greatest source of growth.

You'll grow faster in your strengths. In today's world, **you have to outpace your problems** and give your best where you have your best to give, to succeed in any situation, flow amazing value to yourself and others, and find a sustainable way for getting results in everything you do.

If you spend the bulk of your time in your weaknesses, then you are stacking the deck against you, and even if you improve your weaknesses, you will never achieve the powerful force of growing your strengths.

What Are Your Strengths

To keep this very simple, here are the keys:

- **Your strengths are your natural talents.** Your strengths are what your natural patterns for how your thinking, feeling, and behavior.
- **Your strengths are NOT what you are simply good at.** Unfortunately, many of us are good at things that make us weak or drain us, so we spend more time in those. So yes, we are good at them, but no they are not strengths that give us energy or that we exponentially improve at. True strengths are your natural talent for thinking, feeling, and behavior, applied to a context..
- **Your strengths are what you find easy to do.** The things that other people struggle with that you find very easy to do are your natural strengths.
- **Your strengths give you energy.** You can spend time in your strengths all day and actually have more energy at the end of the day than when you started. Your strengths catalyze you. They make you strong.

- **Your strengths are where you get better faster.** Your strengths are a place where you can accelerate. You grow faster in your natural strengths than in any effort that works against your strengths.

Give Your Best Where You Have Your Best to Give

You're an individual with a unique set of strengths, weaknesses. I think the key is to find a purpose that lights up the following statement:

Give your best where you have your best to give.

When you find that, it's your unique contribution to the world, and when you spend time in your strengths it's your growth, renewal and passion in action. Of course, the trick is to find something where you can be the best in the world at, and the trick there is ... it's YOUR world, since it's all relative.

Here are some key points:

- **Light things up your way.** I'm a fan of be more of yourself with skill and give your best where you have your best to give. It's all about bringing yourself to the picture and lighting things up the best way you can.
- **Amplify your results.** It lines up nicely with what I've learned to be true ... drive by your why, live your values, and play to your strengths ... and give your best where you have your best to give.
- **Renew yourself and lift others up.** I think it's important that you give your best where you have your best to give, otherwise, you can drain yourself. I think renewal and downtime and taking care of your own basics builds a firm foundation for lifting others up.
- **Focus on the vital few activities where you can really give your best.** Focus on strengths over weaknesses. You'll get more results by improving your strengths than improving your weaknesses.
- **Spend less time in your weaknesses.** Limit the time you spend in your weaknesses. Find ways to off load more of your weaknesses so you can spend more time in your strengths.
- **Fight to spend more time in your strengths.** Don't let the changes around you, cause you to lose sight of the activities that make you strong. Don't let yourself get caught up in activities that weaken you.
- **Get back on your horse.** Sometimes we get knocked off our horse. We may not have realized how beautiful the ride was or how well we were riding. We were caught up in the ride and it was great. But something changes. The ride no longer feels right and we no longer feel strong.

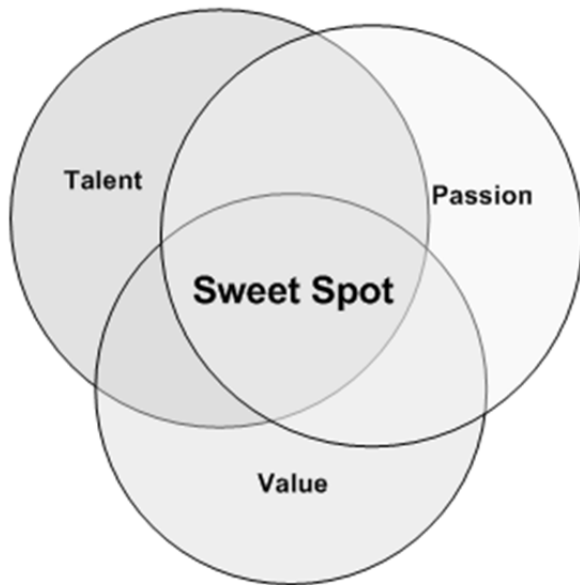
Find Your Sweet Spot

The secret of amplifying your impact and getting exponential results is finding the "sweet spot" which is the overlap of your talent, your passion, and value. Value is in the eye of the

beholder. You can flow value for yourself or for others or for your company. The key thing here is that you find the strengths that give you juice and that flow value.

Visual – The Sweet Spot

Here is a visual to hold in your mind of what it means to find your sweet spot:



Finding Your Strengths

There are many ways to find your strengths. The key is to find the activities that you look forward to, give you energy, and lift you up. Another key is to get specific. For example, maybe you can write songs all day. Maybe you can write content all day. Maybe you love to interact with customers. Maybe you like to brainstorm. Maybe you like to solve big hairy challenges. For me, I like to make sense of meaningful problems where I can turn it into a form factor that's easy to share and scale expertise. I find that having a language to think about your strengths can help you better.

Find What Gives and Takes Your Energy

At the end of the day, the most important thing is to **find where you get energy from, and find what takes it away**. This leads you to a personalized list of strengths that you can use as a lens for investing in your **portfolio of strengths** ... and this is the key to exponential results.

Three Steps to Designing a Strong Week

There are many ways to spend more time in your strengths, but here is the most effective way that I mentor individuals, teams, and leaders:

Steps	Checks
Step 1 – Map Out Your Weaknesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Can you identify the top 3 activities that make you the weakest?</i>• <i>Can you identify the types of work that make you weak?</i>• <i>Can you identify who drains you and who catalyzes you? What’s the pattern?</i>
Step 2 – Map out Your Strengths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Can you identify the top 3 activities that make you strong?</i>• <i>Can you identify the types of work that make you strong?</i>• <i>Can you identify the patterns of people that catalyze you?</i>
Step 3 – Design a Strong Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Have you eliminated as many of the activities that make you weak as you can?</i>• <i>Have you found a way to add a few activities that make you stronger?</i>• <i>Have you consolidated your weaknesses as best as you can?</i>

Reviewing the Map of Your Week from a Strengths Standpoint

Usually what happens is you find out that you have a scatter chart all over the week of spending time in your weaknesses and spending time in your strengths. The key is to consolidate your weaknesses so that you can either spend less time in them, get them off your plate, or **pair up with other people**, or find a way to enjoy them. The other key is to add more activities that give you strength to each and every day. This is the secret of renewal and boundless energy for making things happen in your life.

Example of Mapping Out Your Weaknesses

Here is an example of what a week might look like, where “W” represents an activity or task that drains you:

-	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00	-	-	-	-	-
8:00	-	-	-	-	-
9:00	W	-	W	-	-

10:00	W	-	-	-	W
11:00	-	W	-	-	-
12:00	-	W	-	W	-
1:00	W	-	-	-	W
2:00	-	-	-	-	-
3:00	W	-	W	-	W
4:00	-	W	W	-	-
5:00	-	-	-	-	-
6:00	-	-	-	-	-
7:00	-	-	-	-	-
8:00	-	-	-	-	-
9:00	-	-	-	-	-
10:00	-	-	-	-	-

Example of Mapping Out Your Strengths

Here is an example of mapping out your strengths where “S” represents something that gives you energy and that you could do all day:

-	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00	-	-	-	-	-
8:00	-	-	-	-	-
9:00	-	S	-	S	S
10:00	-	S	-	-	-
11:00	-	-	-	-	-
12:00	S	-	S	-	-
1:00	-	-	-	-	-
2:00	-	-	-	-	S

3:00	-	-	-	-	-
4:00	-	-	-	-	-
5:00	-	-	-	-	-
6:00	-	-	-	-	-
7:00	-	-	-	-	-
8:00	-	-	-	-	-
9:00	-	-	-	-	-
10:00	-	-	-	-	-

Example of a Strong Week

Here is an example of designing your week to consolidate that things that make you weak, while doing more of what makes you strong:

-	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00	-	-	-	-	-
8:00	-	-	-	-	-
9:00	W	W	W	W	W
10:00	S	S	S	S	S
11:00	-	-	-	-	-
12:00	-	S	-	S	-
1:00	S	-	-	-	-
2:00	-	-	S	-	-
3:00	-	S	-	S	-
4:00	S	-	S	-	S
5:00	-	-	-	-	-

6:00	-	-	-	-	-
7:00	-	-	-	-	-
8:00	-	-	-	-	-
9:00	-	-	-	-	-
10:00	-	-	-	-	-

Cornerstone Concepts for a Strengths-Based Approach

Here are twelve cornerstone concepts to help you really adopt a strengths-based approach to your life:

1. Everybody has strengths and weaknesses.
2. Strengths are not simply what you're good at.
3. Strengths are what you naturally think, feel, or do.
4. Spend more time in your strengths. Schedule it. If you schedule it, it happens. If you don't, it won't.
5. Own it. Only you can do this. Only you know what your strengths are.
6. Do less of what makes you weak.
7. Energy can come from your mind, body, emotions, or spirit.
8. By spending less time in your weaknesses and more time in your strengths, you renew, rebuild, and rejuvenate your mind, body, emotions, and spirit ... it's your multiplier.
9. You have to own getting on your strengths path.
10. Find the specific things you want to spend more time doing each day – the things that make you STRONG.
11. Find the jobs, tasks, and activities that are directly related to your strengths.
12. Find creative ways to change how you do what you already do to gradually integrate more of your strengths. Your little wins will add up.

Your Assignment

1. Find your strengths and **write them down** in ways that sing to your heart and put precision on what truly makes you strong. You're done when your list feels like a short-list of your super skills.
2. Map out your strengths and weaknesses.
3. Find creative ways to eliminate, consolidate, or reduce the activities that make you weak, and find a way to spend at least one more hour per week in something that makes you strong. Trade-up spending time in your weaknesses in favor of spending more time in your strengths.

Day 11 – Reduce Friction and Create Glide-Paths for Your Day

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.” — Leonardo da Vinci

Your Outcome

- *Simplify your day by getting rid of the hurdles and personal obstacle courses that are in your way throughout the day. Doing your daily chores or common tasks shouldn't be a jungle gym. It should be a glide path.*

Make your day a whole lot easier by eliminating or reducing the friction in your day. Establish “friction-free” glide paths that support you throughout your entire day. By reducing the friction and simplifying your daily routines and common tasks, you make it easier to glide through your results.

Welcome to Day 11

Welcome to **day 11** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 10**, we learned how to feel strong all week long. Today, we learn how to reduce the friction in our day, and make it easier to do the common things we do. This way we spend less energy on little things getting in our way, so we have more energy and focus to tackle the big things.

Don't die the death of a 1000 paper cuts throughout your day!

All the little friction in our day can wear us down. Don't complain about the stuff in your way ... do something about it. Your glide paths will really help you on days when you're run down, or you're running late, and you really need it most.

3 Steps to Creating Friction-Free Glide Paths

Here are three steps to creating friction-free glide paths.

- **Step 1. Walk your paths.** Simply write down your common routines and common tasks you throughout your day. If you don't know where to start, write down breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Chances are you have a lot of recurring activities each day that you can choose to tune.
- **Step 2. Identify the friction.** Identify the things that create friction throughout your day: What slows you down? ... What hoops do you have to jump through? ... What's always in your way or what are you constantly moving out of your way to get to something else?
- **Step 3. Simplify your paths.** Declutter and reduce the friction for your common scenarios, routines, and tasks. Most of the ways to do this will be obvious to you now that you've

listed your common tasks and points of friction. Brainstorm ideas for making these routines less complicated and less friction.

10 Examples of Friction-Free Glide Paths

Here are some examples of friction-free glide paths:

1. Get rid of the clothes on the top of the hamper. Tip – If you want clothes to go in the hamper, then don't have clothes on top of it. Nobody should have to lift the hamper lid with a bunch of clothes on top. If the lid keeps turning into one more shelf, then remove the lid.
2. Clear your workspace. Keep your workspace clear and ready to go. You can clear it the night before or you can do a quick sweep right before you use it.
3. Put your sneakers by the bed. If you exercise in the morning, have your sneakers and gym clothes ready to go. This is one less excuse for not working out on a day when you don't feel like it.
4. Put garbage cans where you need them.
5. Create checklists for common routines. You won't have to try and remember what to do next and you can make it easier to follow your routine.
6. Put things where you look for them. If you are always looking for something in the wrong place, then make the wrong place, the right place and put it there.
7. Make space on your bookshelf so you don't have to stack or balance things or squeeze with all your might to get that very last book to fit just right. Pulling books off your shelf shouldn't be a chore, and neither should putting them back.
8. Put your calendar where you can see it at a glance. Make it easy to quickly see what your schedule looks like.
9. Make it easy to look things up. If you regularly look certain things up, consolidate them and put them in easy reach.
10. Remove anything that you have to step over or walk around. Pave a simpler path and make it easy to go wherever you need to get to on a regular basis.

There are many, many ways to create glide paths in your day. These are just some random ideas to get your started. Get creative. You probably already know what you need to do, you just have to decide to do it. This is worth making time for since it pays you back throughout your day, and it pays you back every day ... with interest.

Your Assignment

1. Identify your worst friction points in your day.
2. Create three glide paths to simplify your day. Pick any routines or common tasks that you want to make easier for yourself.

Day 12 – Productivity Personas – Are You a Starter or a Finisher?

“Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Your Outcome

- *Become a “productive artist.” Find whether you are a “starter” or a “finisher” and improve your success in everything you do.*

Some people are natural “starters.” They live for the creative beginning of projects, but not the day-to-day execution or the detailed follow up and follow through. Some people are natural “finishers.” They like the day-to-day work and the routine execution. When “starters” and “finishers” pair up, everybody wins.

Welcome to Day 12

Welcome to **day 12** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 11**, we learned how to reduce friction and create glide paths for your day.

Today, we learn how to figure out our strengths and weaknesses when it comes to productivity using **Productivity personas**. The beauty is that you can **Productivity personas** to get a better lens on yourself, your situation, or people you work with. With this lens, you can be more effective and get better results in any situation, whether it’s a one-man band or part of a team.

Starters and Finishers

One of my friends is great at starting things. Just don’t expect him to finish. He would light a lot of fires in a lot of places and then he’d be on to his next big idea. Trust me, unless you want to just fade away, you want fire starters around. They light things up and create value and possibilities out of thin air. **He’s a natural “starter.”**

Another one of my friends is great at finishing things. He is a master at knowing the details and being complete. Words that come to mind are “thorough,” “attention to detail,” “responsible,” “sees things through,” ... you get the idea. What he lacks in getting things started, he makes up for in bringing things to close and going the last mile. **He is a “finisher” at heart.**

When a starter and finisher pair up ... look out. Great things happen. The fastest way to suck your life force out of anyone is to always play the “finisher” role when you’re a starter, or always play a starter role when you’re a finisher.

Why Productivity Personas

Your personal success at getting results is clearly a place where a little knowledge goes a long way. By adding the lens of **Productivity Personas** to your tool belt, you will be better equipped to deal with any productivity issue, whether it's for yourself, helping a friend, or leading a team.

If you're feeling drained or like you're spinning your wheels or simply not making the impact you know you can make, this might just be your ticket to faster, simpler, and better results.

3 Ways to Use Productivity Personas

Here are three ways you can use the **Productivity Personas** to your advantage:

1. **Know Yourself.** Use the **Productivity Personas** to know yourself. If you're aware of the personas, you can use them to your advantage. For example, don't let your inner **Critic** or **Perfectionist** get in the way of your **Doer**. Ask yourself, *"When am I at my best? Am I more of a Starter or a Finisher? Am I more of a Maximizer or a Simplifier? Am I more of a Thinker or a Doer?"*
2. **Team Up.** Use the **Productivity Personas** to pair up with other people and improve your own effectiveness. You can also use the **Productivity Personas** to create more effective teams or to optimize teamwork. Ask yourself, *"Who can I team up with to get results? How can I build more effective teams? Who should be paired up on the team for best results?"*
3. **Improve the Situation.** You can imagine how some behaviors work better with others and how some can create conflict. Swap out for more effective personas based on the scenario. For example, if you really need a **Starter** for the situation, but you can't break out of **Finisher** mode, then see if you can find somebody who can play the role. Ask yourself, *"What are the best behaviors for the situation?"*

Remember to use the **Productivity Personas** as a lens. The labels are for behaviors, not for limiting or boxing in personalities. Anybody can demonstrate any of the behaviors at any time.

Productivity Personas at a Glance

Persona	Notes
Achiever	Likes to accomplish things.
Big Picture	Sees the forest from the trees. Likes the big ideas and doesn't want to get lost in the minutiae.
Can Do	Finds a way. Where there's a will, there's a way, and they'll find it. It may not be the optimal solution, but they'll find a workaround.
Controller	Likes to control things. This could be the Doers, the project, or their world.

Critic	Finds the faults. They'll find ways why you can't or why it's wrong. They'll critique themselves their work, or their ideas. Anything is fair game.
Daydreamer	Likes to dream up better ways for better days. They'd rather dream than do. They don't have to act on their dreams to enjoy them.
Details	Loves the details and will want to see things through. Dots the i's and crosses the t's. They're passionate about spreadsheets.
Doer	Does their job. They tend to get their job done. They may not come up with new ideas, but they have a preference for taking action.
Facts and Figures	Is a numbers person. They want quantifiable measurements. Like Details, they too like spreadsheets.
Finisher	Brings things to closure. Effective finishers, complete things and move on. Is a fit and finish type of person. It's finished when they say it's finished.
Marketer	Communicates the value. Knows how to sell ideas.
Maximizer	Finds the maximum impact.
Opportunist	Finds the opportunity in any situation.
Perfectionist	Treats everything like a work of art. Quality is their name, finishing isn't their game. They'll do it when it's done. It will be done just as soon as it's perfect. Whenever that is.
Procrastinator	Finds way to put off to tomorrow, what they really should do today. They only send belated birthday cards since they know they'll never send them out on time.
Randomizer	Turns their latest priority into other people's problems.
Simplifier	Finds the simplest path. Strips things down to the minimum. Good enough for now is OK in their book.
Starter	Starts things but doesn't always finish. Their energy comes from thinking up new ideas and kicking things off. Love prototyping an idea, but once they've figured it out, they're ready to move on to something else.
Thinker	Is an "ideas" person. Thinking is what they do best. Analysis is their game, but doing is somebody else's game. They don't have to act on their thoughts to enjoy them.
Tinkerer	Likes to tinker. The world is their sandbox. Dabbles here, dabbles there.

Using the Productivity Personas

Simply familiarize yourself with some of the various **Productivity Personas**. They can help you when you need to make sense of a productivity challenge or scenario, as well as to learn more about yourself. The key is to be aware of the preferences, for yourself and others, and to choose more effective behaviors as well as to optimize yourself and others in any situation.

Your Assignment

1. Identify your natural preferences in terms of a “starter” or “finisher.”
2. Identify the most common **Productivity Personas** or roles that you play in your day to day.
3. Find one simple thing you can do to complement your natural productivity pattern.

Day 13 – Triage Your Action Items with Skill

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.” — Theodore Roosevelt

Your Outcome

- *Learn how to deal with a barrage of incoming action items and demands on your time.*

Welcome to Day 13

Welcome to **day 13** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 12**, we learned how to use Productivity Personas to analyze and improve our results in any situation.

Today, we learn how to “triage” an overflowing plate of action items and tasks. **Triage is a Healthy Process of Sorting, Sifting, and Selecting**

What is Triage

“Triage” is a process of sorting, sifting and selecting what to work on. You might have heard about doctors “triaging” their incoming patients in emergency settings.

When I first joined Microsoft, “Triage” was a common practice our team used to deal with our incoming issues. Triage helped us sort our backlogs and queues of issues into more meaningful buckets. We couldn’t just do everything at once and we couldn’t keep up with our flow of incoming requests. Triage helped us more effectively make the most of our time, energy, and resources we had on hand at the moment against our incoming actions.

Triage in Practice

I’ve used triage successfully to deal with everything from dealing with email, to dealing with a flood of incoming tasks, to **dealing with aging backlogs of action items**, both at the personal, and the team level.

When I lead a distributed team, I use email triage as an ad hoc and lightweight way to get the team’s eyeballs quickly focused on an issue. I simply add “email triage” to the subject line, and send the mail out with the specific issue or question to sort through. I’ve also used triage to clear my email inbox and to keep my email at zero inbox for years, and I’ve shown many others, including teams around Microsoft, to do the same (and we have a lot of email at Microsoft.) I affectionately call this approach, “The Zen of Zero Mail.” For things that you need to act on, prioritize, or get off your plate, “triage” is a healthy process of sorting and selecting in a more mindful way.

Do It, Queue It, Schedule It, or Delegate It

You can triage an incoming action item to either do it, queue it, schedule it, or delegate it:

- **Do It** – Do it if now is the time: it's the next best thing for you to do; now is the most opportunistic time; or it will cost you more pain, time or effort to do it later.
- **Queue It** – Queue it, by adding it to your queue if it's something you need to get done, but now is not the right time. A queue is simply a list of action items.
- **Schedule It** – Schedule it by adding it to your calendar if you need a block of time to get the work done. Only add things to your calendar if you truly need a reminder or if you really need to block off a chunk of time to work on it. Remember that if you schedule it, it will happen, but if you don't, it won't. If it's really important, then make time for it. If it's just something to do "later," and it won't really happen, then just [let](#) it go with skill.
- **Delegate It** – Delegate it if it's something that should be done by somebody else and it makes sense to do so, and you have that option. When you delegate, try to match it to another person's learning opportunity or passion. (There's a difference between delegating and dumping.)

3 Steps to Triage Your Action Items

Here are three steps for triaging your stack of action items:

1. **Consolidate your action items.** Dealing with them in a batch really shows the benefit of this approach, because you can quickly whack your stack down to size.
2. **Triage each item.** For each item, determine what the best plan of attack is: Do It, Queue It, Schedule It, or Delegate It.
3. **Repeat the process.** Repeat the process until you have a manageable set of actions and you feel that things are appropriately in the right places, either in your list of actions, your queue, or your schedule, or off your plate. If you end up spending too much time triaging, and not enough time doing, then establish a timebox or time limit to pace yourself and to know when to stop.

Really what you're doing is setting the stage for your success. By having a time for things, and having them on your calendar or in your queue, you can focus on what you have in front of you with more confidence, clarity, and conviction, knowing that you're making the most of what you've got. You can also more effectively prioritize with **MUST**, **SHOULD**, and **COULD**.

Questions to Help Guide You

Here are some questions I find useful as a checkpoint:

- *What do you want to accomplish?*
- *Does it matter?*
- *How important is it?*
- *What's the impact?*

- *What's the next best thing to do?*

You can always check your actions against the bigger picture and what you want to accomplish: This is just a starting point and you'll want to create and test your own questions to see what works for you.

Putting It All Together

Let's take a quick step back and do a rundown of what you've learned so far during 30 Days of Getting Results and how this fits in:

1. *You can use [The Rule of 3](#) to avoid getting overwhelmed.*
2. *You're the author of your life and you can write your story forward, one moment or one day at a time*
3. *You can use three stories to drive your day and and light up your day by connecting to your values (Daily Wins).*
4. *On Mondays, you can use three stories to drive your week (Monday Vision).*
5. *On Fridays, you can use Friday Reflection to celebrate your wins and find your personal success patterns.*
6. *You can map out what's important in your life using Hot Spots to create a meaningful map.*
7. *You can let things slough off with skill ... no more straws breaking the camel's back .*
8. *You can create space in your life to renew and recharge by setting up boundaries and buffers.*
9. *You can dump your brain to free up your mind.*
10. *You can prioritize more effectively by using MUST, SHOULD, and COULD.*
11. *You can feel strong all week long by spending more time in your strengths and less time in your weaknesses.*
12. *You can establish glide-paths to simplify your day and make your routines friction free.*
13. *You can analyze and be more productive in any scenario using productivity personas.*

By adding triaging to your belt, you now have a **simple mental model for dealing with incoming action items** more effectively.

Using Agile Results to Write Your Story Forward

[Agile Results](#) is a **simple system for meaningful results** that you can use to support you for the rest of your life, no matter what you do.

The beauty is not just that it's simple or that it's proven ... it's that **each day you get a new chance at bat – a fresh start.**

Each day you wake up is another chance to ask the question, *“What are three things you want for today?”* ... and so you **write your story forward, one day at a time.**

Your Assignment

1. When an incoming action item comes your way, triage it and decide whether to **Do It, Queue It, Schedule It, or Delegate It**.
2. Triage one of your stacks of things to do to whack it down to size.

Day 14 – Carve Out Time for What’s Important

“Things which matter most, should never be at the mercy of things which matter least.” – Goethe

Your Outcome

- *Make time for what’s important. Spend more time in what really matters in YOUR life, and spend less time in what does not. As one of my friend’s puts it, “time is all we have.”*

Welcome to Day 14

Welcome to **day 14** of 30 Days of Getting Results, a series of posts where I share with you the art and science of getting more effective results from my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 13**, we learned how to triage our action items with skill to chop our backlogs or overflowing plates down to size.

Today, we learn a vital key to successful and effective time management. We learn how to make time for what really matters in our life, a day at a time and a moment at a time.

A Lesson in Life for the Best of Your Life

One of the most crucial lessons in life that many people learn the hard way is this:

You don’t have time, you make time. If you don’t make time for what’s important, it doesn’t happen.

You’ll never get off the treadmill or stop treading water, **unless you decide to**. That’s what this series of modules is all about ... helping you get results, enjoy the journey, and make the most of what you’ve got ... with skill (versus just hoping for the best or trying harder or wishful thinking.)

Put the Big Rocks First

This is a story I first heard from Stephen Covey a long time back that really stuck out for me. As the story goes, a teacher fills a jar with rocks until no more would fit. He then asks the class, “Is the jar is full?” The class says, “Yes.”

The teacher reaches under the table, pulls out some gravel, and adds the gravel to the jar. The gravel fills the spaces between the rocks. The teacher asks again, "Is the jar full?" Some nod their head.

The teacher then adds sand to the jar filling up the remaining spaces. The teacher asks, "Is the jar full?" The class is on to him now and says, "No."

"Good," the teacher replies, and he proceeds to pour water into the jar until it's filled to the brim.

The teacher asks, "What's the point of this illustration?" One of the students replies that no matter how full your schedule is, you can always fit more things in.

"No," the teacher responds. The point is this:

If you don't make room for the big rocks, you'll never fit them in.

Make Room for Your Big Rocks Today, Each Day

This is where The Rule of 3 helps. Are you spending the right amount of time today on those three results or stories that you want to accomplish?

The default pattern is to try and fit them in with all your existing routines. A more powerful approach is to **make time for your three results today and optimize around that**. This might mean disrupting other habits and routines you have, but this is a good thing. The more you get in the habit of making time for what's important, the more you'll get the results you want. If you're not getting the results you want you can start **asking better questions**. For example, are you investing enough time? Are you investing the right energy? Maybe the approach is off.

Just maybe, a different thing happens. Maybe you start accomplishing the results you **thought** you wanted, but you don't like what you get. The grass is NOT always greener. Now you can step back and ask whether you're choosing the right outcomes or stories for **what YOU really want or really need** in your life right now.

What are You Rushing Through For?

Covey teaches us, be efficient with things, but effective with people. Whenever I see somebody rushing through something or it feels like it's a drive by dump or exchange, I have to ask:

"What are you rushing through for?" ...

Sometimes it's because people are late. Sometimes it's because they are more focused on the goal, than the journey. A lot of times, it's because they simply didn't allow themselves to be here now, where **this moment is the one that really counts**.

It doesn't mean being slow, unless slow makes sense for the situation. In fact, I can't help but to think of John Wooden's saying, "Be quick – but don't hurry!" For me, it reminds me to **be deliberate and mindful** on how I pace myself. I can be quick without haste or rushing through things, as if something else is always more important, somewhere else.

3 Ways to Carve Out Time for What's Important

Take the time to step back and reflect on where you spend your time on a regular basis. Here are three ways to make time for what's important:

1. **Reset your day.** You can do a reset for your day by stepping back and asking yourself, "What three results do I want for today?" For example, one of my outcomes today is, "Enjoy the nice day outside." I'm not going to let something else get in the way of missing our fleeting sunny Summer days.
2. **Reset your schedule.** You can do a reset for the week by stepping back and asking yourself, "What three results do I want for this week?" ... or "What three stories do I want to light up in my life or make happen for the week?" You can then fit everything else around that. You can also simply check whether you've made enough time in your schedule on a weekly basis for the things that really count, for you, in your life right now. It's not all-or-nothing, and there's always a way to spend a little more time here, and a little less there, but you might have to get creative. If you get stuck here, pair up with somebody and ask for their help ... you might be surprised how this simple act gives you clarity on your calendar, and how another pair of eyes can really shine the light on ways to get more of what you want.
3. **Invest in your Hot Spots.** However you define your Hot Spots (mind, body, emotions, career, financial, relationships, and fun), you can very deliberately map out what's important in your life, and you can deliberately invest in your Hot Spots. I found the single most important factor here is to make time on my weekly schedule for my Hot Spots. If I'm not getting enough time in a bucket, then I schedule more time. If I'm putting too much time into one bucket, and not another, then I adjust it. Once I have enough time in the right buckets, then I make sure I'm investing my best energy and best mindset. I never want to be in a scenario where I'm always rushing through, because I didn't make time for it.

And, of course, you can always simply ask yourself, "What are you rushing through for?" and do a reset, at any moment, at any time.

Today's Assignment

1. Make time TODAY for something you really want to spend more time in, that's important for you. Maybe it's as simple as feeding the ducks. Maybe it's spending time with an old

friend. Maybe it's spending more time learning about [Getting Results the Agile Way](#) Who's to judge? You're the judge. Just remember, you're the one that lives with the consequences of how you choose to spend your time ... each moment, each day, every day. Be the author of your life, and write your story forward. No regrets, just choosing your own adventure from here forward.

2. Step back and ask the tough question, "What are you rushing through for? If the answer is nothing, then just kick back and enjoy doing whatever you're doing right here, right now.

Day 15 – Achieve a Peaceful Calm State of Mind

“After a storm comes a calm.” — Matthew Henry

Your Outcome

- *Quiet the buzz in your mind. Achieve a “peaceful calm” state of mind that is relaxed, responsive, and ready.*

Welcome to Day 14

Welcome to **day 15** of 30 Days of Getting Results, a series of posts where I share with you a simple system for meaningful results from my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 14**, we learned a key way to master time management by carving out time for what’s important.

Today, we learn how to quiet our mind and achieve a “peaceful calm”. From this vantage point, you’ll see things with more clarity, you’ll feel “centered,” and you’ll think your best thoughts. You’ll also find it easier to quiet your mental chatter, and just be in the moment. You’ll direct your attention with skill.

A “Peaceful Calm” State of Mind

If you aren’t sure what it’s like to feel a peaceful calm, the best way I can describe it is it’s like looking out over the Grand Canyon for the first time. Your mind just takes it all in. There are no worries about the past, the present, or the future. Your mind is fully absorbed in the moment.

For that brief moment, your mind is captivated by the experience.

Your mind is empty, but fully alert, fully aware, and not distracted by any mental chatter or any of your head movies. Instead of replaying scenes in your mind, you are the movie.

Relaxed, Ready, and Resourceful

While the world might be a jungle, fight-or-flight mode can limit our best thinking. To think our best thoughts or create our best ideas, or solve our problems in the most resourceful way, we need to operate from a place that’s “centered” and serene.

When I think of “peaceful calm”, words that come to mind are: **tranquil, centered, serene,** and **peaceful**. I also think of a series of “R” words including: **restful, resourceful, relaxed, responsive,** and **ready**.

An empty mind is a powerful one. It's ready for action. It's relaxed, ready, and responsive.

- When your mind is relaxed, you can take in information with less distortion. You're connected to your emotions, but rather than being overwhelmed or randomized, it's more like using your emotions as input.
- When your mind is ready, you are responsive. You are able to easily see the situation and respond with skill instead of react out of fear or anxiety.
- When your mind is resourceful, you are able to easily think the thoughts that serve you. Your creative mind is ready to solve problems with you instead of work against you.

Additional Ways to Center Yourself and Achieve a Peaceful Calm

Here are some additional ways to help you achieve a peaceful state of calm:

1. **Take away the threat.** If there's one thing that can keep eating at you, it's the threats in your life. If you take away the threats, you solidify your foundation. You either have to decide what to do about it, or let it go, or decide it's not how you're going to live. One of the best ways to deal with a threat is to reframe it as a challenge and take the bull by the horns. Another way is to assume the worst case scenario and deal with it. For example, let's say your threat is losing your job. Then assume you'll lose it, and make the preparations – get staffing companies on your side, build your network, and create a winning resume.
2. **Make a map of what's important.** This simple step will add clarity for your mind and a place to focus your thoughts, when they might seem random or all over the board. Map out your priorities and outcomes.
3. **Find your why.** By finding your why, you simplify your life down to a driving purpose. It gives you a simple way to prioritize and evaluate what you will spend your time or your energy on.
4. **Learn to pause.** By taking a brief pause, you can respond over react. It will help you stay centered in more situations and respond more effectively.
5. **Reset your mental model.** Ask yourself, "Who do you want to be?" and "What experiences do you want to create?" Do you want to be running around like a chicken with its head cut off or do you want to show some self-control, confidence, clarity, and deliberate action? Simply by doing a reset, when you find yourself off-kilter, can help you center yourself with skill.
6. **Focus on your breathing.** You'd think we do this well, given how much we breathe all the time. Well, usually we don't. It's easy to get stressed and then breathe high and shallow instead of deep and full. If you want to center yourself, then focus on your breathing. Key tip – don't treat it weird or act like it's a magic ritual. Simply feel the flow of your breath in, down, and around, then back out. Pause when it's fully in, and simply notice what a full, deep breath feels like. Simply enjoy your breath. Then have another, it's on the house.
7. **Visualize with skill.** This is particularly effective if you tend to be very visual. You can simply recall some of your favorite scenery or scenes from your life, where you felt a

“peaceful calm.” This will help you remember the feeling, and it will give your mind a quick way to focus on something that it already knows.

8. **Remind yourself that things can always be worse.** They really can. If you need examples, you can find them easily. Somebody is always worse off. If you adjust your frame of reference, this can help you keep things in your own life in better perspective. One thing that sticks out for me here is a line from Navy Seals try outs that goes like this, “The only easy day was yesterday.” And of course, yesterday, was an absolute nightmare ... but by comparison, it’s a walk in the park.

Today’s Assignment

1. Get a good mental picture that you can use to get to your “peaceful calm”. Remember a time when your mind was at it’s most relaxed, ready, and resourceful state. Really get a good picture in your mind of this experience. Notice what it feels like. Walk your five senses one-by-one (site, hearing, touch, smell, taste): What do you see? ... What do you hear? ...What do you feel? ... What do you smell? ... What do you taste?” For example, if your image is on the beach, you might see the waves lap against the shore, you might hear the seagulls, you might feel the sand between your toes and the warm sun on your shoulders, you might smell the boardwalk, and you might taste the salt in the air. Simply walking your senses will dramatically improve your ability to fully remember the feeling. The more you practice the better you get.
2. Write down everything that’s buzzing around in your brain. Whether it’s things that are bugging you or ideas that keep floating around. Just empty it and keep emptying it until you’ve got it all down. Breathe a sigh of relief. You’re looking at your mind on paper.
3. Make a time and a place for things. For the things that you really have to deal with, create an appointment with yourself, add it to your schedule, and whenever the issue comes up, remind yourself that you have an appointment to “deal with it.”

Day 16 – Use Metaphors to Find Your Motivation

“To different minds, the same world is a hell, and a heaven.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Your Outcome

- **Your Outcome:** *Find the metaphors that empower you for your best results in work and life. Use inspiring metaphors to make meaning and enjoy the journey and your destination. This is your way to get “on your path” or “back on your horse” or “get up to bat” and make the most of what you’ve got.*

Welcome to Day 16

Welcome to **day 16** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 15**, we learned how to achieve a peaceful calm state of mind.

Today, we learn how to use metaphors to find our motivation and drive. Metaphors are a simple way to add juice to your life. By using metaphors, you can empower yourself more effectively, and **create more meaningful and compelling situations** and circumstances. When you use metaphors that connect to your values, you find ways to turn ordinary situations into extraordinary situations. For example, I don’t drive a project, I “lead an epic adventure.” Adventure is one of my values, so I try and connect to it wherever I can.

In your life, it’s your story and you are the director. You choose what to point your camera at and the meaning you’ll make. Metaphors help you shape your story.

Why Metaphors

Metaphors helps us shape a language and the pictures we hold in our minds. Creating a vision and holding it in our heads will tend to steer us **towards the emotions and feelings** that we associate with such a picture.

Whether or not the picture is an accurate representation of what we are relating it to, we tend to create that picture anyway – and the emotions that go along with it. It therefore has a tendency to become reality, at least on an emotional level. The bottom line is, **metaphors shape your overall experience**, filter what you perceive, and influence how you make meaning.

You are the most important meaning maker (and perhaps not always the best, especially if it’s by default and not by design). Choose your metaphors thoughtfully; here’s why:

- They shape your experience.
- They empower you to change how you think and feel (and your thinking and feeling impact your doing).

- They help you make meaning.

Example Metaphors

Here are some common metaphors:

Positive Metaphors	Negative Metaphors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chipping away at the stone • Expedition • Eye of the tiger • Grab the bull by the horns • Mission • Your ship has come in • Your ship is sailing and you're on it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting a wall • Life sucks then you die • Swimming upstream • That ship has sailed • Up the stream without a paddle • Uphill battle • You're on your own

Whether a metaphor is positive or negative is up to you. For example, most people would probably think of an uphill battle as negative. Then again, some people **might like the challenge**. Ultimately, it's your context and how you think about a particular metaphor that decides whether it's positive or negative.

You can use metaphors for yourself and for life.

Metaphors for You

You can use metaphors for who you are or what you do, as a simple way to shape your experience, or to help others make sense of what you do. Here are some examples:

- *I'm a survivor*
- *I'm a lover*
- *I'm a fighter*
- *I'm a healer*
- *I'm a teddy bear*
- *I'm a lion*
- *I'm a bull*
- *I'm a peaceful warrior*
- *I'm a truth seeker*
- *I'm a mentor*

Contrast that some of some disempowering or negative metaphors. You can use metaphors to more purposefully shape the experiences you want to create. For example ... Are you an "old dog" or a "lifelong learner" or "forever young" or "young at heart" or do you "age like a fine wine" and get better with age? The choice is yours.

Metaphors for Life

Your metaphor for life has a big impact on your day to day experience. Your metaphor for life shapes your day-to-day experience in simple but profound ways. Consider some examples:

- *Life's a game*
- *Life's a dance*
- *Life's magic*
- *Life's a tragedy*
- *Life's an adventure*
- *Life's a comedy*

If you see life as a tragedy, it becomes one. If you see life as a game, you might try and find out how to win. If life is a comedy, then maybe every day is like your favorite sitcom. If life is a dance, maybe you find ways to see grace or beauty in yourself and others. If life is magic, then you find the wonder in the world and you enjoy seeking out mystery and possibility.

Key Take Aways

Here are key take aways to help you use metaphors to find your motivation:

1. Metaphors shape your experience.
2. Metaphors can be a simple way to empower yourself.
3. Choose the metaphors that work for you.
4. You can find a metaphor for yourself and for life.

Today's Assignment

1. Find an empowering metaphor for your situation or circumstance.
2. Find an empowering metaphor for yourself or what you do.
3. Find an empowering metaphor for life.

Remember that the key to a successful metaphor is that it motivates you and helps you respond to any challenge that comes your way or succeed at whatever you do. It's not whether it makes sense, it's how it makes you feel and the results you get. Measure and test your metaphors against personal effectiveness as your ultimate yardstick.

Day 17 – Add Power Hours to Your Week

“The energy of the mind is the essence of life.” — Aristotle

Outcome

- *Add **Power Hours** to your week and use your best energy for your best results. By guarding your peak hours throughout the day, and applying them where you need it most, you dramatically improve your ability to achieve faster, better, and easier results.*

Welcome to Day 17

Welcome to **day 17** of 30 Days of Getting Results based on my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 16**, we learned how to use metaphors to find our motivation.

Today, we learn how to increase the number of power hours we have throughout the week. By adding **Power Hours**, we keep our energy strong and we achieve more than would normally be possible.

Power Hours are Your Force Multiplier

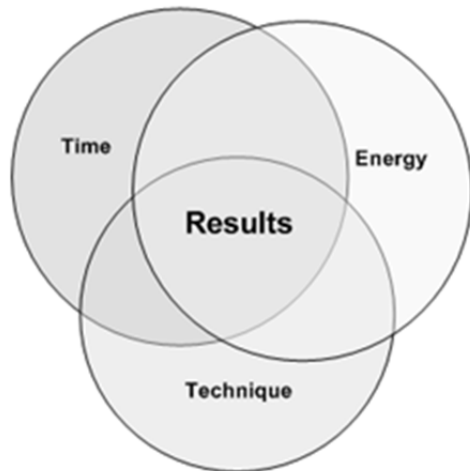
Out of your week, how many hours are hours where you actually feel like you are on top of your game and getting your work done or making your ideas happen? Many people I know get the bulk of their work done in a short period of time. They have to. They only have a few uninterrupted hours where they can fully focus and produce their results. They've mastered their **Power Hours**.

*The beauty of the **Power Hour** is that it's a small block of time. It's YOUR peak hour and it's YOUR force multiplier. You can deliberately turn more of your hours, into your peak hours to multiply your results.*

If you're already working on the right things, the right way, I can't think of any stronger multiplier to your day than using your best energy to amplify your results.

Visual – The 3 Keys to Amazing Results

Here is a simple mental model for thinking about how you can impact your results:



Basically, you can throw more time at something, or you can change your approach or your technique, or you can change the energy or effort you apply. The key is to spend the right time, on the right things, the right way, with the right energy. That's the true secret of faster, simpler, easier results.

Power Hours are Your Peak Hours

A **Power Hour** is simply an hour where you are “in the zone” and at your best. It's a term I heard often while growing up, whether it was somebody having a “power hour” when they worked out, or having a “power hour” on the job. On the job, a “power hour” meant that you are firing on all cylinders, clearing hurdles with ease, and plowing through your work in an unstoppable way, with energy and zest.

Why Power Hours

Not all hours are the same. Some hours are better than others throughout the week. There are many reasons to add more Power Hours to your week, but here are a few:

1. **Power Hours are the key to exponential results** They are your force multiplier. I'd rather have four Power Hours, than forty non-peak hours.
2. **Power Hours are exclusively yours.** They are your peak hours. Your batteries are charged and you are ready to go.
3. **Power Hours refuel you.** They help you renew, refuel, and build momentum throughout your day and throughout your week.
4. **Power Hours help you conquer your mountains.** They help you blast through your work or better deal with your worst hurdles or challenges in work and life.
5. **Power Hours are the secret to working less.** They are the key to working less, while achieving more.

The main reason to add **Power Hours** to your week is to get leverage from the time and energy you already spend. If you've ever thrown time at your problems, or had your work feel like it

stretches on and on, or you've gone through the motions but didn't feel like you were getting anywhere, then you know exactly why you need to add more **Power Hours** to your week.

3 Steps to Adding Power Hours to Your Week

Here are three ways that you can add Power Hours to your week:

- **Step 1. Find the Power Hours you already have.** We all have them. Some of our hours are way more effective than others or we feel way more alert and alive. Simply identify throughout the week, which hours are the hours where you feel you are at your best, and you could do your best work. Don't confuse this with when do you actually do your work. This is like knowing when you feel hungry versus when do you actually eat. In this case, simply identify your best hours of energy in the week.
- **Step 2. Guard your Power Hours.** Find ways to block off your Power Hours as if your life depended on it. In fact, your livelihood might depend on it. Now that you've actually identified when your **Power Hours** are, protect them so that you can spend them where you need it most. What some people do is they create appointments with themselves. They stop setting up meetings with other people during those times. They push back on meeting requests for those times. Simply by protecting the Power Hours that you already have is the fastest way to add **Power Hours** to your week (or, to put it another way, it's how not to ruin your peak hours.)
- **Step 3. Spend More Time in Your Strengths.** You can add **Power Hours** by shuffling your schedule around to spend more time in your strengths. For example, I deliberately added activities like brainstorming or having lunch with my mentors as weekly routines to add more **Power Hours** to my day. For ideas on finding and applying your strengths, see Day 10 – Feel Strong All Week Long.

When I first counted up my **Power Hours** for the week several years back, I found I had around four. I was pretty upset until I checked with other people and found out they were lucky if they had that. I can happily say that by deliberately focusing on adding **Power Hours** to my week, I have a minimum of four **Power Hours** per day. This helps me achieve a lot more with less time, and spend my best energy where I need it most. This was my key for exponential results.

Today's Assignment

1. Identify your current Power Hours for the week. Find the recurring rhythms and patterns. It might be just before breakfast or right after, or maybe it's after lunch. Look to where you feel your best during the day.
2. Guard your power hours. Find a way to free those Power Hours back up so that you can use them either for getting your work done or making your ideas happen or blasting through barriers.

Day 18 – Add Creative Hours to Your Week

“Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.” -- Scott Adams

Your Outcome

- Add more **Creative Hours** to your week. Let your ideas and imagination come out to play, while you uncork your creative genius and flex your creative mind.

Welcome to Day 18

Welcome to **day 18** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 17**, we learned how to add Power Hours to your week.

Today, we learn how to add creative hours to our week. With our creative hours, we can innovate or think of new ideas or work on our creative art.

Adding Creative Hours to Your Week

Just like adding **Power Hours**, you might benefit from adding more **Creative Hours** to your week. Count how many **Creative Hours** you have during the week. If it's not enough, schedule more and set yourself up so that they truly are **Creative Hours**.

If you're the creative type, this will be especially important. If you don't think of yourself as very creative, then simply think of these as free hours to let your mind wander and explore or reflect.

Creative Hours are Your Free-Form Thinking

It's those times when your mind feels free to explore ideas: creating new ideas from scratch, putting new ideas together, or simply reflecting. Your **Creative Hours** are really a state of mind—a state of daydreaming. It's the mindset that's important. Whereas your **Power Hours** may be focused on results, your **Creative Hours** are focused on free-form thinking and exploration.

You might find that **Creative Hours** are your perfect balance to **Power Hours**. You might also find that you thrive best when you add more **Creative Hours** to your week. Ultimately, you might find that your **Power Hours** free up time for your **Creative Hours**, or that your **Creative Hours** change the game and improve your **Power Hours**.

Your power hours might also be how you leverage your ideas from your **Creative Hours**. Test your results.

3 Common Patterns for Your Mind at Work

For simplicity's sake, let's start by calling out three common patterns or modes of thinking:

1. **Creative inspiration.** Your creative juices are flowing. This is where your imagination runs wild and your ideas are free-flowing and you are full of creative inspiration. You're able to think out of the box and ideas seem to come to you.
2. **Thoughtful Task.** Your brain is engaged and this is where you have to think your way through your activity. You are actively thinking and processing information and using your memory.
3. **Routine Activity.** Your brain does not have to be engaged. It's a familiar or repetitive task that you can do without thinking. You just know what to do and you can just do it, without much mental intervention.

You can use these patterns as a lens to help you better identify when you are in your most creative state. Keep in mind that the nature of your work will influence your pattern.

3 Steps to Adding More Creative Hours to Your Week

Here are three ways to add more Creative Hours to your week:

- **Step 1. Protect the Creative Hours you already have.** First identify the when you're at your creative best throughout the week. You might find that your best hours for creativity follow certain routines or occur at repeatable times. For example, maybe your ride home from work puts you in a creative state.
- **Step 2. Create Space.** You might need to add space in your schedule to give yourself room for imagination and creativity. For example, if you're always rushing to make a deadline or always worried about what you have to do next, you might not be making enough space or downtime to experience your best creativity. You might need to create space in terms of time or create space in terms of location. See Day 7 – Setup Boundaries and Buffers.
- **Step 3. Change up your routines.** You might need to change your routines to find patterns that help you get into your creative mode more easily. For example, maybe by simply moving around some of your routines, you find that you suddenly experience more creative energy and your ideas flow on a more regular basis.

The key in all this is simply being more mindful of when you are at your creative best, and finding ways to experience more of your creative mindset by design instead of just lucking into it. Experiment and test to find what works for you.

Experiment Between Morning Person and Night Owl

Some people find that they are more creative at night but are more productive during the day. Other people find they simply can't be creative in certain situations or that they can't be productive in others. Experiment between being a night owl and a morning person to **see which patterns work best for you**. You might even find that these patterns switch, depending on the season. For example, you might prefer to be a night owl in the winter and a morning person in the summer.

Today's Assignment

1. Identify your **Creative Hours**.
2. Create more space for your **Creative Hours**

Day 19 – Who are You Doing it For?

“Beauty is altogether in the eye of the beholder.”— Lew Wallace

Your Outcome

- *Figure out who the things you do are really for. See how whether the work you do is actually “above the line” or “below the line” in terms of whether you’re getting ahead, or just treading water.*

Welcome to Day 19

Welcome to **day 19** of 30 Days of Getting Results. In **day 18**, we learned how to add more creative hours to your week.

Today, we learn how to get clarity on who the work we do is really for. With great clarity, comes great conviction. When you know who you are actually doing things for, you can check whether what you’re doing is really valued, or if there is something higher priority. You can then invest more of your time and energy in things that have more value. More importantly, **you can better map the value you create to what people actually care about, including yourself.** When something you do is actually for you, make sure it’s what you really value. When something you do is for something else, make sure it’s what they really want or care about.

This one simple practice will help you avoid crossed-expectations with yourself and others.

It will also help you avoid feeling underappreciated, and it will also help you actually flow more value for yourself and others on a regular basis. A little clarity goes a long way.

What Value Are You Delivering?

When you throw time and energy at things, look at it in terms of “value delivered” versus “activity performed.” Remember that value is in the eye of the beholder ... whether it’s value to yourself, to your manager, for the company, or for the world.

Value is in the Eye of the Beholder

One common pitfall is throwing a lot of time and effort at things, only to find that when you’re done, nobody cares.

You need to figure out who you are really doing it for, and how valued it really is.

- **If it’s for you, don’t expect appreciation.** If it’s actually for you, that’s perfectly fine. You have to take care of your needs and wants, too. Just don’t expect others to appreciate it,

since it's not actually for them. If you keep feeling a lack of appreciation, then ask yourself, "Who was I really doing it for?" If it was actually for yourself, then figure out whether it was what you most cared about, or whether you could have invested the same time in something else and made more impact.

- **If it's for somebody else, find out how much they really care.** If you were doing it for somebody else, ask them whether what you're working on is really the most important thing to them, right now. Check with them! Whether it's your customer or your partner or whoever, it's easy to assume they should value it, just because you do, or because you think they should. It's also very possible that what was important to them at one point, is no longer as important (time changes what's important.) **If you're working on a lot of low-priority items, don't expect to get the rewards.** Your success depends on figuring out their true priorities and mapping the value you deliver to that. At work, I find that people don't always know what they really value, so I tend to simply ask, "What are some of your worst problems on your plate?" This helps quickly separate all the things a manager might tell you to do versus what's really on their radar and what they really care about.
- **Don't become a dumping ground.** The more you work on low-priority items, the more you become a dumping ground. The more you become a dumping ground, the busier you get; and the busier you get, the more overloaded you will feel. Now the worst happens—you're overworked, underappreciated, and no fun to be around.
- **Get off the treadmill.** By failing to work on what's valuable and by failing to understand and reset expectations, you've worked yourself into an unrewarding, high-stress scenario.

A common scenario on a team is where somebody spends a lot of time ramping up and learning. They aren't actually delivering value for the team yet. They get frustrated that they don't feel appreciated and they say how much time they've spent learning or figuring things out or working hard. The lens they are missing is that they are just doing what's expected which is "below the line", and they haven't risen "above the line" yet. They need to see that, at that stage or at this point in time, the value is actually for them and that it's their own growth.

Points to Ponder to Deliver More Value

Here are some points for you to ponder to help you deliver more value to yourself and others:

- *Are you working on stuff that's valued?*
- *Who is the value for: you or somebody else?*

The important thing is for you to have an appropriate frame of reference for the value of what you're doing. If you don't feel appreciated for what you're doing, it just might not be that valuable to somebody else, or it might just be expected. You also might find that you're so busy taking care of everything that you can't get your head above water.

The fix is usually **reprioritizing what's on your plate, figuring out what the real values and expectations are, and resetting expectations with yourself and others.** The last place you

want to be is grinding away on something that neither you nor anyone else will value, or worse, missing basic expectations that minimizes your overall effectiveness.

Today's Assignment

1. For the things that are on your plate, get clarity on who they are really for. It's fine for things to be both for you and other people, but if it's for other people, you might want to check whether they actually value it or would prefer something else. Don't be surprised if what they value is not the same as what you value. However, you can often find or create a bridge.
2. Figure out the things that you really need to do for yourself. Do them guilt-free. Remember that the better you can take care of yourself, the better you can take care of others. Build a firm foundation and a platform for yourself, so you can do great things and flow value for yourself and others. One way to remind yourself of some of your basic needs is to explore *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*.

Day 20 – Ask Better Questions, Get Better Results

“There are no right answers to wrong questions.” – Ursula K. Le Guin

Your Outcome

- *Learn how to ask “cutting” questions to instantly start helping you improve your results. By asking key questions, you can cut through the fog or cut to the chase and figure out what really counts.*

Welcome to Day 20

Welcome to **day 20** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 19**, we learned to ask the question, “Who are you doing it for?” to help us get clarity on why we are doing what we’re doing and whether it is really valued and who actually values it. This also helps us map the value better, whether it’s for ourselves or for somebody else.

Today, we build on this approach of asking questions, to improve our results.

Asking cutting questions helps you improve your ability to work on the right things, with the right energy, at the right time, the right way ... for YOUR BEST RESULTS.

Asking better questions is an ongoing process. The one who gains the most is you. Your ability to improve the questions you ask yourself will improve the quality of your life in all areas.

Why Ask Questions

Asking the right questions can help you balance, focus, make better decisions, and prioritize more effectively. Let’s elaborate on that:

- **Asking the right questions leads us to better answers.** If we think of thinking as a process of asking and answering questions, then to get better answers, we have to ask better questions. Think about that. Whether it’s your own self-talk or in a meeting, how powerful is it to ask the right question?
- **Asking questions changes your focus.** You can change your focus by changing your question, and this allows you to quickly switch perspectives or get a new lens on things. For example, by asking yourself “What’s right in your life?” you get a very different result than asking, “What’s wrong with your life?” Some people never ask themselves what’s right in their life, and they lose appreciation for what they’ve got, and they blow the bad things out of proportion.

- **Direct your self-talk more effectively.** Change your questions and you change your game. Rather than “tell” yourself to do things, you can ask more effective questions to get more resourceful. For example, “How might I solve this” or “What’s a good approach?” or “Who else shares this problem that I can learn from?” You can also get unstuck by switching gears from “Why” to “How” questions. For example, rather than ask, “Why does this always happen to me?”, ask yourself either, “What are you going to do about it?” or “How will you avoid this in the future?”
- **Asking questions creates opportunity.** If you want more conflict in your life, simply make more statements. Statements create conflict. Somebody can always argue with a statement. You can even argue with yourself. Switching to questions, opens up exploration.
- **Questions create “ah-has.”** When you ask questions, you can actually create emotional connections as you have your insight and “ah-ha” moments. These emotional links are more powerful than just raw information.

As you can see, there are lots of reasons why improving your questions can improve your everyday experience in a very practical way.

Quotes About Questions

Here are some of my favorite quotes about the value of asking good questions:

1. *“A child can ask questions that a wise man cannot answer.”*—Unknown
2. *“A prudent question is one-half of wisdom.”* – Francis Bacon
3. *“An answer is always a form of death.”*—John Fowles
4. *“It is not every question that deserves an answer.”* — Publilius Syrus
5. *“No question is so difficult to answer as that to which the answer is obvious.”* — Karl Otto von Schonhausen Bismarck
6. *“Quality questions create a quality life. Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers.”* — Anthony Robbins
7. *“Questions are never indiscreet. Answers sometimes are.”* – Publilius Syrus
8. *“The man who questions opinion is wise; the man who quarrels with fact is a fool.”*—Frank A Garbutt
9. *“The only questions that really matter are the ones you ask yourself.”*—Ursula K. LeGuin
10. *“The uncreative mind can spot wrong answers, but it takes a very creative mind to spot wrong questions.”* —Antony Jay
11. *“We learn more by looking for the answer to a question and not finding it than we do from learning the answer itself.”*—Lloyd Alexander
12. *“When we have arrived at the question, the answer is already near.”*—Ralph Waldo Emerson
13. *“You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions”.*—Naguib Mahfouz

Questions for Improving Your Results

Here is a table of questions you can draw from to help you improve your results:

Category	Questions
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Are the right people working on the right things?</i>• <i>What's the right thing to do?</i>• <i>What's the best play for this scenario?</i>• <i>Does your container limit or support you?</i>
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What's the next best thing to do?</i>• <i>Next steps?</i>• <i>What are the actions?</i>• <i>What's the simplest thing you can do now?</i>• <i>Is your current action moving you forwards or backwards?</i>
Efficiency and Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What are you optimizing?</i>• <i>Is it effective?</i>• <i>Are you going faster AND in the right direction?</i>
Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What do you want to accomplish?</i>• <i>What are the tests for success?</i>• <i>Are these really your goals or someone else's?</i>
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Who can you learn from?</i>• <i>What are 3 examples to model from?</i>• <i>What are 3 things going well?</i>• <i>What are 3 things to improve?</i>
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Do you want to do it?</i>• <i>Do you like to do it?</i>• <i>How can you enjoy the process?</i>• <i>What thoughts are getting in the way of your motivation?</i>• <i>Can you make a different choice that is more motivating?</i>
Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How much time did you spend on it?</i>• <i>How much time should you spend on it?</i>• <i>Is now the right time?</i>• <i>What's good enough for now?</i>• <i>Are you spending \$20 on a \$5 problem?</i>• <i>How can you manage your energy to use your time more effectively?</i>

Value

- *Does it matter?*
- *Is it significant?*
- *Who feels it has value? You? Others?*
- *If others value it, does it conflict or align with what you value?*

Using the Table of Questions

Use the table as a starting point, but the key is to find the questions that work for you and continue to add to your “question toolbox” over time. You’ll find that some questions will really empower you from getting unstuck, to finding solutions, to getting inspired, to figuring out your next best thing to do.

Your Assignment

1. Identify one question you can ask yourself that can help you get better results.
2. Identify one question you need to stop asking yourself, so you can get better results. Find a more effective question you can replace the ineffective question with.

Day 21 — Carry the Good Forward and Let the Rest Go

“When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.” — Lao Tzu

Your Outcome

- *Make the most of your setbacks, failures, and lessons. Take the lessons you learn each week, carry the good forward, and use them to refine your approach. Let the rest go.*

Welcome to Day 21

Welcome to **day 21** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 20**, we learned how to ask better questions to get better results. By asking better questions, we get clarity on what counts for ourselves and others, and we figure out what’s really valued.

Today, we learn how to find the lessons, fail fast, and fail forward. The keys to rapid learning are turning failures into feedback, carrying the good forward, and **staying curious**. The worst pitfall to fall into is a state of “learned helplessness”, where you shutdown or start thinking that no matter what you try, it just won’t work.

Don’t dwell on what you did wrong ... figure out what you can do right.

Just because you don’t get the results you expected, don’t lose your way. One of my favorite reminders in *Peaceful Warrior* is that a warrior does what they love, despite the setbacks and the challenges. They find a way.

Why Carry the Good Forward

When you carry the good forward, and let the rest go, your lessons become a spring board that support you in all areas of your life. Rather than get bogged down, or beat yourself up from all the things that don’t go as planned, you find smarter strategies and tactics for improving your success. This builds momentum and a personal toolbox you can draw from whenever you need it.

Find the Lessons

No matter what goes wrong you can always find the lessons. Mistakes happen. We’re human. Things don’t always go as planned. It’s easy to look back and second guess yourself after the fact, with perfect “20-20 hindsight.”

That's what makes judging and critiquing so easy, since you have a new vantage point and more information. Rather than use the vantage point as a critic, turn your inner-critic into your personal coach and use your feedback as a way to pave a path forward. You can use questions to find the lessons:

- *What did I learn?*
- *How can I make the most of this?*
- *How can I use this?*

Test your results and find the questions that work for you. If you're in a situation that doesn't seem like it will change, then change yourself first by asking the question, "If this situation never were to change, what's the one quality I need to make the most of this?"

Fail Forward

Turn failures into lessons. Don't just ask, "Why did I fail?" It's important to also ask, "What did I learn?" Carry the good forward. As you get into the habit of failing forward, you'll find it easier and easier to turn failure into feedback, while learning the key lessons and insight that help you spread your wings or bounce back faster each time.

Catch the Next Train

Don't be late for today. Be early for tomorrow. All the time you spend dwelling on what you missed or opportunity lost, takes away from you getting ready to catch the next train. While your rear-view mirror is helpful for learning lessons, find a way forward and lead yourself with skill by staying forward looking in your approach. Whenever you find yourself dwelling, ask yourself, "What's next?"

Get Up to Bat

This is one of my favorite metaphors. You get a new chance at bat each day, each week, each month, each year. As long as you keep getting up to bat, you have another chance.

If you're going through change, then remember that change is a process and that it might take multiple times or multiple chances to get it right. Allow for the fact that change is hard. You might fail multiple times; just **keep getting back on your horse**, learn from each setback, and carry the good forward. Don't break yourself against your own goals by biting off too much or beating yourself over the head with them; instead, use them to lift you and guide your choices.

Cut the Chains that Bind You

If you saw Disney's movie "Up," then you know what it's like to cut the ties that bind you. Cut the deadwood or whatever is holding you back. In *Peaceful Warrior*, the reminder was to "put your bags down." In the movie, *Up in the Air*, the main actor, played by George Clooney, asks

the question, “What’s in your backpack?” This forces you to take a look at all the possessions, relationships, commitments, and responsibilities that you carry around in your metaphorical backpack, and whether they’re helping or hurting you, or just how much they are weighting you down. The way that I turn all of these insights into action and keep it simple is with a one-liner reminder ...

“Carry the good forward, and let the rest go.”

Your Assignment

1. Add the question, “How can I use this?” to your mental toolbox for dealing with your setbacks, mistakes, and failures.
2. Add the question, “If this situation never were to change, what’s the one quality I need to make the most of this?” to your mental toolbox for dealing with the worst in your life.
3. Reframe your “failures” as “feedback.” Treat your feedback as an endless supply of learnings and lessons you can choose to act on, ignore, or make the most of.
4. Each Friday, find the three lessons you can carry forward from the week, into your next week, to create your momentum and a springboard for your success.

Day 22 – Design Your Day with Skill

“Let your imagination release your imprisoned possibilities.” — Robert H. Schuller

Your Outcome

- *Design your day to support you for success. Learn how to structure your day to make the most of what you’ve got. Chunk up your day and avoid being overwhelmed.*

Welcome to Day 22

Welcome to **day 22** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 21**, we learned how to carry the good forward and let the rest go to fail forward, fail fast, and improve as we go.

Today, we learn how to design our day with skill. By designing our day in a mindful way, we create just enough routines to give us a firm foundation and platform for success. When we’re having a great day, **these habits amplify and catapult our success**. When we’re having an off day, **this foundation will help us deal with whatever life throws our way**, as well as vault our key challenges or hurdles. It’s all about getting the system on our side, by design.

You Drive Your Day or Your Day Drives You

When you drive your day, you get to define what good looks like, and *when you set the rules, you win the game*. It only takes a moment to take a look from the balcony before you get on the stage. Before you are mired in your day, take this brief look to see the scenes you’ll be stepping into.

If each day is like a play, then you have a beginning, a middle and an end, or three acts. What roles do you want to play, and **what do you want your day to be about**. Whether it’s from the balcony or the director’s chair, you need to set the stage for your success, one scene, one act, or one play at a time.

You drive your day or your day drives you.

Each Day is a Fresh Start

Each day is a fresh start. Remember as a kid waking up each morning to a new and exciting day? That’s the point you need to start from. **The difference is now you have skills**. You also picked

up some good habits and some bad habits along the way. You looked forward to growing up so you could do whatever you want.

Unfortunately over time, maybe you started to think that life isn't as full of possibilities or as limitless as you once thought. But what's really limiting you? You are, and all the limits you bring to each new day. Baggage brings you down. **Don't pick up your bags today. Travel light.**

Test yourself. Test your limits. Chances are you'll surprise yourself time and again; just give yourself a chance. If things don't work out today, then you can still walk away with lessons that will help you shape a better tomorrow.

3 Ways to Design Your Day with Skill

Here are three ways to design your day with skill:

1. **Create an effective Startup Routine** — This is how you bootstrap your day. You already have a startup routine. It's the activities you do to start your day and feel grounded. For example, on weekdays, my startup routine is to wake up, throw my shoes on, workout for 30 minutes, shower, eat breakfast slowly, and take the back way to work. On my drive to work, I listen to my favorite music, and I think of my three most compelling outcomes for the day. When I get to work, I scan my inbox, my queues, and my calendar to see if I need to adjust my three outcomes.
2. **Create an effective Shut-Down Routine** — This is how you end your day. Just like having an effective startup routine helps bootstrap your day, an effective shutdown routine helps you wind down. The key to an effective shutdown routine is testing different patterns until you find one that helps put you in the right frame of mind for a more restful sleep. Sleeping well is the means to starting the next day refreshed.
3. **Drive your day with the Rule of 3** — If you remember nothing else, start your day with The Rule of 3. Know the minimum three outcomes that you want for the day—simply identify three results. These are your “tests for success.” It's your chance to define your success, and you get a clean slate each day.

Designing a Great Startup Routine

The way you start your day can have a dramatic impact on whether you start the day fresh, centered, and from a firm foundation, or you start the day like a chicken with its head cut off. I've seen the difference in myself and I've seen the difference in many others, up and down the ranks.

As I've built teams over the years, I've asked various team members how they start their day. Normally, they would tell me what they do at work. I'd say backup, start from when you wake up out of bed. I was surprised to find how varied many started their day with the news and their email, even before they got to work. They would also tell me how the news would

either make them feel anxious or depressed. They would also be running through their emails in their mind all the way to work.

That's the key right there. By the time you're at work, it's too late. You're in the line of fire. You're reacting.

The key is to use your **Startup Routine** to create a firm foundation for your day before you even get to work. It's not about watching the news or checking your email. It's about first **deciding what you want your day to be about** and what you want to accomplish. Now you are ready to "respond" instead of "react" to the barrage of inputs throughout the rest of your day, from emails, to news, to people stopping by and whatever changes your course throughout the day. Because you created a quick mini-plan for your day, you can effectively choose how to respond and make more effective trade-offs, rather than get knocked around by whatever comes your way.

Designing a Great Shutdown Routine

You might think it would be easy enough to think of a great shutdown routine, but there are a lot of variables. It's actually better to **test a variety of patterns to see what helps you the most**, whether it's watching TV, reading a book, meditating, etc. For example, if you tend to watch the news before you sleep, test watching a comedy; different shows will produce different results. If you like to read a book before bed, are you reading a book that helps you wind down, or are you reading material that makes it hard for you to fall asleep? Simply notice the results you're getting and test different approaches.

There's a lot of research and opinions, but the most important thing is to find what works for you. **It's less about the specific activity you do and it's more about how it impacts you or how you react to it.** For example, if you watch a comedy where the main character always gets into a stressful situation, and you have a lot of empathy, maybe this is not the best thing for you before bed. Then again, maybe the happy ending is just the perfect tension and release you need for the perfect slumber. Test your results and **change your approach if it's not working.** At the end of the day, you're the most important judge.

Lastly, in addition to how you feel at the end of your day, it's also important to notice how you feel when you wake up. If you're not waking up refreshed, chances are that **it's what you did the night before that makes all the difference** (barring any medical conditions, of course). So go ahead and find what works for you. Test some new patterns. Get creative. Explore your results.

Why Use the Rule of 3 to Drive Your Day

The Rule of 3 is one of your main tools for driving your day. You can use it anytime, anywhere to make the most of what you've got. Here are some of the main reasons to start your day with The Rule of 3:

1. *You define the three tests for success. If you set the rules, you win the game.*
2. *You get to define what good looks like. It's your life.*
3. *You get to chart your course. If you start by quickly looking over the time you'll spend for the day, then you have a map to guide you through your day and to lead you if you get lost in the thick of things.*
4. *If you know what you're trying to accomplish, you can prioritize more effectively. There are a lot of little mini-decisions during your day that you can influence by knowing where you want to go.*
5. *If you know you're working on the right things, it's easier to give your all—to find your motivation.*
6. *When you map your day, you know how to pace yourself. You can't run ahead if you can't see what's in front of you.*

Remember that your three outcomes aren't tasks. You might have lots of tasks that roll up to these three outcomes, but these are three results you want for the day. For example, for today I want see a good movie, have a great lunch, and ship a post that helps people make the most of their life, a day at a time. Those are the lines I've drawn in the sand for my day. They are subject to change, but they chart a simple course that I can choose to depart from, and trade-up or scale back with skill. Even if I decide to do nothing, it's the art of making a more mindful choice that matters.

Your Assignment

1. Design a Startup Routine that works for you. Own the way you start your day. Find the simple habits or routines that unleash your inner-Tigger or your corporate warrior or whatever supports you in the most effective way.
2. Design a Shutdown Routine that works for you. Own the way you end your day and cap the night. This is one of life's little moments that you can shape each day in a way that renews you.
3. Use The Rule of 3 to shape three stories, outcomes, or results for your day, in an inspiring way. Own your destiny, a story at a time. Remember that our favorite characters in our stories don't always choose the adventures or challenges they find themselves in, but it's how they respond, especially when they get tested, that we really care about.

Day 23 – Design Your Week with Skill

“Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in.” — Henry David Thoreau

Your Outcome

- *Design a week that supports you in a sustainable way. Have more time for the things you want, spend less time in the things that you don't want, and add more free time to your week.*

Welcome to Day 23

Welcome to **day 23** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 22**, you learned how to design your day with skill.

Today, we take a step back and look at how to design your week with skill. Your week is a large chunk of time to get a handle on. By designing a week that supports you, you set yourself up for weekly results. **Each week is a fresh start.** You can carry the lessons forward from one week into the next. All you really have is time, so the key is to make the most of it.

If you have recurring activities, you probably added them over time without realizing it. That's a schedule by default, not by design. Seize the opportunity now to design a week which actually supports you.

Design Your Week to Enhance Your Life

If there is one place where I've seen **breakthrough after breakthrough**, it's when a person takes control of their weekly schedule and maps out how they want to spend their time by design, not by default. How you spend your time on a weekly basis can either help lift you up and **spiral your success upward by leaps and bounds**, or you can spiral down, if how you're spending your time is working against you.

Designing your week is one of the single most effective ways to enhance your life.

Why Design Your Week

Is your week by design or by default? One of the keys to results is owning your schedule. You can drive your schedule, or it can drive you.

Imagine a week where you spend each day working on the right things with the right people and making the right impact. Imagine looking forward to the start of the week, whether it's

because it's a fresh start, or it's a chance to **experience more of what you want**. Imagine spending more time each day on the things that make you strong, give you energy and make you feel powerful. Imagine a week filled with Power Hours, Creative Hours, and enough free time that **you feel balanced and effective**. Imagine a week where you get **enough sleep, get enough movement, and have enough energy to accomplish whatever you want**.

That is a week by design. It's not just about weekly results -- it's about sustainable results for the long haul.

3 Ways to Design Your Week with Skill

1. **Baseline your week. Map out how you spend your time for the week.** If you're not spending enough time on the things you want, this is your first step to fixing it. Simply by making the map, it helps you to see where your time already goes. This is the first step to seeing your time "leaks," your time wasters, your time pain points and opportunities.
2. **Set boundaries and limits.** Setting time boundaries and limits is one of the best ways to design your week. This is ultimately where you choose the life style that you want to lead. This is where you choose whether to be the "workaholic" or more balanced. For example, you might decide that weekends or nights are your free time. You might decide that you won't work more than 40 hours, and whatever falls off, falls off. When you don't set limits for yourself, you put yourself at risk. When you set boundaries, you establish what a healthy model of a week is for you.
3. **Carve Out Time for What's Important.** If you want to spend more time in something, than make time for it. It will most likely mean letting something else go. The key is to make it a mindful choice instead of playing a victim role where you never have time for this or that. If you want more free time, then make free time, by cutting something else. Don't feel guilty, be deliberate.

The key to remember here is that nobody will come along and design your time for you in the best way possible. You are the ultimate architect and designer of how you spend your time in a way that works for you.

Baseline Your Schedule

Map out how you already spend your time. One of the most effective tools for time management is to baseline your schedule. Here is a template I use to map out a weekly schedule:

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:00 a.m.							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00 p.m.							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							

Examples of What to Put on Your Map

A baseline is simply a current picture of your week. It's a map of the days and the times and the recurring activities or events that you have. Here are some examples of what to put on your map:

- *Sleeping*
- *Eating*
- *Workouts*
- *Meetings*
- *Work time*
- *Recurring Activities*
- *Free time*

This helps give you a balcony view of your week at a glance.

Setting Boundaries and Limits

Try using Hot Spots (mind, body, emotions, career, financial, relationships, and fun) to help you set boundaries:

Hot Spot	Minimums and Maximums
Mind	
Body	Minimum of 3 hours
Emotions	
Career	Maximum of 50 hours
Financial	
Relationships	Minimum of 8 hours
Fun	Minimum of 3 hours

Examples of Setting Boundaries

For example, try setting a maximum on career and a minimum on relationships, body, and fun. Setting boundaries and limits is how you achieve your balance. If you don't make time for things, they won't happen. If you don't set limits for things, they will take over other important parts of your life. You can start with simple boundaries. Here are some examples:

- Dinner on the table at 5:30 p.m.
- No work on the weekend.
- Tuesday night is date night.

Monday Vision, Daily Wins, and Friday Reflection

Whether you design your week or not, remember that the [Monday Vision, Daily Wins, Friday Reflection pattern](#) is the heart of your week. This is the scaffolding to support your weekly results. It's how you'll get a fresh start each week and each day. It's also how you'll improve over time.

It's a simple, yet consistent pattern you can count on:

- On Mondays, you envision what you'd like to accomplish for the week; you simply imagine—if this was Friday, what three results would you like under your belt?
- Each day, you figure out three results for the day that help you move towards your three results for the week. At the same time, you stay flexible so that you're always working on the next best thing for you to do.
- On Fridays, you reflect on your results and you carry the good forward.

5 Ways to Improve Your Week

Here are some additional ways to improve your week:

1. Schedule Your Free Time. If you schedule it, it happens. If you don't, it won't.

2. Fix time for eating, sleeping, and working out. This is one of the most common success patterns I see time and again. Have a time where you regularly eat, sleep, and exercise and **make everything work around that**. This is your foundation and core. It's part of your platform for personal success.
3. Consolidate your related activities. One of the best ways to free up your time or spend less time on things is to do them in a batch. Lump them together so you can tackle them with efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Consolidate activities that make you weak. If some activities drain you, try to lump them together and consolidate the amount of time you spend in them. Again, batching is your friend.
5. Add more activities that make you strong. If you need to add more energy to your week, simply find ways to spend more time in things that make you strong. It's not doing nothing that helps you renew your energy, it's actually doing what you love or doing the things that make you stronger that help you bounce back with skill. For me, I regularly meet with my mentors to get new perspectives on things. This is one of my renewal patterns that supports me each week.

The key to remember in all this is it's not about being a productive machine. It's about spending more time on the things you want, driving from your life style, being who you want to be, and creating the experiences you want in your life.

Free Yourself Up

You can tune and prune your week from here, but step one is simply having a weekly schedule that has some simple buffers and boundaries and free time, to help you take the pressure off, and to be your most effective self. When you spend the right energy on the right things the right way, you get them done in way less time. This frees you up in multiple ways, beyond just giving you some hours back. It gives you peace of mind and it gets time on your side. When time is on your side, you are unstoppable.

Today's Assignment

1. Baseline your schedule. Take the time to map out your weekly schedule and take a look from the balcony.
2. Schedule your free time. If you don't have enough free time, the single most effective way you can add free time is to add more free time to your schedule. Remember the big rocks story? First make room for your free time, if that's what's important to you, then add things around that.

Day 24 – Bounce Back with Skill

“Life is not about how fast you run, or how high you climb, but how well you bounce.” – Anonymous

Your Outcome

- *Bounce back with skill and roll with the punches. Learn to draw from multiple sources of strength and energy, including your mind, body, emotions, and spirit.*

Welcome to Day 24

Welcome to **day 24** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book, [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 23**, you learned how to design your week with skill to get a fresh start, establish routines that support and renew you, and spend more time on the things that count for you.

Today, we learn how to bounce back with skill. Bouncing back with skill helps us roll with the punches, refuel our bodies, and **keep our spark alive**. It’s how we keep our engine going when the rest of us says “we can’t” and it’s how we “shut down” or “turn it off” so we can bounce back stronger.

It’s How High You Bounce

If you combine a firm foundation with your ability to bounce back with skill, while leveraging the cycles of things, including your own personal patterns of “ups” and “downs,” you not only make the most of what you’ve got, but you truly write your story forward, focusing on the things you control, while letting the rest go.

Remember that in life, it’s not how many times you get knocked down ... it’s how many times you get back up.

Key Principles for Bouncing Back with Skill

Here are some core principles for bouncing back with skill:

1. **Drive from what you want your life to be about.** Focus on who you want to be, what experiences you want to create, and what you want your life to be about. Water seeks its own level. You have to set the level starting with your own mental model or the way you want to write your story forward. When life doesn’t play out the way we expect, it’s up to us to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and make the most of what we’ve got, from that point forward ... Rise again.

2. **Draw your strength and energy from multiple sources.** Your energy comes from multiple sources – mind, body, emotions, and spirit. You can get a synergy by combining these sources, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
3. **Spending the right energy creates more energy.** Thinking the thoughts that serve you, spending more time in your strengths, and growing your limits can come back to you tenfold. You grow faster in your strengths than you do in your weaknesses. A key to bouncing back further, is pushing you back stronger. As Tony Robbins puts it, “Resistance makes you stronger.”
4. **Know the cycles of things.** You can swim upstream or you can ride the wave. Respect the cycles and go with the flow. Growing and resting are a cycle. Whether it’s the ebb and flow or the cycles of up and down, you can get the cycles on your side, if you work with them, instead of against them. When you know the cycle of things or how the process works, you can allow time for the process, whether it’s resetting your expectations or simply adjusting or accounting for where you are in the cycle.
5. **Keep your expectations in check.** Don’t let crossed-expectations bring you down or keep you down. Sometimes one of the best ways to leap the hurdles in your life is to lower your expectations. Sometimes it means raising the bar. A key here is testing your assumptions and using the feedback as a learning loop to set your expectations accordingly.

At the end of the day, your ability to bounce back is up to you. Even if you use a coach, a therapist or anybody else, you still have to pair with them for your best results. Knowing how to draw from your multiple strengths is crucial to your success.

Visual –Sources of Strength 4×4

Here is a simple model I put together to help you multiply your ability to bounce back in any situation:

MIND		BODY	
1	Beliefs Focus Mental Models Self-Talk	2	Cycles Exercise Nutrition Rest
EMOTIONS		SPIRIT	
3	Compassion Physiology Self-Confidence Thoughts	4	Meaning Purpose Service Values

The Quantity, the Quality, the Focus, and the Force of Your Energy

You can better focus, shape, and amplify your energy when you know where it comes from. You can think of your sources of energy in a simple but effective way: body is quantity, emotions are quality, mind is focus, and spirit is force. Your energy is the combination of your mind, body, emotions, and spirit. Rather than doing nothing, sometimes the answer is doing something to improve your energy and refuel. For example, it might mean spending more time in your strengths or doing more of the things you enjoy, or simply less of the things you don't. Sometimes the best way to bounce back is to really give yourself some downtime. Sometimes it's about reducing your expectations and giving yourself the time and space to recover, or play out the process.

Mind

Your mind is how you frame and focus. It's how you choose what to focus on and what lens to look through. The same glass can be half empty, or half full. Your mind is your source of self-talk that can be inspiring or deflating. Your mind can hold the pictures that lift you up or break you down. The scenes you see, the stories you tell, and your beliefs can all limit or enable you.

Ways to Bounce Back with Your Mind

Here are some ways to bounce back with your mind:

1. *Focus on what you control and let the rest go.*

2. *Like a rubber ball ... Having the right mental model or metaphor is where it starts. You can be like a rubber ball and bounce back from anything.*
3. *Set limits on things. If you let your body go until it crashes or runs out of steam, it can be too late. You have to set limits either in terms of buffers or boundaries or timeboxes.*
4. *Ask yourself, "What do you want your life to be about?"*
5. *Turn resistance into your sparring partner. Resistance is the enemy. Respect it, but don't let it wear you down.*
6. *Visualize the prize. If it works for Olympic athletes, it might just work for you. Picture it, then make it so.*
7. *Improve your self-talk.*
8. *Change your beliefs. Find a model or learn from others what some more empowering or useful beliefs might be.*
9. *Change your focus. You can change your focus by changing the question.*
10. *Focus on what you control and let the rest go.*
11. *Change your state.*
12. *Know how to psyche yourself up.*
13. *Don't keep solving the same problems. Burnout isn't caused by working hard or working long hours. It's caused by working on the same problems or not making progress.*
14. *Mentally prepare for it. Simply resetting your own expectations can help you prepare for anything. Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.*
15. *Choose to act strong*
16. *Turn a setback into a defining moment.*
17. *Take breaks. Even little breaks interspersed can help you mentally, emotionally, or physically.*
18. *Use your renewal patterns. Maybe this means taking an afternoon siesta. Find what works for you.*
19. *Shake things up. Sometimes the best way to break out of a rut is to shake things up.*
20. *Shift to the future.*
21. *Ask yourself, "Who's in your corner?"*
22. *Know that resistance is the enemy.*
23. *Brace yourself and pace yourself. You might have to chip away at the stone.*
24. *Remember your heroes.*
25. *Remember your shining moment.*
26. *Play the right "head movies." If you keep playing the wrong scenes in your head, you wear yourself down. Find a new scene or movie to play in your head that inspires you.*

Body

Whether you think of your body as your temple or your fortress or your machine, you need to take care of it, so it can take care of you. There is a strong mind-body connection and your body is a strong multiplier when it comes to bouncing back with skill. Pay attention to your own patterns. For example, a friend of mine told me he slept better when he cut down his caffeine after 6pm. I tested this and found I slept faster, easier, and deeper too. One of the

guidelines for your body is to push yourself past your limits to grow, rest and recover for your best growth, respect your cycles of “on” and “off” or “up” and “down”, and feed your needs (whether that’s nutrition, hydration, rest, etc.)

Ways to Bounce Back with Your Body

Here are some ways to bounce back with your body:

1. Allow for recovery.
2. Take action. Sometimes you have to take action first and then energy and motivation follow. You can think of this as “fake it until you make it.” This is especially true for me when I run.
3. Play like a kid, sleep like a baby. I heard Deepak Chopra say in an interview that children sleep like a baby because of their dynamic activity throughout the day. To know great rest, we need to know great activity and vice-versa. I know for myself that if I don’t get my downtime, I go into a slump. I’m a fan of giving my all while I’m driving a project, and then taking a break after I ship.
4. Avoid spiking your blood sugar. Spiking your blood sugar is one of the worst ways to work against your body. It creates higher highs, and lower lows. You can reduce the roller-coaster effect by limiting your intake of things that have a high-glycemic index. Another approach is to balance your ratios of fat, carbs, and protein, such as in the Zone Diet.
5. Swap out starchy carbs for more fibrous ones. This seems to be a pattern that helps a lot of people find more energy in a consistent way.
6. Eat more frequent and smaller meals. This is another way to balance your body’s needs throughout the day. One pattern is to aim for having a small meal or snack throughout the day, such as every three hours.
7. Respect your cycles. We all have our up times and our downtimes, even throughout the day. If you find you need more sleep, test giving yourself more sleep. Know your peak energy cycles throughout the day and leverage those.
8. Don’t bake bad habits in. When Bruce Lee was “off” or he couldn’t practice a technique properly, he stopped. The last thing he wanted to do was burn in a habit or practice that was ineffective.

Emotions

Emotional ups and downs can be tough, especially if you have exceptional emotional lows, or exceptional emotional highs. One of the most important things to do here is to avoid “learned helplessness.” Martin Seligman teaches us that the worst thing we can do is make things permanent, personal, or pervasive. The way to stay optimistic is to make the bad things in life not personal, not permanent, and not pervasive. This simple little change to your explanatory style can make a crucial difference in your ability to bounce back in the worst situations.

Ways to Bounce Back with Your Emotions

Here are some ways to better balance and bounce back with your emotions:

1. Think the thoughts that serve you. Your thoughts create your energy.
2. Pull yourself forward by what you really want to do.
3. Grow your compassion. Keep your heart open. One of the worst ways to kill your lust for life is to grow callous and cold.
4. Hold yourself high. Your physiology affects your emotions in a strong way. Sometimes you need to smile before you feel happy.
5. Believe in yourself. This might mean as simple as deciding that you'll "give it all you've got" and "whatever happens happens." You don't have to put your focus on your ability. You can put your focus on your effort or your determination. Where you put your focus will change how you feel.
6. Find your "why." This is how you light your fire from the inside out. Don't depend on external things to keep you going. Root yourself firmly in your own foundation.
7. Leverage your relationships and network. There is strength in numbers or even just somebody who wants to listen.

Spirit

You can practice your spiritual intelligence as a way to fully engage and lift your spirit when you need it most. The most useful way I found to think about spiritual intelligence is living your values, finding your unique contribution, and shaping a better version of yourself.

Ways to Bounce Back with Your Spirit

Here are some ways to bounce back with your spirit:

1. Make it bigger than yourself. Find a cause where you can put your focus on something you think is great. Having a cause is a great way to get back on your horse or back up to bat.
2. Do what you love or do what you were born to do. Either way, you win. If you can't find your calling, then look for your unique contribution.
3. Connect to your values.
4. Immerse yourself in great literature or music.
5. Find the synergy. According to Stephen Covey, we unleash our spiritual intelligence when we combine meaning, integrity and contribution – by serving and lifting all stakeholders: customers, suppliers, employees and their families, communities, society — to make a difference in the world.

Stories, Metaphors, Sayings, and Songs

Keep a collection of stories, sayings, and songs that you can use to lift yourself up when you need it most.

Example Metaphors and Stories

Here are a few stories and metaphors that help me bounce back or stand strong:

Category	Items
Stories	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Little Engine That Could2. The Wizard of Oz3. Rocky4. The Karate Kid
Metaphors	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Back on the saddle again.2. Like a rock3. Like a rubber ball ...4. Roll with the punches5. You 2.0

Example Sayings and Songs

Here are a few sayings and songs that help me bounce back or stand strong:

Category	Items
Sayings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make like a duck and let it roll off your back.2. Finish strong.3. Live strong.4. Go down swinging.5. Don't go down without a fight.6. Take the bull by the horns.7. When the going gets tough, the tough get going.8. Where there's a will there's a way.9. I've not yet begun to fight.10. Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger.11. Stand strong when tested.12. No pain, no gain.13. There's no failure, only feedback.14. It's not over until you give up.15. I'm down, but not out.16. I'll be back.17. Hope for the best, but prepare for the

worst.

Songs

1. Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger "
2. Ozzy's "Crazy Train "
3. Lincoln Park's "Faint "
4. Steppen Wolf's "Born to Be Wild "
5. Queen's "We are the Champions"
6. Chumbawamba's "Tub Thumping"
7. INXS "The Devil Inside"
8. Van Halen's "Jump"
9. T-Pain's "Apple Bottom Jeans"
10. Elton John's "I'm Still Standing"
11. While Lion's "Little Fighter"

Find What Works for You

Whatever works for you is what counts. The stories, metaphors, sayings or songs don't have to make sense or be the "right" choice. All they have to do is get you going when you need it most. The art of bouncing back with skill is shifting from what "should" work to what "does" work for you, and changing your approach until you find your key.

Today's Assignment

1. Find one of your past victories in life and add that to your mental flip book of scenes to draw from when you need it most.
2. Find one metaphor to help you to represent how you bounce back in life.
3. Find one song or one saying to have in your mind that you can use as a one-liner reminder to take the right actions when it counts. For example, one that some people like is "Stand strong when tested."

Day 25 – Fix Time, Flex Scope

“Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.” — Parkinson’s Law

Your Outcome

- *Learn how to master time management and set effective time limits for things and then bite off what you can chew within that time limit. Your ability to use timeboxing and time budgets will help you manage your energy, free up your time, get more things done, and achieve work-life balance.*

Welcome to Day 25

Welcome to **day 25** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 24**, we learned how to bounce back with skill and to draw from our four sources of strength (mind, body, emotions, and spirit.) Today, we learn the single most effective way to **master time management**. It’s the art of timeboxing. Timeboxing is a simple way to treat time like a budget and choose how much time to spend on things. This is how you avoid throwing “good time”, after “bad” or working past the point of diminishing returns, or simply put, spending \$20 on a \$5 problem.

If you’re a procrastinator or if you have stuff you hate to do, or if you fall prey to ineffective thoughts or get stuck in analysis paralysis, or if you find yourself always running late or missing windows of opportunity, then this post will help you transition to a more effective approach.

Fixing Time, Flexing Scope

One of the best patterns I know for mastering time management is called **Fix Time, Flex Scope**. This is a practice we’ve used for several years on our patterns & practices team at Microsoft, to ship things on time and on budget. I’ve used this pattern personally and for all my projects for a perfect track record of **on time** and **on budget**. The idea is to fix or allocate a certain amount of time for something in advance, and then **bite off what you can chew** within that amount of time.

The opposite pattern is to simply work on something until you’re “done.” That pattern is **Fix Scope, Flex Time**. Basically, you keep throwing time at the problem until you eventually decide it’s done. That pattern has several problems, including the following:

1. You no longer have the benefit of time to help you prioritize
2. You can no longer count on hitting your windows of opportunity
3. You potentially run out of steam or go into a “death march” with no end in sight before you actually finish

4. You end up throwing time at problems (time expands to fill its container)
5. You end up with “scope creep” because of your moving timeline that just keeps moving out further and further.

3 Easy Steps for Timeboxing with Skill

Here are 3 key steps to creating effective timeboxes:

- **Step 1. Identify candidate areas for time boxing.** Identify candidates for time boxing. This could be anything from work projects to personal projects. Personally, I’ve found it the most effective to start with something small, such as starting a new exercise program. I’ve also found it effective to use it to tackle my worst time bandits (any area where I lose a bunch of time, with either little ROI or at the expense of another area.)
- **Step 2. Identify your objectives.** In this step, ask yourself what you need to accomplish with time boxing. Examples include: meet a deadline, show incremental results, make incremental progress on a tough problem, build momentum, etc.
- **Step 3. Identify the appropriate time box.** In this step, figure out what a right-sized time box would be. For example, you might have a project due in three weeks. Within that three week time box, you might decide that if you allocate 2 hours a day, you’ll produce effective results.

The right-sized time box largely depends on what you determined in Step 1. You might need to grow or shrink your time box depending on whether you’re trying to build momentum, show results or just make progress on a problem.

10 Ways to Think in Terms of Fixing Time and Flexing Scope

Here are some ways to think in terms of fixing time and flexing scope:

1. 3x3 system ... use three stories for your day, for your week, for your month, and for your year. This is a simple and direct way to fix time, while flexing scope (you are varying your stories within the timeboxes of a day, week, month, and year.)
2. Catch the next train. Keep your trains leaving the station. When you miss one, don’t hold your train back. Instead, catch the next one. It’s a simple metaphor but it keeps things flowing. For example, if you missed completing one of your stories today, then you might add it to tomorrow’s metaphorical train, but only if it’s the next best thing for you to do.
3. Ask yourself, “How much time should it take?”
4. Ask yourself, “How much time do you actually have for it?”
5. Think in terms of “containers” of time to do your work in. For example, you might have a 30 minute container, or a 2 hour container or a 1 day container or a week as a container, etc. Give yourself enough space in this container.
6. Have a time and a place for things. Simply organizing your time this way will help you find peace of mind. For example, I have a small windows on Sunday mornings that I use for creative work. If I miss it, later in the day just doesn’t feel the same. As such, I use this time for what it’s really meant for. Don’t try to rob Peter to pay Paul.

7. Ding ... your time is up. When your timebox expires and your time is up, treat it like it's really up and be done with it.
8. Think in terms of "good enough for now" and treat perfection as a "journey", not a "destination."
9. Version your work. Your first version might not be as good as your second, third, or fourth, but get in the habit of using versions as a way to share and improve your work over time. For example, you might create an Alpha, Beta, Version 1, Version 2, etc.
10. Chunk your work down. This is key both to flowing value along the way, as well as having **cuttable scope**. One unit that I find works well is using a story, where the story is a narrative of a task you'll perform or a goal you'll achieve. Your stories can vary in size whether they are one of your stories for the day, the week, the month, or the year. For example, a meaningful story for the year might be a much larger story than a story you would tackle within a single day.

A Story ... "It's Done When It's Done"

Many moons ago, one of my early turning points in my career as a Program Manager at Microsoft was during a meeting with my manager about when my project would ship. The conversation went roughly like this ... My manager asked me when my project would be done, and I said I didn't know. I added that there was no way we could accurately estimate or even guesstimate when we could finish everything left on the plate. I was basically **scope-driven** and the project would be done, when I finished all the scope.

I remember a colleague saying, *"What I'm hearing you say is ... it's done when it's done."*

At the time, that seemed perfectly reasonable to me. After all, something is done when it's done, isn't it? The problem was that nobody was signed up to bet on something that didn't have an end date. Nobody wanted to keep supporting something where they could not see the end in sight and they could not see any results until after I shipped, sometime in the future.

To make a long story short, I ended up having to set a date and brutally cut scope to ship on time. My biggest wake up call was that I didn't actually have much **cuttable scope** (things that I could easily cut without killing the quality) and that trying to whittle something down was far worse than building something up with a timeframe in mind.

That was how I learned to go from **scope-driven** to **time-driven** and actually **treat time as a first-class citizen**.

Today's Assignment

1. Pick one of your daily activities that eats too much time and set a time limit for it. For example, one of the best moves I did long ago was decide that I would not spend more than 30 minutes a day on email (and I get a ton of email at Microsoft that requires my attention

and actions.) This one move forced me to both ruthlessly prioritize and find way better techniques to manage my email.

2. Pick one thing that you've been spreading out over too much time and create a timebox for it. Maybe it's a pet project that you would love for it to see the light of day. Maybe it's write a book. Decide how much more time is worth spending on it, at least for a strawman or whatever is "good enough for now." Maybe it's worth spending another day, another week, or another month, etc. Whatever the timebox is, put your stake in the ground. Then decide the most important things to complete for your project within that time. Cherry pick the most important value, and work on that first, until you run out of time in your timebox.

Day 26 – Solve Problems with Skill

“You don’t overcome challenges by making them smaller but by making yourself bigger.” —John C. Maxwell

Your Outcome

- **Your Outcome:** *Solve your problems with skill. Become a skilled problem solver and learn a systematic way for solving your problems. Turn even your worst lemons into lemonade.*

Welcome to Day 26

Welcome to **day 26** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 25**, we learned how to fix time, flex scope to get things done on time, slice our work down to size, achieve work-life balance, and flow value along the way versus wait for a big bang.

Today, we learn how to solve our problems with skill and to frame them in a way that inspires action. It’s not wishing our problems away that leads to a better life. It’s finding more effective ways to deal with whatever comes our way.

Our ability to succeed in life is directly related to our ability to respond to our challenges.

Why Focus on Solving Problems

We can’t avoid them. Growing up, I wanted to make all my problems go away. I thought if I just won the lottery or made it to the top or got the perfect job that all my problems would go away. I would achieve something and then live happily ever after. It was a very static view of life.

Eventually I realized, problems are a part of life. They come with the turf. Your problems change, but you’ll never be free of problems. And everybody has problems in some shape or form. Instead of eradicate problems from my life, I could embrace them – take the bull by the horns. At that point, I decided the most effective thing I could do is become a skilled problem solver.

By focusing on solving problems, I learned to take on big, hairy challenges, and to shape my life with my skills and abilities. I also learned how to help others drastically improve their problem solving ability.

5 Steps for Solving Problems

Here are five steps you can use for solving problems in your life:

1. **State your problem as a “how to”.** I’ve found that the most effective way to state a problem is to make it a goal-based problem, such as “how to win friends and influence people” or “how to write faster” or “how to cure problem XYZ” or “how to motivate yourself”, etc. This makes your problem actionable. It makes it easier to find existing solutions. It makes it easier to share your problem with others in a way they can quickly follow, which makes it easier for others to help you. You put your brain into automatic resourceful mode. I think it’s also incredibly important to write your problem down as a one-liner statement, using this “how to” phrase. Writing the problem down forces you to clarify the problem and thinking on paper is an effective way to really see your problem echoed back at you.
2. **Find potential solutions.** This is where the magic happens. It’s rare that you would be the only person in the world with the problem you have. Figure out who else shares your same problem or would have had to solve your problem and find three potential solutions. Looking for three solutions forces you to cast a wider net, it expands your possibilities, and it helps you look at potential solutions from multiple perspectives. You can look to people you know or people you don’t. You can consult the wisdom of the ages. You can look to people who specialize in your problem. You can find working examples or people with the results you want, and reverse engineer their solutions. You can almost always find some working example or actual results to learn and model from, versus start from scratch.
3. **Test your results.** Your problem doesn’t solve itself. Take action and test your results. You have to bounce it against reality and see what sticks. At this point, you are either achieving success, or you are getting feedback. Worst case, you’re finding a bunch of things that don’t work. Best case, you’re moving towards your solution. Here you really need to pay attention to what results you are actually getting. This will inform you, in a very real way, whether or how you need to change your approach.
4. **Change your approach.** If it’s not working, change your approach. According to Albert Einstein, insanity is “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” If you want different results, then change what you’re doing. If you don’t know how to change your approach, start asking yourself better questions. If that’s not working, start asking other people better questions. You can always find somebody who will offer advice. If you do get advice, make sure you are asking the right people, and asking the right questions. Everybody has a super skill, and the world is a network of capabilities.
5. **Refine the problem.** Sometimes the best thing you can do is keep refining your problem, based on taking action and getting real feedback. You might find that you only had a surface level understanding of the problem, and now you have a much deeper understanding, by actually exploring solutions and testing your results. How you define and refine the problem will continuously improve your ability to find the answer or at least get closer to the solution.

As simplistic as this process might appear, it scales up and down and you can use it for pretty extreme challenges.

Change Your Approach, Change Your Results

I learned to dramatically solve problems faster while working in Microsoft Developer Support. I was constantly faced with problems I had never seen before. My ability to **define the problem** and **test solutions** was tested on a daily basis, in extreme scenarios (I was on a small escalation team.)

In my final days of Developer Support, I learned a recipe for solving problems in a better way. When a customer reported their problem, rather than just solve it however I could, I would first **enumerate the patterns of solutions** for the given problem (drawing from our internal collection of solutions.) I would then let the customer know how many times this problem was solved, **identify the various success rates for the different paths**, and then, with a better sense of expectations, let them **choose which path to follow, based on trade-offs**.

This approach helped me pair with the customer and **co-create the solution**, and go down whatever path made sense for them, based on what they were optimizing for. More importantly, by letting the customer know up front, how many times a problem had been solved, it gave them hope and **confidence** versus thinking they were out on a limb and the only one in the world with their specific problem. Basically, I learned how to **cast a wide net on the problem, enumerate solutions, evaluate the best path, and make better trade-offs**, while increasing my success rate, and reducing time spent on problems.

7 Telltale Signs that You are Getting Better at Solving Problems

Here are some things you'll notice as you get better at solving problems:

1. You get better at recognizing and defining the problem in a way that adds clarity and focus on the underlying problem.
2. You find it easy to reframe problems faster in a way that empowers and inspires you.
3. You find it easier to explore possible solution paths versus lock into one solution.
4. You test your solutions sooner versus later.
5. You figure out ways to get more feedback faster and easier.
6. You build a network of smart people and capabilities to help you solve problems.
7. You find it easy to switch your mind into a more objective mode where you can focus on effectiveness instead of stewing on the problem.

7 Reasons Why People Fail at Solving Problems

Here are some common reasons why people fail at solving their problems:

1. **They ask the wrong questions.** If you want to go nowhere fast, then just ask the wrong questions. If you want to stay stuck in a loop, keep asking “why” questions (“Why does this always me?”, “Why is this happening now?”, “Why did this happen? etc.”). If you don’t start asking “how” questions, “How to prevent this from happening again?” “How to solve this?” “How to make the most of this?”, etc., then you’ll be a broken record that even you won’t want to listen to anymore.
2. **They blame other people for their problems.** If you don’t step up to the plate and “own” your problems, then your problems own you. Once you fall into victim or blamer mode, then it’s game over. You took away your power to do something about the problem.
3. **They act from their least effective state.** There are many ways to put yourself in an ineffective state. A common one is to blow the problem out of proportion and make it larger than life. Another is to ask yourself limiting questions (“why me?”) or to adopt limiting beliefs (“I’ll never solve that”.) Switching to “how to” questions helps you engage your brain in a more resourceful way. Simply reframing your “problems” to “challenges” is an effective way to play with your problem in a more inspiring way.
4. **They don’t ask the right people for help.** Don’t ask a bum for money. It’s OK to get input from a wide variety of sources, but you have to seriously ask yourself whether you’re asking the right people who really have the right perspective on your problem. A good way to whittle this down is to check how many times this person has actually dealt with this problem successfully, or whether they have the resources or are in a position to actually help you. Don’t fall into the trap of the blind leading the blind.
5. **They don’t use the right tool for the job.** If you have a surgical problem, get a surgical solution. One of the worst ways to tackle your problems is with a silver bullet or a one-size fits all solution or a buckshot approach (where you spray a bunch of solutions hoping something hits its target.) Your ability to solve a problem well is a reflection of your ability to choose the right tool for the job.
6. **All thought, no action.** There are two flavors of this. One is “analysis paralysis” in which you churn on your own thoughts, but don’t turn your thoughts into action. The other flavor is to “worry” and put yourself into a worry loop, that simply generates anxiety, but doesn’t generate any results, besides put you into an ineffective state. Action is your friend and your escape hatch.
7. **All talk, no action.** Actions speak louder than words. Let your actions get in the way of your words, not the other way around. If you find yourself still talking about the same problems, that’s a good sign you’re falling into the trap. For better or worse, you get what you focus on.

Some Quotes on Problem Solving to Keep in Mind

Here are some quotes to help you really hone your ability to solve problems:

1. *“A problem well stated is a problem half solved.”* — John Dewey
2. *“Don’t dwell on what went wrong. Instead, focus on what to do next. Spend your energies on moving forward toward finding the answer.”* — Denis Waitley

3. *"Focus 90% of your time on solutions and only 10% of your time on problems."* — Anthony J. D'Angelo
4. *"For every problem there is a solution which is simple, clean and wrong."* — Henry Louis Mencken
5. *"Have you got a problem? Do what you can where you are with what you've got."* — Theodore Roosevelt
6. *"How you think about a problem is more important than the problem itself – so always think positively."* — Norman Vincent Peale
7. *"In times like these it is good to remember that there have always been times like these."* — Paul Harvey
8. *"It is not stress that kills us. It is effective adaptation to stress that allows us to live."* — George Vaillant
9. *"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."* — Albert Einstein
10. *"Laugh at your problems; everybody else does."* — Anonymous
11. *"Leaders are problem solvers by talent and temperament, and by choice."* — Harlan Cleveland
12. *"Man is the only animal for whom his own existence is a problem which he has to solve."* — Erich Fromm
13. *"Most people spend more time and energy going around problems than in trying to solve them."* — Henry Ford
14. *"Never try to solve all the problems at once — make them line up for you one-by-one."* — Richard Sloma
15. *"No problem can stand the assault of sustained thinking."* — Voltaire
16. *"Problems are to the mind what exercise is to the muscles, they toughen and make strong."* — Norman Vincent Peale
17. *"Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well-informed just to be undecided about them."* — Laurence J. Peter
18. *"Stop looking for solutions to problems and start looking for the right path."* — Andy Stanley
19. *"The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem you had last year."* — John Foster Dulles
20. *"The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem."* — Theodore Rubin
21. *"The way we see the problem is the problem."* — Stephen Covey
22. *"Uncertainty can lead to paralysis. And if you become indecisive you're dead."* — Jim Citrin
23. *"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."* — Albert Einstein
24. *"When you come to a roadblock, take a detour."* — Mary Kay Ash
25. *"Worry is like a rocking chair – it gives you something to do but won't get you anywhere."* — Anonymous
26. *"You won't find a solution by saying there is no problem."* — William Rotsler

Additional Ways to Master the Art of Effective Problem Solving

Here are some additional ways to help make mince-meat out of your problems:

1. **Overwhelm your problems.** This could mean throwing more time or more energy at your problem to get over the hump. As Voltaire teaches us, “No problem can stand the assault of sustained thinking.”
2. **Expand your bubble and expand yourself.** Imagine that you are in a bubble and you bump up against your glass ceilings or this bubble you’re in, every time you hit a problem. When you solve a problem, you expand your container, and you expand yourself. Solving problems is how you grow.
3. **What are you trying to accomplish?** Ask yourself, “What are you trying to accomplish?”, not “What are you trying to do?” It’s a very subtle, but very critical change in how you ask this question. When you focus on what you are trying to accomplish, you up-level it, and immediately create more flexible solutions to solving your problem.
4. **What are you optimizing?** You should be deliberate in whether you are optimizing for “best” or “simplest” or “fastest” or “complete”, etc. This will dramatically shape the types of solutions you look for, and the types of results you will get.
5. **Reframe from “problem” to “challenge.”** It’s a simple step, but make it a habit to treat your problem as a way to test your skills and to grow yourself and expand your abilities.
6. **Whatever doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.** My Mom taught me this, and as they say, “Mom always knows best.”
7. **You’re part of the problem or part of the solution.** Remind yourself that you’re part of the problem or part of the solution. Choose to be a part of the solution, and stop whining, complaining, or blaming, and start defining, exploring, and solving.
8. **Ask the right person.** It might be tough to ask for help, but if you find people that like solving the problem you have, you can actually make it a win-win scenario. Let people pit their skills against your problem.
9. **Ask better questions.** If you want better answers, then ask better questions. If you want to make more effective progress on your problem, then ask more effective questions. Questions are the keys to unlocking solutions.
10. **Share the problem with skill.** You’ll find it easier to broker in help if you can state your problem clearly. You know it’s clear when somebody can basically start testing solutions to your problem or they can echo the problem back to you, using their own words.
11. **Team up, pair up, or co-create the solution.** Find people who eat your problem for breakfast. One person’s problem, is another’s playground.
12. **Satisficing.** Your solution doesn’t have to be “perfect.” It has to be effective. “Satisficing” is about finding a solution with a “good enough” match to fit your scenario or context.
13. **Respond to the challenge.** Always drive from the mindset that you are “responding” to the challenge, not “reacting” to the problem. As Covey says, “success is when the response meets the challenge.”
14. **A resourceful state of mind.** Whether this means asking yourself a better question, or putting on your favorite hat, or playing your favorite song, watching your favorite movie, or saying your favorite quote, get yourself into a mode where your brain is ready, willing, and able to brainstorm solutions in a resourceful state.

15. **Measure against effectiveness.** When you're testing results, your ultimate measure is simply whether it is effective, against what you want to accomplish, and what you are optimizing for.
16. **Count the actions you've taken.** Actually write down, the actions you took ... "I did this" or "I did that", etc. Worst case, you have a list of what doesn't work, but even that is progress. Be honest with yourself and admit whether you actually took an action or simply thought about it. It's too easy to think about an action, to the point you feel you took action, but in reality, you didn't do squat.
17. **Remember the Little Engine that Could.** Even when you think you can't, remember the Little Engine that thought it could. Sometimes you just have to say, "I think I can" and then prove yourself right.

Your Assignment

1. Pick one of your problems that you'd like to solve and write it down as "how to ..." (such as "how to grow my blog to 10,000 subscribers")
2. Find three examples of people or solutions that you can model from.
3. Pick one solution to test and get feedback as you apply it. Use this feedback to help you shape your solutions or change your approach.

Day 27 – Do Something Great

“Big dreams create the magic that stirs men’s souls to greatness.” — Bill McCartney

Your Outcome

- *Immerse yourself in something great. Take your life to the next level. Do something great that matters for you or someone in your life. Go above and beyond your daily call of duty.*

Welcome to Day 27

Welcome to **day 27** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 26**, we learned how to solve problems with skill.

Today, we decide to do something great.

You Never Know What You’re Capable Of.

You just never know what’s possible. My first book was downloaded several hundred thousand times within the span of a few months. It was unreal. What was even more unreal though was that **I didn’t know whether I could even pull it off**. After all, I had never written a book before.

When I first joined the patterns & practices team at Microsoft, they knew I could write articles, but they questioned whether I could write a book. When they asked me if I could, I said, “I don’t know but I guess I have to figure it out now don’t I — since it’s part of the job.” At that point, I decided that instead of focusing on writing a book, I would focus on solving significant problems. I decided to write the ultimate playbook for building secure ASP.NET applications. I decided I would give it my all, assemble a team of rock stars, and tackle the problem **like it had never been tackled before**. I set my eyes on the prize and, as Yoda says, “There is Do... or do not. There is no try.” As my Mom always said, “where there’s a will there’s a way” and that’s how I created the very first “Blue Book” for Microsoft, several years ago.

The lesson for me was that you just don’t know what you’re capable of, until you push past your limits.

From Ordinary to Extraordinary

- Sometimes in life, you have to decide ... at least one more time ... to be The Little Engine that Could, even when you think you can’t. When you decide to do something great, your life takes on new meaning. You instantly chart a new course. Your life goes from ordinary to extraordinary. You decide that what you do will make a difference, that what you do will

matter, and that will give what you do all that you've got. And, If you're going to go down, then **you're not going down without a fight**.

- But failure isn't even an option. It's not even on your radar. In your mind, you can see the prize ... front and center ... and larger than life. It's the path and you're on it. With all your might, and maybe even a little magic, you'll move whatever mountain stands in your way. It's onward and upward. It's time to do something great.

3 Steps to Do Something Great

To do something great, it helps to have a recipe. Feel free to depart from the recipe, but here is it as a starting point to help you prepare and launch the "something great" that you will do:

1. **Find Your Eye of the Tiger.** If you've seen Rocky, you know what I mean. Your Eye of the Tiger is your fire in the belly. It's you at your finest and it's you ready to take on the world. The simplest way to find this "Eye of the Tiger" again is to remember a time in your life when you had your greatest victory. Remember the feeling you had, when you were unstoppable? Grab that feeling and hold on to that, and don't let go. If that's not working, then blast your favorite all time song – you know, the one that always makes you drive too fast. If you need help here, read my guest post on [Finding Your Eye of the Tiger](#).
2. **Decide what great thing you will do.** Don't swat at flies. Get the dynamite out. Pick something great. This is your chance to say, "I'm going for it." This is your chance to fight with all your might and make it happen. This is not a time to pick something mediocre. It's time to knock the ball out of the park. It's a time to pick something fantastic. Make it epic. It's Frodo getting rid of that stinking ring. It's Rocky getting back his "Eye of the Tiger." It's making like a Dead Poet Society and seizing the day. It's Edward finding the joy in his life, Bucket List style. It's Rudy against the odds, fulfilling his dream. It's Danielson whipping out the Crank Technique with a final blow when he's literally down on his last leg. If you're not crying, or you're not furious, or you're not elated, or you're just not feeling it, then **you haven't found it**. It's not about doing one more thing you can do. It's doing THE thing you MUST do – finding your calling, the one that's here now, and answering the door.
3. **Make it a project.** Call it a project. Have a vision for it. See the end in mind. Give it a start and a finish. In this case, make it a month. Bound it. Making it a month long project both gives you a high chance for success, but it also give you a good chunk of time to do something great. Making it a project gives it a special place in your heart and a special place in your mind. It's a simple way to wake up your inner-giant and say, "Hey, this one really counts."

This is you pushing and testing your limits. This is you focused on doing the great thing in your life that you've had on hold. This is you getting up to bat with skill on your side and the fire inside. Best case scenario, you exceed your own expectations. Worst case scenario, you moved the needle in your life.

Ideas of Great Things to Do

When you decide that to do, it has to be great for you. It's for you that it has to matter. It's your story. It's your chance. That said, here are some examples of various things that other people have done within the span of a month that changed the course of their lives. Use it as a list to draw from or inspire you:

1. *Reshape your body.*
2. *Find your fire.*
3. *Write a book.*
4. *Write a song.*
5. *Make a video.*
6. *Change somebody's life.*
7. *Overwhelm your greatest hurdle or breakthrough a barrier or a ceiling in your life.*
8. *Change a habit or change the way you lead your life.*
9. *Retool yourself for your current jungle of life.*
10. *Get a new lease on life.*
11. *Get your dream job.*
12. *Make your dream job.*
13. *Share your lessons learned with the world.*
14. *Rekindle an old spark.*
15. *Reconnect with an old hobby.*
16. *Create the ultimate knowledge base on your passion.*
17. *Learn a new skill.*
18. *Finish off a pet project.*
19. *Dust off an old dream or make your destiny happen.*
20. *Turn the worst pain in your life, into your greatest opportunity.*
21. *Be the father, mother, sister, brother, daughter, son, uncle or aunt, cousin or friend that you've wanted to be.*

Why Make it a Project?

To do something great, make it a project. Making something a project helps you think about it in a tangible way. Give your great project a name. This is your project so call it whatever you want. I named one of my projects "J.D. 2.0", based on my [You 2.0 guide](#). Giving your project a name, helps create a stronghold in your mind. For a month, this project is your castle.

Do It For a Month

Make it a month long project. Start at the start of the month. End at the end of the month. You can also do a second run, but for now, give yourself a month. This isn't a marathon and it's not a "death march" or an "endless pursuit." Just for this month, you do put all your eggs in this one basket. Concentrated effort amplifies your impact. Because it's just a month, you can prioritize it over other things. Because it's just a month, and not forever, you can give

it your all. By making it your theme for the month, it helps you focus and harness all of your discretionary energy, focus, and time. This is your secret recipe for doing great things.

Do It Daily

To do something great, do it every day. Carve out a little time more time each day, to invest in your great thing. You don't know when your breakthrough might happen. **Serendipity is a part of life and often a part of success** ... Tee up more possibilities in your life, a day at a time.

Each day is another chance. Doing something every day, even just a little bit, gets easier as you go, and helps build momentum. Time and again, I found that daily action, even baby steps, is how I consistently got over humps or created breakthroughs.

Your Mental Model

While the strategies and tactics to make things happen are important, the most important step starts in your mind. It's the mental pictures you hold, it's the beliefs you have, and it's the self-talk that you tell yourself the whole way through.

For at least this month, don't focus on your success. Focus on giving your best. Don't focus on the scoreboard, focus on the pitch.

Your Tools

You're making things happen with skill now, so let me remind you of your tools:

1. **Mindsets and metaphors.** You can switch your mindsets by switching hats. Put on your explorer hat or your "solution" hat or your "thinker" hat or your "doer" hat. Use metaphors that serve you. The right metaphor can help you move mountains.
2. **Agile Results.** Get the system on your side. By using the three stories each day, week, and month, you're connecting you're wiring your mind, body, and emotions to achieve great things, as well as deal with the setbacks, and bounce back stronger and faster each time.
3. **Stories and choices.** By using stories and making mindful choices to drive your day, week, and month, you bring together everything you've got in an inspiration way to write your story forward and carve out meaningful results.
4. **Time.** For once, time is really on your side. Agile Results automatically uses time as a foundation for building momentum and getting results. You automatically create a rhythm of results by pinning against time and riding the day, week, and month, like a wave or rolling snowball.
5. **Action.** Taking action is what makes things happen. Action is your playground and where you test your ideas against reality. If you wanted to just think your way into something, then you miss the ride. It's fine to be a dreamer. It's fine to be a doer. How about being a doer with dreams or a dreamer that does?

6. **Reflection.** Take the time to reflect on your results. With Agile Results this is automatically baked into Friday Reflection. You can also design your day, to cap each day with some reflection time. Learning and responding is how you get closer to your dreams.

The people that do great things, enjoy the journey, action and all, the ups and downs, and they enjoy the destination. The secret here is to drive your action from who you want to be and the experiences you want to create. Drive it from your life style.

Everybody has Flaws

Here is a lesson from one of my mentors on **the power of doing great things** — “There are no great people. There are people that do great things. Heroes fall.” It’s the “feet of clay” scenario.

People aren’t heroes, they do heroic things. The point is, don’t miss the good because of the bad, and don’t get caught up in putting people on pedestals. Don’t put yourself on a pedestal either. Instead, focus on doing a great thing and giving it your best shot.

You Can’t Fail

Stephen Covey, Randy Pausche, and others remind us that nobody regrets the things they did. They regret the things they didn’t do.

Don’t let fear run your life. Especially fear of failure. What if you try and you fail? ...So what. Guess what? If you have to succeed, then you’re playing the game of life wrong. Test your possibilities. Grow from it. Embrace the experience. That’s what life is all about. If you gave it your best shot, you . You grew yourself a little more, or maybe a lot. ... but that you’ll give it your best shot.

How To Stay on Fire

Don’t depend on external validation too much – that’s the best way to kill your motivation on a daily basis. Don’t hold your breath for your manager’s acknowledgment, or your spouse’s appreciation, or the audience’s applause. It’s a wonderful by-product, but it can’t be your driver. First and foremost, impress yourself first. Remember to connect it to your values and your internal bar ... your internal rewards ... and then you “balance” with external rewards and appreciation.

That’s how to make great things or do great things and stay on fire.

If You Get Knocked Down, Get Up Again

Giving something your best shot is within your control. The results are not. The best you can do, is give the best you've got, test your dreams with skill, and roll with the punches. And when you get knocked down, the single best thing you can do is get up again.

You never fail unless you give up.

Quotes on Greatness

Here are a few words of wisdom to add to your mental toolbox of life:

1. *"As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world – that is the myth of the atomic age – as in being able to remake ourselves."* — Mohandas Gandhi
2. *"Ask yourself whether the dream of heaven and greatness should be waiting for us in our graves – or whether it should be ours here and now and on this earth."* — Ayn Rand
3. *"Do not despise the bottom rungs in the ascent to greatness."* — Publilius Syrus
4. *"Do not trust people. They are capable of greatness."* — Stanislaw Lem
5. *"Every day, people settle for less than they deserve. They are only partially living or at best living a partial life. Every human being has the potential for greatness."* — Bo Bennett
6. *"Great heroes need great sorrows and burdens, or half their greatness goes unnoticed."* — Peter S. Beagle
7. *"Great men are rare, poets are rarer, but the great man who is a poet, transfiguring his greatness, is the rarest of all events."* — John Drinkwater
8. *"Greatness is a road leading towards the unknown."* — Charles de Gaulle
9. *"Greatness is not measured by what a man or woman accomplishes, but by the opposition he or she has overcome to reach his goals."* — Dorothy Height
10. *"Greatness lies, not in being strong, but in the right using of strength."* — Henry Ward Beecher
11. *"I always knew I was destined for greatness."* — Oprah Winfrey
12. *"If we cannot see the possibility of greatness, how can we dream it?"* — Lee Strasberg
13. *"Illusions of grandeur are not the same as visions of greatness."* — Edwin Louis Cole
14. *"No one ever achieved greatness by playing it safe."* — Harry Gray
15. *"The greatest thing you can do in this world is to make the most possible out of the stuff you've been given. This is success, and there is no other."* — Orison Swett Marden

Today's Assignment

1. Find your "Eye of the Tiger." Find one old memory or one mental picture to hold in your mind that gives you your Eye of the Tiger.
2. Pick something great to do next month. Tee yourself up to start at the beginning of the month and end at the end of the month. It will be your theme or focus for the month. Make sure it's great for you ... even if "great for you", means doing something that's "great for somebody else." Put that fire in your belly to good use. Above all, remember that great is in the eye of the beholder, and it's all relative.

3. Watch your favorite movie that always has a way of lighting your fire.

Share Your Stories

I like real stories from real people. That's what life is all about. If you want to tell me about the great thing you're going to do next month, you can email me at "GettingResultsTeam" (at) "gmail.com". Better yet, tell me "why" you're going to do it. Tell me why it matter so much for you. It's not what we do in life that ends up so meaningful, it's why we do it. Nothing is more inspirational than somebody's "why."

I've really enjoyed the email folks have been sending me so far about their breakthroughs and their turnaround stories and even how for some people, just their ordinary days have become extraordinary. I'm also watching the goodness spread. I see friends inspiring other friends and it's contagious. As one friend put it to me, their "pilot light is lit again!" I see people lifting each other up, and that's how we all stand on the shoulders' of giants.

Get ready to make next month one of the most exciting chapter in the story of your life, as you continue to write your story forward. It will be epic.

Day 28 – Find Your One Thing

“Purpose is what gives life a meaning.” – Charles H. Perkhurst

Your Outcome

- *Find your one thing. Whether you call it your passion, your purpose, your mission, your crusade, finding your “Why,” or simply what you want your life to be about ... express it in words, as a motto, or tagline, or a simple one-liner. This will be your path and torch.*

If you’ve seen the movie City Slickers, this scene should sound familiar:

- **Curly:** *You know what the secret of life is?*
- **Mitch:** *No. what?*
- **Curly:** *This. (holds up his finger)*
- **Mitch:** *Your finger?*
- **Curly:** *One thing. Just one thing. You stick to that everything else don’t mean shit.*
- **Mitch:** *That’s great, but what’s the one thing?*
- **Curly:** *That’s what you’ve got to figure out.*

That’s the challenge in life, but the key to your success ... **you have to find your one thing.**

Welcome to Day 28

Welcome to **day 28** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 27**, we set ourselves up to do something great as a month long project.

Today, we find our one thing. We find our purpose with skill.

The Story of What Drives Me

Maybe I watched too many cartoons, but growing up I was a defender of underdogs. Somehow I got the message, **defend the weak or underprivileged**. My Mom re-enforced this making sure I knew to protect my little brother and sister (although, my sister knew how to whoop some arse, and she killed any spider that threatened my path.)

It’s not just defending people weaker than you though. Early on I saw the movie Trading Places. I remember how just by swapping people’s lot in life, **everything changes** ... What people expect of them changes, how people treat them changes, and what people expect of others changes ... even what people expect of themselves changes. It’s powerful stuff. But don’t expect anybody to pick you up and plop you down. You have to make your own changes. I’m a big believer that ...

... Everybody deserves a chance at their best life.

I learned early on that it's not your lot in life. It's not what you've got in life. **It's what you make of it.** And the one thing you have your whole life is you. You take you, everywhere you go. The one thing you can invest in that gets you exponential results is you ... your body, your mind, and your foundation. Your foundation isn't the stuff you have ... it's who you are, it's your beliefs, it's your values, it's your rules, it's your mindsets and your metaphors, and it's your **strategies and tactics for life** ... it's your toolkit you use to make the most of what you've got. That's the story behind my one-liner purpose...

... Exponential results for the underdog.

I level the playing field with smarts. And **everybody is an underdog** at some point in their life. Maybe it's a game, where you **don't know the rules** or how to play the game. Maybe it's in a situation, where you're in the dark. Maybe it's your education compared to somebody else's. Maybe it's your money compared to somebody else's. Maybe it's your status compared to somebody else's. Regardless, we're all underdogs in some way, shape, or form, in some situation.

The way to level the playing field is through **know-how and knowledge**. I share the best skills I learn for making the most of any situation. I share the **wisdom of the ages** and modern sages. I draw from books, people, and quotes, as well as what I learn in the trenches at Microsoft and what I learn from my masterful mentors. That's what drives Sources of Insight. That's my Little Engine That Could. I make others great ... I enhance you with skill ... I **empower YOU to be YOUR best.**

But enough about me ... this post is about you, and finding your one-liner purpose. I shared mine to help you find yours. Maybe seeing mine in action, helps you connect your dots and lights a bulb and your ah-ha moment fires for you in a way it's never fired before.

Do What You Were Born to do or Do What You Love to Do

For some people, they find a way to do what they love for a living. For some people, they find a way to fund their life style, and in turn, make time to do more of what they love. Either way, this is **the happy path**. Fulfillment is potentially a by-product. For other people, they do what they were born to do. This is the fulfillment path. Happiness may be a by-product of the process, but, what drives them is giving their best, where they have their best to give. Either way, **effective people are find ways to answer their calling.**

Where people fall down is when they ignore their passion or their lust for life or they don't capitalize on making the most of what they've got. Bringing your calling to the surface, or **doing more of what you love** to do, even in a simple way or **a small way**, on a regular basis, is how you light your fire, get on your path, and make a world of difference, starting with you. It's how you lead your life from the inside out.

Here's a tip – a lot of people find their inner-strength by finding something to bet on that's bigger than themselves, whether it's service to others, their community, or an ideal in their life

What Do You Want Your Life to Be About

Who do you want to be and what experiences do you want to create. If you want your life to be magical, then spend time with magicians. Explore the natural wonders of the world. **Stay curious** and **dream up possibilities**, and watch more Disney. If you want your life to be a comedy, then go to more comedy clubs. Watch *I Love Lucy*. Learn to look at life through a twisted lens that helps you open up and say, hah! Find the funny in your life and the funny in the world.

Your one thing, can become an over-arching theme for your life, that helps you make meaning and enjoy the journey as you go. The beauty is, to make the change, all you have to do is start with the question ...

“Who do you want to be? ... and what do you want your life to be about?” ... and then start creating those experiences.

You're the author of your life, the architect, and the director ... point your camera at what you want more of.

Today's Assignment

1. Find your theme. Distill your story into something simple. Flip back through your life and find the theme. For me, it was helping level the playing field with know how and helping underdogs get exponential results.
2. Find your one thing. What do you want your life to be about? Some people make life an epic adventure. Some people make life a tragedy. Some people spend their life turning tragedy into triumph.
3. Create your one-liner reminder. Let your productive artist come out to play and turn your mission into magic. You know you nailed it when you suddenly feel like you suddenly have the strength of a thousand bulls on your side, and you are on your path, and you're an unstoppable force of one.

The surprise is that when you become a powerful force of one, you actually create a coalition of the willing and you become a lightning rod for those that share your values, help lift you up, and spread your cause like wild fire.

Whether you become a **fire starter** for you, your family, your neighbors, friends, or your community, the world becomes a better place when it's filled with people with a lust for life.

Day 29 – Find Your Arena for Your Best Results

“Be careful the environment you choose for it will shape you; be careful the friends you choose for you will become like them.” — W. Clement Stone

Your Outcome

- *Create an environment that helps you thrive. You can be a fish out of water, or you can be in your element.*

Welcome to Day 29

Welcome to **day 29** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). In **day 28**, you learned how to find your one thing to simplify your life, make meaning, and grow your lust for life.

Today, we find our arena for our best results.

Finding YOUR Best Arena

Before I joined Microsoft, I moved jobs a lot. I kept becoming a big fish in a small pond, and then stagnated. I joined Microsoft to be a little guppy in a big ocean. I wanted to surround myself with excellence and **people with a passion for more from life**. I wanted to try and keep up with people who wanted to change the world.

Growing up, I learned that your container makes a big difference. Whether it was sports, or school, I found that if you hung with the right people, you got better fast. While I could always improve on my own, **the right environment accelerated my growth**. Every time. I’ve tried to use this pattern of learning from the best of the best, and putting myself into environments or taking on projects that accelerate my success. **I grow more by changing my container than any other way**. I think of this as finding an area for my best results. When I’m in the right arena, I thrive. When I’m not I die. Slowly. In Young Guns, I think of the line, “You’re growing or dying ... there’s no in between.”

I think of my arena in multiple layers, but it’s everything that’s wrapped around my performance. It’s the work I do, it’s the industry I’m in, it’s the people I work with, it’s the platform I do it from, etc. The key for me is to always **follow the growth**, ride the waves, and make the most impact from my arena, or change arenas to unleash my best. It’s my personal success platform.

The lesson I keep learning on growing my success is ... Fill your head with stories of success, hang out with inspiring people, find the work that breathes life into your day, and play YOUR best game, in YOUR best arena.

Your Container Limits or Supports You

Your container can accelerate your success or hold you back. You can go from struggling to succeeding, or from surviving to thriving. You might be like a diamond in the rough, that just needs some polishing with the right people in the right place. **Your amazing and unique value can go undervalued or underappreciated** simply because you're in the wrong arena. Seth Godin teaches us to lean into the right Dips, get out of the wrong Dips, and become a Linchpin ... be indispensable and remarkable in the job you do. Sometimes you can do a remarkable job, but you're simply in the wrong container or stuck in a Dip.

Sometimes one of the most important reasons to change a container is because you hit **glass ceilings** in terms of the impact you can make. Sometimes you need to change containers because of the financial limits — one industry might value your skills way more than another. One industry's prince can be another's pauper.

You can't Be a Preacher in Your Home Town

One of the best sayings one of my mentors reminded me is, "You can't be a preacher in your home town." The idea is that you might be a perfectly good preacher, but everybody growing up remembers you as little Joey down the street and they can't imagine you as a preacher. It conflicts with their mental model.

Sometimes, the best thing you can do is find a new town.

5 Ways to Change Your Arena

Here are five ways you can change your arena:

1. **Change your mental model.** It starts right here. If you can't see it, it won't happen. Have you ever just known you could do something long before you proved it? It's the pictures you get in your mind, it's the beliefs you hold in your heart, and it's your unshakable mind that tells you what's possible, or what's not, long before you even try. This is why the most important person and what they think of you, is you. That's why role models and scenes of success are so important. What you hold in your mind, you can make happen. It's very difficult to work against your own mental model and beliefs, especially limiting ones. They become self-fulfilling. If you want to change your arena, start by changing your mind.
2. **Change how you play the game.** This could be as simple as shifting to spending more time in your strengths. This could be as simple as finding a mentor that show you better ways to play your game. This could also be as simple as shifting from "getting your job done", to "mastering your craft." This could also mean changing roles or which aspect of the game that you choose to focus on. Some actors become directors. Some athletes become coaches. They're still in the game, but from a different perch.
3. **Change who you play it with.** Spend more time with catalysts or people who lift you up or people you can learn from, and less time with people who drain you or bring you

down. Don't let the people you spend time with be the reason your balloon never gets off the ground.

4. **Change where you play your game.** This could mean changing teams, changing companies, etc. This could mean moving. Basically, it's changing where you perform, and sometimes that alone makes all the difference. The key is to go where you are valued, you fully engage, and you feel yourself grow.
5. **Change the game you play.** Sometimes the best thing you can do is change the game you play. One of our VPs at Microsoft realized he could be a mediocre developer or a great Program Manager. When he changed paths, he accelerated his growth.

You know a good container or arena when you are giving your best, where you have your best to give, and it's amplifying your impact, and helping you grow in an accelerated way.

Design Your Workspace to Support You

I'm a fan of keeping my workspace simple, clean, and effective. I reduce distractions and I keep a clean space so I don't have to fight through my stuff to get to what I'm working on or battle for some open area. I create breathing room. From a visual perspective, it's simple, clean, and uncluttered and supportive. From an auditory perspective, I play my favorite music, unless I need to hear myself think, then I find a way to get the quiet time I need.

These little adjustments go a long way in helping me make the most of my arena.

Rapid Growth

Edward de Bono says we can accelerate our growth by finding rapid growth fields. He writes, "The computer industry is a growth industry, and within that industry software is a growth field." His point is that you can ride the success bandwagon or get carried along with the growth. For example, he says it's "easy for a general to become a success in war but rather more difficult in times of peace", and that "the most likely way to make a good living out of creative imagination may be to go into advertising."

Find a Stage Where You Feel Strong

At the end of the day, the key for you is that your arena make you strong and keeps you growing where it counts.

You don't have to completely change your arena, or change it all at once, but if you find yourself keep getting stuck or not growing your success the way you want, then look to your environment as a way to structure and accelerate your success.

Today's Assignment

1. Fix up your workspace to support you. Do whatever you need so that when you get ready to perform, you feel good about the space you work in. Whether it's add plants, add music, or just declutter, set the stage for your best results.
2. Evaluate your container. Are you working on the right things, with the right people, for the right manager, for the right company, making the right impact? That's a string of thoughts, but they'll help you look at your container in terms of how well it's supporting you giving your best, where you have your best to give.

Day 30 – Take Agile Results to the Next Level

“The true meaning of life is to give our life meaning.”— Tate T. Weber

Your Outcome

- *Review the basics of the Agile Results system and set the stage to take your life to the next level by exploring more of the Agile Results principles, patterns, and practices.*

Welcome to Day 30

I wanted the end to be a good beginning ... for the rest of your life. Well, here we are. It's **day 30** of 30 Days of Getting Results, based on my book [Getting Results the Agile Way](#). It's been 30 days since we started and you can browse all the lessons at 30 Days of Getting Results. Revisit them when you need them, or share them with friends and family to help give them the edge.

I hope one of the most important ideas that came across during our journey together is that you are your ultimate investment, throughout your life. Investing in yourself is how you turn your world around and how you turn other people's world around. It breathes spirit into life and it's contagious.

At the end of the day, you are the one that makes your life happen. You are the one that takes care of your business. Whether you're getting your game on at work or taking care of your business of life, I hope that Agile results can help you succeed far beyond your wildest dreams. It's there to **enhance you** and help you unleash what you're already capable of. Everybody deserves a chance at “the good life”, and this is the ultimate toolkit that I can give you that can help you make the most of what you've got.

Write Your Story Forward ... A Day at a Time

As a reminder of what Agile Results is, it's **a simple system for meaningful results**. You can use it to step up your game and support you for the rest of your life, in everything you do. It gives you an extreme advantage by giving you **state of the art practices** from a variety of disciplines for **improving your thinking, feeling, and doing**. I know many parents who are using Agile Results to help their kids improve their focus, their energy, their time management, and basic productivity. I know companies using it to help drive change and to help build a rhythm of results for their teams. I know many people that are using Agile Results to get **a new lease on life**.

By using three stories to drive your day, your week, your month, and your year, you take charge of your life, and you **live life on your terms**. It helps you be who you want to be and create more of the experiences you want to create. By spending the right time, on the right things,

the right way, with the right energy, you unlock a powerful combination for your life that unleashes your best possibilities and helps you make the most of what you've got. The common theme behind the system is one simple idea:

... Be the author of your life and write your story forward.

Back to the Basics

The basics work and they'll support you. Let's do a quick recap:

1. *You can use The Rule of 3 to avoid getting overwhelmed.*
2. *You're the author of your life and you can write your story forward, one moment or one day at a time*
3. *You can use three stories to drive your day and and light up your day by connecting to your values (Daily Outcomes).*
4. *On Mondays, you can use three stories to drive your week (Monday Vision).*
5. *On Fridays, you can use Friday Reflection to celebrate your wins and find your personal success patterns.*
6. *You can map out what's important in your life using Hot Spots to create a meaningful map.*
7. *You can let things slough off with skill ... no more straws breaking the camel's back .*
8. *You can add power hours and add creative hours to breathe life into your week and get more done, in less time, with better results.*
9. *You can use metaphors to inspire yourself with skill and make meaning in everything you do.*
10. *You can achieve a peaceful calm state of mind, where worries melt away, and your clarity and focus come to the forefront.*
11. *You can setup boundaries and buffers to achieve work-life balance with skill.*
12. *You can feel strong all week long, by playing to your strengths and spending less time in weaknesses and things that drain you.*
13. *You can do something great and make it a month long project. Great things can happen in month-long packages, and it's a way to rock your world, a month at a time.*

Monday Vision, Daily Wins, Friday Reflection is the Backbone

Each day or each week is another way to get the system on your side. All you have to do is remember this simple pattern:

- **Monday Vision** – Identify three stories or outcomes you want for the week. This sets the stage.
- **Daily Outcomes** – Each day, identify three outcomes or stories that you want to achieve for the day.
- **Friday Reflection** – Each Friday, identify three things going well and three things to improve.

I wanted a system that was easy to adopt and immediately get the benefits, and that if I fell off, I wanted it to be easy to hop back on. The system is super simple to get back on if you fall

off. On any given day, simply ask yourself, what are three outcomes you want for the day, and you're back on saddle again.

Where to Go from Here

Oh, the places you'll go. For your journey for the rest of your life, take the system with you and get the force on your side:

1. Read the book – *Getting Results the Agile Way* at <http://GettingResults.com>
2. Explore the [Getting Results Knowledge Base](#), and be sure to [browse the visuals](#). I find some pictures are worth a 1000 words.
3. For inspiration, read the testimonials and some of the stories of adoption and real-world case studies at [Getting Results.com](#).
4. If you had a chance to go through Day 27 – Do Something Great, hopefully you have something in mind that you are excited about and ready to tackle. I have something that I'll be working on, and I'm looking forward to cranking things up.

Here's to your success ... onward and upward.

Call to Action

1. Share this free eBook with a friend.
2. Explore the full book, *Getting Results the Agile Way*, for free in HTML on Getting Results.com at <http://GettingResults.com>
3. Explore the Getting Results Knowledge Base for [time management tips and time management strategies](http://gettingresults.com/wiki/Knowledge_Base) at http://gettingresults.com/wiki/Knowledge_Base

Note -- Getting Results the Agile Way is available for purchase as a printed book and on the Kindle at <http://www.amazon.com/Getting-Results-Agile-Way-Personal/dp/0984548203>.