

Cultivate Independence

The earlier a person builds good eating, exercising, and financial habits, the easier it will be for them to maintain those habits throughout their life. No matter your current health, whether it's poor or great or somewhere in between, continue reading this book in its entirety, and even reread the chapter on health. Working on your health should always be a priority. Don't procrastinate! You can set easily attainable goals, look for natural cures to ailments, believe in yourself, and never give up. If you do this, I guarantee you will be giving yourself a measure of freedom and independence, which is a solid foundation you can build upon to gain even more freedom and independence in other areas of your life.

Of course, when people think about independence, they usually only think of financial independence. Financial independence is obviously important, and everyone should have a plan and be working on that plan to support their financial well-being. We'll cover more on financial independence in its own chapter. For the purposes of this Introduction, ask yourself what you would do if there were a complete total financial collapse. You'd need more than money to survive such an event. You'd need something more valuable than money. You'd need a skill set and the know-how to implement it.

There's a difference between knowledge and know-how. Knowledge is knowing about something; know-how is knowing how to do something. For example, you can have a great deal of knowledge about a natural disaster scenario, such as a blizzard, hurricane, or flood, but none of that will help you if one lands in your neighborhood. That's where know-how comes in. In pure wilderness survival, know-how is reached through a practice called "dirt time" because in wilderness survival, you're going to get your hands dirty.

It may take years, decades, or even a lifetime to become totally independent. Why not look at life as an adventure? Bear in mind adventures should be fun, exciting, and by design. If you love something, you don't have to force yourself to do it, and remember our three life rules: try your best, improve a little bit, and have fun.

You, as the reader, must find your own happiness, stay in balance along the way, and set your own goals. Then BELIEVE. No two people can walk the same spiritual path. Happiness is the next chapter, so keep reading. There's no single way to learn something or to adapt a skill to your toolbox. There's always a better way, a shorter way, a more effective way to do something. There's also a worse way, but we're going to stay away from those!

Skills can be learned, most typically, through trial and error, or you can shorten the learning curve by hiring a mentor or professional. For example, when you come into a martial arts school, expect there to be time, schedule, and financial commitments to achieve your black belt. When you receive your black belt, you will be in the best shape of your life and have the ability to defend yourself and your family against sudden attack. When you have the ability to defend yourself, you have gained another measure

of independence and freedom. You will have the confidence to follow your heart and have the perseverance to never give up when things get tough in life.

...

Balance in life means creating harmony between your responsibilities and finding time for things that bring you pleasure. It also means understanding your own boundaries and needs so that you can pursue your roles and identities. In our quest to reach our goals and always strive for more, a lot of us get worried about other aspects of our lives without being able to really work on them. We may be quite good at some things. We might crush goals and reach targets workwise, but what about our family, our friends, and our bodies? For a lot of us, we often feel guilty about prioritizing work over other areas of our lives. Rabbi Harold Kushner once said, "Nobody on their deathbed has ever said I wish I had spent more time at the office."

It's like we can't seem to work on all these areas at the same time. We hear all those stories of people who ruined relationships because they worked too much, lost touch with their kids, and maybe alienated their spouses. Sometimes it gets worse. Health may suffer. People get overweight from getting work done in a chair all day; they grow completely frazzled because they never go on vacation. The list is endless. So, let's start there. Please remember my quote at the end of the introduction, "It doesn't matter where you've been, but remember. It doesn't matter where you are but know. The most important thing is where you are going and how and why to get there." Start by making a list of your responsibilities. Hopefully, this is very close to the happiness list you made in chapter one. Running from your responsibilities will not make you happy. You need to take responsibility for your current situation, finish what you start, learn, and do better next time. Having a balanced life is a lot like having total independence; it may take years, maybe a lifetime, but the best time to start balancing your life was yesterday, and the next best time is today. So, start on that list today. Please remember to ask yourself what is important and what is not important, which is taking time away from your true responsibilities.

People think they want more balance in their life, but what they really want is more **balancing**. Balancing in an act is not something that happens out of the blue. It's not a fact, and it's not a state. Please remember there is a difference between being balanced and balancing. Balancing is **a never-ending act**. When you look at a tightrope walker, they appear to be walking flawlessly on the rope with no effort. But the truth is, their whole body and mind are constantly making tiny micro-adjustments to stay balanced on that rope. They are **balancing** all of the forces and stressors they are experiencing at that moment.

The problem with the idea of a balanced life is that it is seen as an abstract concept while it should be seen as a concrete act, an act fueled by purpose, meaning, and drive. When we focus on the right things and eliminate the wrong time-wasting things, that's when balance will come into our lives. This distinction between **a balanced life** and **balancing your life** may seem like a silly matter of verb tenses, but it's an

important difference. In the first, we're talking about an end game, something that we can work at and achieve, meaning there's no more effort after that. This can lead to disappointment—we've thought that we have reached that point, but it didn't do the trick. However, balancing your life indicates that it's a steady action. We're doing fine on the tightrope.

...

So, how do we get there without ruining other parts of our life? The key, the true balance, is in counterbalancing, which means constant adjustments are the key to success. You will always leave things behind in your quest for balance. It's inevitable. The trick is to be clear on what you want to give up and what you want to prioritize. Once you've prioritized the different parts of your life, you can then counterbalance the investments in time you make in each one. It's not about the amount of time but rather the amount of quality time that's important. Common sense would tell you that you can't spend ten hours at work, eight hours sleeping, eight hours with your kids, eight hours at the gym, and eight hours working on learning a new skill in a single day. That seems impossible; however, it is possible if you condense time frames. For example, what if you had a family business that enabled you to work with your kids, get plenty of exercise, and learn new skills at the same time? The critical component of counterbalancing is that you never go so far in one direction that you can't find your way back or stay so long that there is nothing waiting for you when you return.

The main challenge in most people's lives is to counterbalance work with personal life. There is absolutely no way this can be achieved without sacrifices. But again, the sacrifices don't have to be where most people expect them to be. In the sphere of work, it's **never** about how much time you put in. It's about the results. To get those, you need to forget about many of your tasks and only focus on a few important ones. You have to accept that some of them will be left behind. You may have some time to get back to them once in a while, but most of the time, you'll be fully focused on your top priorities. You'll be out of balance within the extreme of work, and that's totally fine as long as you can come back to life later.

In the sphere of personal life, it's **always** about how much quality time you put in. If you don't put in the time, you'll miss out on your friends' big life events, your kids' birthdays, and all the important family things that make family so worthwhile. Within the extreme of family, you need to achieve as much balance as possible by prioritizing. You need to go back and forth between friends, family, events, happiness, and sadness. It's about managing all those at the same time.

Here is the key to learning. When you head down for a long period of work and place yourself in total imbalance with your personal life, you need to prioritize because you're only there for a certain period of time. Accept that things will be left behind. When you come back to the other side, your personal life, you need to go back and forth between everything and everyone. The question of balance is a question of priority.

According to Gary Keller, “When you’re supposed to be working, work, and when you’re supposed to be playing, play. It’s a weird tightrope you’re walking, but it’s only when you get your priorities mixed up that things fall apart.” Keller likens the sides of the balance to buckets.

Separate your work life and personal life into two distinct buckets—not to compartmentalize them, but rather to counterbalance them. Each has its own counterbalancing goals and approaches.

Next, counterbalance your work bucket. View work as involving a skill or knowledge that must be mastered. This will cause you to give disproportionate time to your ONE thing and will throw the rest of your workday, week, month, and year continually out of balance. Your work life is divided into two distinct areas: what matters most and everything else. You will have to take what matters to the extremes and be okay with what happens to the rest. Professional success requires it.

Then, counterbalance your personal life bucket. Acknowledge that your life actually has multiple areas and that each requires a minimum of attention for you to feel that you have a life. Drop any one, and you will feel the effects. This requires constant awareness. You must never go too long or too far without counterbalancing them so that they are all active areas of your life. Your personal life requires it. Start leading a counterbalanced life.

A note about finances (we’ll discuss in detail in Chapter 7): Money bridges both sides of the balance. The work bucket inherently involves finances because that’s where your money comes from. This same money is also in your life bucket because it funds how you live. As I mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter 1, money is a fact of our modern lives, but it shouldn’t be the most important thing. That said, it is something we need to pay attention to.

...

Ask any of your friends, family, or colleagues—chances are they’ve set goals at some point. Why? Because it works. Goal achievers understand the importance of setting goals to help them achieve their vision of an ideal future. Setting goals helps trigger better habits, increases your focus, and ensures you make progress on the areas of your life that are most important. Goals align your purpose with your daily actions and build confidence, motivation, and momentum. As a powerful driver of motivation and learning, effective goal setting involves using a structured working model to approach your goals.

Using a goal-setting theory as a model for understanding the components of a practical goal fine-tunes your approach. The goal-setting theory honed by Edwin Locke and Gary Latham in 1990 highlights the correlation between goal setting and performance, stating that specified and well-defined goals can enhance productivity, in both your professional and personal lives. They proposed that such goals can motivate people to do their best by cultivating focus, effort, and perseverance.

The goal-setting theory works when you meet five critical conditions:

Clarity: Goals must be specific and measurable, letting you know what you are striving to achieve

Challenge: Goals should be challenging yet attainable, as easy goals won't encourage you to put your best foot forward.

Commitment: You need to support the goals you're working towards and commit yourself to achieving these.

Feedback: Feedback helps you determine how well you're performing and what you need to change to improve results.

Task complexity: You need an adequate timeline for their goals—one that accounts for the learning curve and task complexity.

Having an adequate goal-setting process can be highly beneficial as:

- **Effective goal setting provides direction.**

Goal setting can pave a clear direction. Once the steps to goal setting are complete, you can follow a distinct pathway that aligns your daily activities with your main objectives. This allows you to zero in on areas you've prioritized while discouraging you from going on a tangent and investing energy into activities that don't contribute to key goals. Simply put, if it is not a written goal, then don't spend time on it.

- **Successful goal setting keeps motivation levels high.**

When you directly and daily contribute to goal setting, you're more likely to stay motivated when faced with challenges. Measurable goals are incredibly motivating, as you can visibly see yourself progressing towards the end goal as you hit each milestone and short-term goal. This keeps you increasingly engaged as you close in on their final objective.

- **Setting goals improves accountability.**

A carefully crafted goal-setting process depicts clear goalposts and deadlines, giving you a timeline to abide by. As such, you will consistently work towards these milestones, simultaneously monitoring your progress to ensure you're on track.

- **A well-defined goal-setting process boosts performance.**

After choosing a goal-setting framework and creating goals for yourself, you know what needs to be done and by when. This gives you a clear sense of purpose, resulting in heightened productivity.

- **Goal setting helps you address obstacles.**

Once you've determined your goals, you can consistently compare your performance with the desired outcome. This can help you uncover where you're falling short and where they're thriving, revealing what needs to be improved or

adjusted. As such, establishing effective goal-setting processes can help you stay on track by pinpointing what you need to adapt or reconfigure to move forward.

When setting goals, you can choose to establish different types of goals. These can vary depending on the scope, context, duration, or complexity of what you want to achieve.

Process vs. performance vs. outcome goal setting

Process goals refer to methods or strategies you want to use to facilitate progression and attain the performance goals, while performance goals are short-term goals that work together to achieve the outcome goals, which are overarching end goals that you're striving to achieve.

Short-term vs. intermediate vs. long-term goal setting

Short-term goals are those you want to accomplish soon, often within the next day, week, or month, depending on your cadence. These serve to complete the bigger picture and contribute toward larger or long-term goals.

Intermediate goals look out to three months, six months, a year. Long-term goals refer to end goals you want to accomplish later on. These are rooted in your values and require more time, commitment, and planning.

Individual vs. shared goal setting

Individual goals are personalized to you. These help you cultivate unique pathways that align with your aspirations, while shared goals help you work together with your partner, family, or team at work by fostering a sense of unity. Therefore, shared goals are vital to creating an environment that balances strengths and weaknesses.

Qualitative vs. quantitative goal setting

Qualitative goals are assessed objectively, as there's no concrete definition or measurement for achievement. Instead, goal achievement for qualitative goals is "felt." Quantitative goals are measurable and can be tracked, with goals accomplished when a particular metric or outcome is reached.

Choosing the right goal-setting framework can bring you closer to realizing your goals. A framework can help you align with your desired trajectory while allowing you to keep an eye on your progress. Below, we discuss three of the most widely used goal-setting frameworks for individuals that you can choose as part of your goal-setting process. There are numerous other strategies that are primarily used by businesses for setting corporate goals, but it would take some work to tailor these to individuals.

...

I believe there is a real connection between mother nature and happiness. Nature is a very special place, and it is the most demanding and rewarding teacher of the fundamentals of life and independence. The knowledge and skills to survive in nature carry over into all aspects of life. You see, to truly master the art of being independent, you only need to have a little knowledge in a lot of areas. *“A jack of all trades and a master of none”* is better than specializing in one area. The thing is, only you can decide your path toward total independence. Only you can decide to learn a new skill or decide how well to practice it.

There are three basic premises of survival. First, man is a toolmaker and cannot survive in a parking lot or barren wasteland. We are not like a deer that can lie down under a tree, wake up covered with two inches of snow, brush the snow off, and go about our day. We need to build things and have raw materials to build things out of.

Second, you can only use what you have with you what you. Sure, it's nice to have a bug-out bag, a survival kit, a gun, ammunition, blankets, extra shoes and socks, and a coat, but do you have those things with you right now? How about a knife, the number one survival tool of choice?

Third, knowledge and know-how are the lightest things to carry with you. Do you know how to build a shelter, make a fire, procure fresh water, and find food? In the Introduction, I drew the distinction between knowledge and know-how. Knowing that you need these things only takes you halfway there. You also, and more importantly, need to know HOW to do it.

In a pure wilderness survival situation, we follow the sacred order of the four sacred skills: shelter, water, fire, and food, in that order. The untrained person may believe food is the most important thing; however, this is simply not true. Food is actually last, the least important. We always teach any person that unless you have some type of medical condition, you can go at least two weeks without food, but in certain conditions, you may not make it two hours without shelter. We teach that you need fresh water within twenty-four to forty-eight hours. So, if a person has taken care of his or her shelter and has found a water source, they can make it two weeks. Let's go through the skills.

1. Shelter

It is no mistake that when we decide to go on vacation, after deciding on a destination, we take care of shelter—hotel, cabin, campsite, etc. This is because shelter is the most important skill. As many as eighty-five percent of outdoor recreation fatalities are caused by hypothermia. Hypothermia is a rapid, progressive, physical, and mental collapse due to the loss of body core temperature. Humans in the final stages of severe hypothermia will exhibit “terminal burrowing” (hiding in small, enclosed spaces) and “paradoxical undressing” (removal of clothing). Most fatalities are found naked and in the fetal position. A short-term survival shelter called a debris hut, made from dry, dead vegetation, can keep a person alive in severe conditions.

If you can build a shelter in the woods, then it is easy to build a shelter in your home. There is no reason for anyone to freeze to death inside their own home.

If you don't have a backup heat source and the power goes out, it will not be long before the inside of your house is just as cold as outside, minus the wind chill factors. However, if you have a free-standing wood stove and a year's supply of firewood, a power outage can turn into a party.

If a person understands the value of insulation, then you can build a shelter in your home: a shelter in a shelter. If your body, or that of your family and pets, are going to provide the heat, then a shelter must be small! Pitch a tent on top of a mattress in the smallest room in your house. Build a shelter out of mattresses. Lay a full-size mattress down, put two twin mattresses on the edge, put a few boards on top and another full-size one on top, and put some blankets to close the ends. There is your shelter for four people and two dogs. You may not be comfortable, but you will be alive!

Another word about shelter: LOCATION. We always say a good shelter in a bad location is a bad shelter. A good shelter location should have plenty of materials and be in transition areas, not in the deepest woods or out in the field, but in the middle to offer some protection and yet still let some sunshine in. Stay away from water sources that can flood. Water sources also have increased animal travel and insects and make it harder to get warm and stay warm. In modern life shelter location is still very important. For example, don't buy a house in a high crime area, in a flood zone, or downwind from a power plant that is constantly throwing pollutants in the air.

2. Water

Have you noticed that the first thing a server asks when you sit down in a restaurant is, "What can I get you to drink?" A person needs fresh, pure water within twenty-four to forty-eight hours, or they will become critically dehydrated. As I discussed in Chapter 5, every system and every cell in your body needs fresh, pure water to be hydrated properly to function.

In a survival situation, water must be pure. If you drink water that is not safe, such as directly out of a lake or stream, it can contain viruses, bacteria, protozoa pathogens, or helminths (parasitic worms). You are going to start throwing up and having diarrhea, which will dehydrate you dangerously fast and put you in serious trouble. Make sure you have a backup water source at your home to get you through an extended power outage. If you have a water well, get a hand pump for it so that you are not reliant on electricity.

In a survival situation, try to find the water source; the spring where the water comes out of the ground is usually safe. Tapping trees, plants, or vines are often great water sources. Collecting the morning dew is a great way to get fresh

distilled water, and yes, you will crawl around on your hands and knees, licking it up if you are thirsty enough.

3. Fire

Fire has many uses. It can provide protection, comfort, heat, light, purify water, cook, harden arrow points or spears, and de-scent your clothes. It can also be used for signaling, smelting, forging, cremation, and charcoal and ashes can be used as well.

There are dozens of primitive fire-making methods or fire by friction. Not all of them are universal. The bow drill is the most effective and produces the most heat. Fire by friction in a survival situation requires a high level of skill and the right materials. Remember, man is a toolmaker. I find a BIC lighter works very effectively, though I have not had much luck with waterproof matches as they don't seem to be all that waterproof.

Parts of a fire should include a fire pit and a fire reflector. These will make your fire more effective, which means less work collecting firewood, and less work collecting firewood equals less energy spent; therefore, more energy saved. Conservation of energy is important for survival. The basic fire structure should start out as a tepee structure. Learn how to build a fire with one match while using no paper or Firestarter. If you can start a fire in the woods with nothing, then you should be able to start a fire in your home. A fireplace or wood stove is a nice addition to any house.

4. Food

Next, you need to look at food, sustenance, and your calorie intake. How can you be independent if you can't forage? Foraging is the act of finding and harvesting available wild foods. Did you know that wild herbs are usually stronger and more potent than cultivated herbs, and mother nature supplies some of the cleanest animal protein in the world? Knowledge and know-how to fish, hunt, grow, and preserve your own food is also necessary. You need to know how to do all these things if you're going to be truly independent.

In survival, if it has fins, furs, feathers, or scales, it is edible. You can also eat nuts, fruits, berries, roots, tubers, shoots, flowers, herbs, and mushrooms. HOWEVER, if you don't have great confidence in your ability to properly identify mushrooms, stay away from them.

The most basic hunting tool is a throwing stick, sometimes called a rabbit stick. A throwing stick can be used to harvest any small game. Snares and deadfalls are also very effective. At home, some extra dried food, such as beans, grains, and rice, as well as home-canned or store-bought canned food, should be considered. There are several companies that sell dried foods.

An additional consideration in survival is hand-to-hand combat. How can you be totally independent if you don't have the ability to defend yourself and your family from a sudden attack? NO, A GUN IS NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SECURITY. Any trained professional will tell you that your empty-hand abilities, not a gun, are the most important skills, and you always have them with you and should be readily available. Awareness is the number one skill, and verbal de-escalation is not too far behind. Avoid a confrontation at all costs. Running or fleeing from the scene is a great option when possible. To be totally independent, everyone should take three or four years of a good combat Martial art.

...

We've covered a lot of ground in this book: happiness, balancing your life, setting goals, believing in yourself, taking care of your health, the elements of survival, and finances. The overarching theme throughout has been gaining independence. Having the inner confidence in your abilities to navigate the complicated terrain of life is priceless. It is also attainable! By taking to heart what I have written in this book and applying it to your own life, you could reap great rewards and experience tremendous personal growth. I've given you the knowledge, and now you need to work on know-how. It's an amazing journey that we are all on, and I wish you success in achieving your aim of independence.