

WELCOME TO DAY 1

“‘Someday’ is a disease that will take your dreams to the grave with you.”

—TIM FERRISS

The only reason that matters when it comes to setting, pursuing, and attaining goals is your reason. This first day is all about identifying the “big why” that will drive you to achieve something that is truly important to you. As part of that exploration, I will be sharing some strategies, questions, and examples that have helped the people I’ve worked with to get clarity on their own unique big why.

Before I do that, I’m first going to go through some of the

excuses I've heard as to why someone doesn't set clear goals for themselves. See if any of them ring any bells for you.

"I just haven't gotten around to it."

The single most popular excuse I hear when it comes to goal setting is this one: "I know I should do it—I just haven't gotten around to it." Or this variation: "I've been told since grade school that I should set important goals down in writing, and I keep meaning to, but I just haven't ever taken action on it."

It is possible, indeed very likely, that you have said something like this to yourself or others to justify the status quo. It is possible, too, that you yourself have gotten tired of this excuse and have decided that goal setting is something that could significantly improve your life. The fact that you are reading this book is evidence of that. But let me share a few words of advice before we go any further: Don't make the mistake of believing that setting this excuse aside and picking up this book (both good things in and of themselves) will reverse the underlying reality of "not getting around to it."

This book will not change your life by osmosis. Reading the words that show up on its pages will not, on its own, make a big difference. In order to dramatically change your results, you will need to shake up the status quo. That will mean completing the exercises for this day and on the following days. Specifically, set aside the time and attention necessary to write down your

goals and your plans for achieving them. I will be coaching you every step of the way. Here comes your first piece of coaching: Set aside the time in your calendar right now to complete all three consecutive days of this program (four if you are a sales professional or business leader).

Please don't proceed any further in this book until you have done that and are following your written schedule. You will need a few hours for Day 1 and Day 2 and the whole day for Day 3 to complete what I have laid out for you here. Make a date with yourself and, ideally, with your significant other or a close friend, to spend a long weekend working on your future. Is there anything that could be more important?

"People do not wander around and then find themselves at the top of Mount Everest."

—ZIG ZIGLAR

I cannot overemphasize the importance of making and keeping this calendar commitment, ideally with the social accountability that comes along with doing the exercises with a life partner or close personal friend. This personal commitment to sustained action, over the course of multiple days, is the only thing that will overcome the "I just never managed to get around to it" excuse.

A side note: This social aspect is definitely worth incorporating in your process. I have a client who has attended my annual

goal-setting program for years. She always reports back on her accomplishments and shares with the group how much the process helped her. Two years ago, she couldn't attend. Guess what? After she missed the organized day of goal setting, she didn't do it on her own. She ended up having her worst year of business in a very long time. She knew better! She had seen the results personally in other years. You can be sure she has been back "on the wagon" ever since.

The best strategy is to work one-on-one with a coach who will help you through the process. If that's not realistic or viable for you, well, you're the person for whom I wrote this book. I will be your coach. My second piece of coaching is to ask whether it is possible for you to find someone you know well and trust who will do these exercises side by side with you over the next three (or four) days.

"I tried, and goal setting doesn't work for me."

Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, when someone says this, that person has made the mistake of setting a goal that doesn't support them personally, align with their values, or engage them powerfully on an emotional level. This program will show you how to identify and pursue that kind of goal.

"It's all right here in my head."

Another big excuse I hear is, "I know what my goals are. They

are right here in my head.” How has that been working for you? Every book I’ve ever read, and every study I’ve ever seen, reports that the key to goal setting is getting the goals down in writing. In fact, if I had to choose one and only one action for you to take as a result of reading this book, it would be to commit your most important goals to writing. That one step alone is essential—and transformative. Personally, I consider it nonnegotiable, and so do all the clients I work with who have gotten good results from this program.

“I just know I will be successful.”

Another common excuse I hear is this one: “I don’t need to do that; I know I’m going to be successful.” Although this excuse at least comes from a success mindset, it is still going to sabotage your efforts if you make the mistake of hiding behind it. If you don’t define what success means, if you don’t know what it looks like and whether you are getting closer to it or further away from it, you will not achieve it. It’s that simple.

“I’m too old/too young.”

I’ve also heard the “I’m too young” and “I’m too old” excuses. Of course, there is no such thing as too old or too young for goal setting. I fully expect to be setting goals in my 90s, and I hope you do, too.

“Life is good.”

One of the most bizarre excuses I run into is this one: “My life is already pretty good. I don’t really need to take time for goal setting.” Is “pretty good” the standard? Is that where you want your life to land? Tell that to Bill Gates. Do you think he should have stopped setting goals after he made his first few million dollars? If he had, the Gates Foundation would never have come into existence and would never have made the massive contributions to global health and education that it has.

Is “pretty good” really a better outcome than living up to your fullest potential? Tell that to J.K. Rowling. Seven years after earning a college degree, her life was a mess. Her marriage had failed; she was unemployed, struggling, and receiving welfare benefits. Then she started writing, and her financial situation turned around when her first *Harry Potter* novel racked up huge sales. Things were “pretty good” for her at that point. Should she have stopped there? Millions of fans are glad she didn’t!

Let’s face it—a life lived without clear goals is a life that has been abandoned to chance and to the priorities of other people, a life that bypasses the opportunity to achieve and contribute in a way that summons the very best of one’s potential. Who wants to live that kind of life? I certainly don’t.

“What if I fail?”

Another frequent excuse I hear typically takes the form of two paralyzing questions: “What if it doesn’t work?” and “What if I fail?” Yes, it’s true. You might not reach all of your goals. There are no guarantees in life. What goal setting will do, however, is dramatically increase your chances of attaining success in the areas where you do set up written goals and a plan to achieve them. I believe that whatever I can do to increase my odds of accomplishing anything worthwhile is worth the time and effort. Note, too, that we all have our own standards for what constitutes “failure”—and that these are sometimes worth re-examining.

A client I will call Mel came to his second annual goal-setting program with me and announced, at the beginning of the program, “This stuff doesn’t work.” I asked Mel what he meant. He said: “Last year, I set 23 different goals, and I only achieved 21 of them. So, for me, goal setting doesn’t work.” Now, I don’t know about you, but I think Mel was extremely successful. He just doesn’t know it. He’s the guy who will find a way to see the cloud in every silver lining. (Fortunately, he decided to stick with the program.)

Why Should You Do This?

OK. Now that we’ve dealt with all the major excuses, let’s look briefly at the other side of the equation. Let’s talk for just a moment about the reasons why you should set goals.

It works!

There are dozens of plausible, persuasive reasons to set goals, but, when you come right down to it, there really is only one main reason to go through the process of setting formal written goals that I will be sharing with you: It works!

Study after study shows that people who have written down their personal goals are more successful than those who haven't. Let me save you some time by summarizing that research for you concisely. The upshot of what the experts have figured out on this subject is that people who set written goals show dramatically increased engagement, tenacity, and, yes, achievement.

My point is this: Success does not cause goal setting. Indeed, it's the other way around.

I divide the world into two groups: Those who write down their goals and take action on them, and those who don't. The critical question you face right now is whether you want to be in the former group. I am guessing, based on the fact that you are still with me, that the answer to that question now is yes. Welcome! You have now joined the elite.

Why do I say that? My own estimate, based on personal experience, is that less than 10% of the population practices active goal setting that involves writing down important goals, and that the practice of writing down goals escalates dramatically among top earners. In other words, there is a direct correlation between financial success (and success in other areas of your life)

and writing down your most important goals. I would estimate that something like 90% of the high net-worth individuals I have worked with over the years practice written goal setting. (Don't ask me to explain the 10% who don't.) What I'm interested in is what actually works most of the time. And at this point, I assume you are, too.

It Helps You Build Your "I"

I'd like you to imagine for a moment that you are teleporting yourself to your happy place, the most beautiful place on Earth. It could be a beautiful desert island. It could be in the mountains, or in the heart of a bustling city. Ultimately, it's some place you would love to spend time. But before you go there, I'd like you to leave all the roles you play in life behind—your job, your role as someone's child or parent, as a marathoner, cook, spouse, golfer, etc. Leave everything behind. The only thing you can take with you is your own personal identity.

In your happy place, all you have is you, absent of all your roles. There is no one else there to please and no one to judge you. All that shows up in this special place is your own self-concept and your own sense of self-worth. Got it?

Great. You are now sitting in your happy place. You have left all the roles you play behind. I'd like you to rank yourself, absent of all your roles, on a scale of 1–10. One, means you feel terrible about yourself as a person. Ten means you feel great about

yourself. Remember, the number you give yourself should reflect the you that is separate from all your roles.

What number did you give yourself? Was it 1? Was it 10? Or was it somewhere in between?

Let's come back to reality. Full disclosure. Years ago, the very first time I did this exercise I gave myself a 7. And you know what? I was wrong.

Let me explain why. Every single person's identity is a 10.

What I'm discussing here is Identity/Role Theory, which is a great way to think about who you are versus what you do.

The only reason a person would give themselves anything less than a score of 10 for their identity is that they have allowed one or more of their roles—parent, student, coach, golfer, whatever—to bleed back into their perception of who they are.

Remember, I said to leave behind all the roles you are fulfilling in life?

So why did I give myself a 7? It was because I always had the attitude that I could be doing better. Maybe I got that from my upbringing. At the time, giving myself a 10 sounded like I was saying that I couldn't possibly get better. That's one way of looking at things, but it begs the question: Better at what? A role!

If you truly are ranking yourself absent of your roles, you are always an "I"-10. It's extremely important to understand that the roles you play in life have literally zero impact on your identity. You

need to separate the “I” (identity) from the “R” (roles). The goal-setting strategies I share with you in this book help you to do that.

When I talk about your “I,” or identity, I mean what psychologists refer to as your self-concept or self-esteem. This is the number one thing that correlates with success in my experience. It connects to what psychologists call self-concept. Winners become successful because they know they deserve it. When you set goals for yourself and achieve them, that makes you feel better about you.

I can’t overstate how important this is. As you start having even small successes, you begin to believe you can achieve anything. And you can—but the achievement always starts with belief in yourself.

“Never undervalue who you are, and never underestimate what you are capable of.”

—OSCAR AULIC-ICE

It Helps Build Your “R”

Setting written goals helps build your “R.” As you just learned, “R” stands for the different roles you play in life. You must constantly remind yourself that your roles are not the same as your identity. You may have a good or a bad day when you take on the role of, say, golf player, but your identity as a human being is always whole, complete, and optimal.

So for instance, when you set goals to improve your role performance at work, you end up actually performing better at your job. But this isn't limited to the workplace. This can be true of any of the roles you take on in your life: parent, child, student, mentor, athlete, and so on, whatever roles you choose to play. Because goal setting can help you grow and improve in your capacity to fulfill specific roles that are important to you, I would submit that it might be an area worthy of your time and attention.

It Helps You Clarify Your Priorities

Setting written goals with the tools I will be sharing with you forces you to set priorities. Going through this process will motivate you to make some critical decisions about what is more and less important to you.

This is a process of deep personal value and something that very few people take the time to undertake. By completing the exercises in this book, you will avoid the common mistake of letting other people or circumstances you cannot control determine what deserves your time and attention.

Too many people spend their lives doing what happens to be in front of them, whether that's sitting at home watching TV most evenings or dealing with whatever happens to be on their desk when they get to work. You might spend your days dealing with interruptions and putting out fires, while the really important work gets pushed aside or ignored.

When you set priorities, you finally can focus on those things that are important, but not necessarily urgent. You can focus on all those things you know you should do but never seem to get around to. You can start to de-prioritize things that are not actually important to you (but important enough, perhaps, to other people for them to take action on).

Two questions I often ask my clients: Are you spending most of your days working towards your dreams and visions of the future? Or are you spending the time based on what did or didn't happen yesterday?

It Makes You More Aware of Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Everyone has personal assets and liabilities that they bring to the table. Some areas you can see quite clearly, and other areas are a bit of a blind spot. Setting written goals as a way of life, I have found, can make you more aware of your strengths. It can help you lead more consciously with your strengths and (just as important) work on minimizing or overcoming the areas where you aren't as strong.

It Makes You More Accountable to Yourself and Others

Setting written goals, not just sporadically or as a ritual you undertake once a year as a "resolution" but as a way of life that connects to weekly, monthly, or quarterly self-assessments, has a

remarkable transformative effect. It eliminates the daydreaming and builds a sense of personal responsibility for your own life.

Many people tell themselves things like, “Someday I’m going to be rich.” Or, “Someday my ship will come in.” Or, “Someday I’m going to write a great novel.” But they never do much about those dreams. Goal setting forces you to separate reality from wishful thinking. That is, it forces you to take responsibility for your own decisions. For some people, that’s not easy in the early going. But by sticking with the process and creating a deep personal awareness that you have absolute, unchallenged control over your own attitude and your own choices, you reach a point of being truly accountable to yourself and to others. You stop making excuses. You take personal responsibility for all aspects of your life. Once you do that, you realize that there really are no limits to what you can accomplish.

It Gives You Both Passion and Persistence

The habit of setting written goals gives you the building blocks for two traits common to successful people: passion and persistence. These are, as it turns out, two sides of the same coin.

In my training programs and coaching work, I always tell my clients that the formula for passion is as follows:

$$\mathbf{P = D + C}$$

D is desire, and C is commitment. Knowing what you want from life and what you are committed to achieving gives you a sense of purpose, and this purpose, I would argue, is necessary to experience a true passion for living. On the other hand, if you lack a purpose, don't know what you really want (desire), and can't articulate what you are committed to, you're not going to experience much passion in life. If you are serious about closing that gap, goal setting is the place to start. It helps you figure out what you want your life to look like. Once you have identified goals that really matter to you, it's much easier to build commitment—the willingness to do what is necessary to achieve your goals.

Related to this is the important concept of persistence, also known as grit. In her terrific book *Grit*, psychologist Angela Duckworth describes grit as a kind of stick-to-it-iveness that can carry you forward to accomplish almost anything you want in life. According to Duckworth, grit is “working on something you care about so much that you're willing to stay loyal to it.” She goes on to point out that grit is all about effort.

Effort outweighs genetics, luck, and even talent. This is not to say that talent doesn't play a role in determining what happens in your world, or that bad breaks no one could have foreseen won't show up from time to time, or that genetics don't matter. All of those things will affect your results. But effort counts for more. Duckworth believes that “greatness is doable,” even with minimal

talent and loads of bad breaks, assuming that you are willing to put in lots of effort over a sustained period of time. That effort starts with your personal commitment to your written goals.

“Thankfully, persistence is a great substitute for talent.”

—STEVE MARTIN

It Motivates You to Strive for Higher and Higher Levels of Success

Warning: Goal setting, using the process I will be coaching you to follow in this book, is addictive.

Once you try it and start experiencing the success that comes with operating and contributing at your optimum level of performance, you’ll want to do it again. And again. And again.

Think of someone whose life and career you admire, someone who achieved so many great things in life and left behind such a great legacy that it boggles your mind. Pick someone whose level of achievement, over a period of years, has served as a personal inspiration to you.

Who did you come up with? Beethoven? Marie Curie? Michelangelo? Martin Luther King, Jr.? Malala Yousafzai? It’s different for everyone. But you know what? Whoever you came up with, I guarantee you that person became addicted (in a good way) to setting the goal of achieving something that mattered to

them—something they once thought they were not capable of achieving—and then became addicted to feeling the exhilaration of making that achievement a reality in their lives. They felt that exhilaration so powerfully that they simply had to repeat the process with each new, empowering goal.

If you are ready to become that kind of person—and I suspect, by this point, you are—then you are ready to set aside all the excuses and take action on the reasons to move forward with this program.

“The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.”

—ATTRIBUTED TO MICHELANGELO

Now that you understand why it is so important to become an active goal-setter, I'd like to ask you to get started with this program in earnest by completing some important self-assessment exercises. The purpose here is to gain self-awareness and to begin prioritizing what's really important to you. I'm going to leave blank spaces for you to fill in your answers. Yes, you have permission to write in this book. It's also OK to get a few separate sheets of paper or write the answers in a computer document if you prefer to work that way.

The next few pages are extremely important. If you really want to benefit from what comes later in the book, find a place where you won't be interrupted for a few hours, turn off all potential electronic distractions, and take the time to invest in yourself by completing these exercises with full attention.

Please do not skip over the exercises that follow, or any of the other exercises in this book.