

## 10 Key Lessons from 10 Years of Personal Development

It was a little over ten years ago that I discovered the world of personal development.

Since then I've read hundreds of books on the topic and wrote 20+ books myself.

Every time I sit at my desk to write a new book, I find myself rediscovering the same concepts. So, I thought, "Why not share them with you today?"

Here you are. Below are 10 key lessons I learned from 10 years of personal development:

- #1. Your environment is more powerful than your willpower
- #2. What you believe often becomes your reality
- #3. Your imagination is stronger than your limitations
- #4. Consistency is more important than intensity
- #5. Self-compassion beats self-criticism
- #6. Long-term thinking wins every time
- #7. The 80/20 principle rules the world
- #8. Doing more of what works is usually the way to go
- #9. The best investment is always in yourself
- #10. Seek contrast and look for the sweet spot

## Lesson #1. Your environment is more powerful than your willpower

Your environment—the people you surround yourself with, the books you read, the videos you watch, the neighbourhood you live in—has an enormous impact on your present reality and the future you will create.

The worse your environment is, the more willpower you'll need to exert. And, unfortunately, no amount of willpower will make up for a poor environment. Therefore, you must do whatever is in your power to optimize your environment by:

surrounding yourself with inspiring people,

- absorbing knowledge of the highest caliber possible,
- designing a living and working space that work for you, not against you.
- Choose your environment carefully and deliberately.

You will raise and fall to the level of your environment.

## Lesson #2. What you believe often becomes your reality

Your mind is akin to an operating system. That system operates according to your beliefs. In other words, your beliefs largely determine what you can or cannot do. To reach your goals, you must upgrade your beliefs. Below are the three core beliefs I found the most important:

**Everything is possible.** When you assume you can, you open the doors to more possibilities. It doesn't mean things will become easier. But it does mean that you'll create more opportunities for yourself.

**Everything is learnable.** When you believe you can learn everything you need to reach any goal you have, your behavior changes. You pursue more challenging goals and acquire new skills in the process.

**Every problem has a solution.** Finally, when you believe that for every problem you face, there must be a solution, you become more resourceful.

Make these core beliefs yours. They will impact most of the beliefs you hold and enable you to make massive changes in your life over time.

Remember the following:

Poor beliefs —> ineffective actions —> no results.

Empowering beliefs —> effective actions —> good results.

Transform your beliefs about yourself and about the world and your life will change for the better.

### **Lesson #3. Your imagination is stronger than your limitations**

Human beings are the only species on earth that can use the power of imagination to visualize something that isn't there and, through focus and persistent hard work, make it a reality.

You're not the prisoner of your past, you're merely suffering from a lack of imagination.

The role of imagination is to take you into the future you want to see so that you can envision what you want. You can then come back to the present, design an action plan, and do what's necessary to close the gap between where you are and where you want to be. Thus, instead of worrying about an uncertain future, envision a compelling one. Then, start moving toward it.

You're not limited, you lack imagination.

## **Lesson #4. Consistency is more important than intensity.**

What matters most isn't what you do every other day, but what you do every day. It's the small things you do every day that matter, not the big things you do occasionally.

Your daily effort compounds over time and will inevitably lead you to incredible places you cannot yet imagine.

The problem is, people are excited at first but fail to sustain their efforts for long enough to achieve extraordinary results. They soon become bored, lose motivation, or feel hopeless when reality fails to match their expectations. As a result, they give up.

The best strategy is to fall in love with consistency.

And it usually entails lowering intensity. Working on a project a few hours a day for ten years can yield far better results than working on it fifteen hours a day for six months. Over a decade, your daily efforts will compound and put you on an exponential trajectory. But your six months of hard work probably won't.

The point is, success is seldom linear. It's exponential. And the best way to achieve exponential results is to make steady progress over a long period of time.

Slow and steady often wins the race. Consistency is far more powerful than intensity.

## Lesson #5. Self-compassion beats self-criticism

How often do you beat yourself up? And how is it working for you?

Self-criticism doesn't work. You're not an inherently lazy person who needs to be beaten with a (figurative) stick. If you're not making progress, it's usually for different reasons, whether it is lack of clarity, poor planning, or various fears. Beating yourself up won't solve these issues.

And if you see yourself as a "failure" it's because you believe "failing" is bad while, in reality, it's a necessary part of your journey toward success.

Now, what works?

Being kinder to yourself works.

Being more self-compassionate works.

In fact, learning to be self-compassionate is one of the best things you can ever do. Self-compassion acts as an emotional safety net. By talking to yourself with compassion rather than criticizing yourself, you protect your mental health.

To cultivate self-compassion, notice when you disrespect yourself. What do you tell yourself when you fail? What nasty words do you say when you make a mistake? Once you're more aware of your inner conversation, you can come up with encouraging words. Some examples would be:

- It's okay.  
I'm doing okay.  
You're doing okay \*\*\*insert your name\*\*\*  
I'm not where I want in life but I'm making progress  
I made a mistake but I'll do better next time  
How I feel now is okay. I'm just being human.  
I don't have to feel good all the time.

The simple acknowledgment that where you are and how you feel now is okay will go a long way in improving your emotional well-being. After all, that's what being human is all about. Whenever you notice that you're being harsh, interrupt your internal monologue and replace it with soothing words. Over time, being self-compassionate will become easier.

## **Lesson #6. Long-term thinking wins every time**

Most people overestimate what they can do in one year, but grossly underestimate what they can do in a decade. When you have a long-term horizon spanning over years or decades, your everyday actions become connected to your vision. And when what you do every day is linked to where you want to be in five, ten, or twenty years, your actions have infinitely more power.

In other words, long-term thinkers “win” because they see their life as a chess game. They advance their pawns strategically and patiently. They know where they want to go and each of their actions is deliberate. As a result, the sum of their actions becomes far more powerful than the part.

On the other hand, short-term thinkers “lose” because they fail to deliberately, patiently, and persistently move toward a clear compelling vision. The tasks they work on each day tend to be disconnected from each other and sometimes even cancel each other out. As a result, the sum of their actions ends up being lesser than its part.

## Lesson #7. The 80/20 principle rules the world

Most of the things you do don't matter. That is, they don't move you closer to any significant goals nor do they enable you to experience the peace of mind and level of fulfillment you're looking for each day.

The 80/20 principle states that 20% of your actions lead to 80% of your results. For instance:

- 20% of what you do generates 80% of your fulfillment
- 20% of your customers brings 80% of your profits
- 20% of your time at work accounts for 80% of your productivity
- 20% of your customers causes 80% of your stress

The 80/20 principle is probably the simplest, yet most effective principle when it comes to achieving better results in life. Understanding it deeply, and practicing consistently will yield better results than anything else you'll ever do.

I've applied this principle over and over in my life. Among other things, the 80/20 principle leads me to:

- Eliminate a large part of my business-related tasks, reduce my workload dramatically, and become a full-time writer.
- Leverage the success of one of my books and increase its sales more than twentyfold. two-thirds of my sales now come from that one book.

Now, you might think that you already know the 80/20 principle.

And perhaps you do.

But if it hasn't transformed your life in major ways yet, chances are that you don't.

## Lesson #8. Doing more of what works is usually the way to go

Many people spend a disproportionate amount of time trying to fix something that doesn't work. It is often the wrong strategy. Whether in your personal or professional life, if every day seems to be a struggle, then you'll probably be missing something. That is, you're probably not:

- 1) focusing enough on your strengths
- 2) amplifying what works for you

### 1) Focusing on your strengths

Most of us have a couple of things that come easy to us and that we could excel at if we gave it enough time and effort. Meanwhile, we're average at pretty much everything else.

Yet, how often do we try to improve our weaknesses? How much time do we spend learning new skills just to become average? And how often do we criticize ourselves when we aren't up to the task?

This is a trap.

I believe that the way to reach extraordinary results is to dedicate a disproportionate amount of our time and effort to a few things we excel at. The key is to find out what these things are. For some people, it might be organizing events. For others, it might be cooking. Yet for others, it might be teaching.

Working from our strengths can make an enormous difference in our life. Personally, I went from being an underperforming consultant, struggling to get out of bed, to becoming one of the best-selling self-help indie authors in the world.

The bottom line is, becoming world-class at one thing, or maximum two or three, can yield results beyond your wildest imagination. Find out what those things are for you. And, once you do, keep going and never stop improving.

Now, here are a few questions to guide you:



- What's one thing that comes easy to you but that others struggle with?
- What are you doing during your free time? What are you researching? What are you creating? What are you drawn toward?
- What do you volunteer for at work or outside of work?
- If you never had to work a day in my life, what would you spend your time doing?

Don't forget to ask your family members and friends. Often, our strengths are so obvious to us that we can't see them—but other people usually can.

## **2) Amplifying what works**

Many people, when they find something that works, fail to capitalize on it. Instead, they move on to something else to “diversify” or chase another success.

However, often the most effective way to reach extraordinary results is simply to do more of what works. It requires way less effort because you're merely amplifying what has already been proven to work.

For instance, it's easier to multiply the sales of a product people want than to create a brand-new product. That's what I did with my best-selling book “Master Your Emotions”. It makes twenty times more today than when I published it years ago. While I have over twenty books, most of my marketing budget goes into promoting that book.

If you think your market is saturated, think again. If you believe you've already maxed out your talent, don't be so quick. There is usually another level to reach. The point is, before getting distracted by shiny objects and other “opportunities, be *absolutely sure* that you leveraged your strengths and amplified what works to the extreme.

You probably haven't yet.

## **Lesson #9. The best investment is always in yourself**

You can spend your entire life trying to change just one other person and fail, or you can change yourself and impact the lives of countless others.

In short, you can have an enormous impact on your environment. But to do so, you must invest in yourself.

Many people look for the best investment out there hoping to get rich. They buy real estate, invest in stocks, speculate on art, or dabble with cryptocurrencies.

But it's a distraction.

It prevents them from focusing on themselves and on the wonderful skills and abilities they could develop to improve themselves and the world around them. In other words, they're searching for gold in the outside world while they should look inside.

In truth, the best way to get rich is by investing in yourself.

You have far better odds of becoming wealthy that way than by doing anything else. And wealth is merely one of the many benefits you'll receive along with healthier self-esteem, better skills, deeper meaning, or enhanced motivation.

Your personal development is also the investment you have the most control over. And it will keep paying dividends forever. Not to mention that the skills you've acquired and experiences you've accumulated over the years can never be taken away from you.

Therefore, *a/ways* invest in yourself. For instance, work on:

- your communication skills (written and/or oral)
- your ability to think logically
- your daily habits and consistency
- your level of self-awareness
- your focus

- any specific skills you need to reach your goals.

## **Lesson #10. Seek contrasts and look for the sweet spot**

When we struggle to feel alive, it's often because our life lacks contrast. Perhaps, we're too comfortable. Perhaps, we're working too much (or too little). Perhaps, we're seeking to maximize pleasure while avoiding pain at all costs.

But seeking to maximize comfort or pleasure isn't the best way to live a fulfilling life. In the absence of pain or struggle, we tend to become apathetic. That's when we start feeling dead inside.

What's the remedy then?

Is it to embrace pain and struggles?

Yes and no.

The best solution is to choose *actively* the kind of pain, discomfort, and struggles you want to experience in your life. That is, it's to have agency over the discomfort in your life, instead of passively becoming its victim.

It entails choosing to experience discomfort in your day-to-day life. For instance, it could be by taking ice baths, working out, doing a meditation retreat, or facing fears such as the fear of speaking in public. It could also be by tackling challenging projects.

It's by disciplining yourself and strengthening your mind that you gain the edge that enables you to reach your goals and improve your life situation—ie. better job, more money, healthier relationships, etc.

When you fail to discipline yourself and refuse to face discomfort voluntarily, life will discipline you in ways that you may not like.

To conclude, seek pain and discomfort and discipline yourself to create more contrasts in your life and feel more alive.

Or don't, and pay the consequences.