



10-Day
Purpose-Driven
Meditations

— Day 1 —

“Most people overestimate what they can achieve in a year and underestimate what they can achieve in ten years.”

— *Bill Gates* —

Why do you do the things you do?

Humans only really have two main motivators: pain and pleasure. In our actions, we either run away from pain or we run toward pleasure.

Today, for instance, you might be going to work because you love your job and you're excited to challenge yourself, move forward in your career, and become an expert at your field.

Or perhaps you went to work because you're afraid of the repercussions of not going to work. You could lose your job, your integrity, and your regular paychecks.

Take an honest look at the things you do (or don't do) and you'll find that some of those things are motivated by fear, anxiety, and pain. Others are motivated by excitement, desire, and growth.

Here's the kicker...

When we take action from a place of fear or anxiety, the results we produce are not as profound as what we could have produced if we'd been motivated by growth and creativity.

If you think, “I don't want to do it but I just have to get it done,” then you're approaching the thing from a place of pain... and that'll show in your result. You're rushing. You're checking something off a list. And the quality of your work will suffer.

But if you think, “I want to do this and I'm going to take as much time as I need,” then you're approaching the thing from a place of pleasure.

You're embracing the process and giving the thing you're doing the attention and time it needs to be a success. That'll also show in your results.

This applies to parenting, passion projects, friendships, work, business, creative pursuits, and everything in between.

But... we are adults.

And we all have to spend some time doing things we don't want to do.

The key is, when we're doing something that we care deeply about, we should allow our passion and creativity to motivate us... rather than a silly checklist or a fear of failure.

As Tony Robbins once said, "The secret of success is learning how to use pain and pleasure instead of having pain and pleasure use you. If you do that, you're in control of your life. If you don't, life controls you."

Journaling Prompts

1

Reflect on your daily activities. Which ones are driven by fear or anxiety, and which ones are driven by excitement, desire, and growth?

2

Think about a task you recently completed. Did you approach it from a place of pain or pleasure? How did this affect the quality of your work and your overall experience?

3

How can you shift your perspective to approach a task you're not particularly fond of from a place of growth and creativity, rather than fear or obligation?

— Day 2 —

Grit is not just a simple elbow-grease term for rugged persistence. It is an often invisible display of endurance that lets you stay in an uncomfortable place, work hard to improve upon a given interest, and do it again and again.”

— Sarah Lewis —

How long can you hold your breath?

The world record is 24 minutes and 3 seconds.

But I’m only asking this question metaphorically. Much like we get a nearly undeniable urge to inhale after 30–90 seconds of denying our lungs, we also get an overwhelming urge to quit after pursuing a passion with too little progress.

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It feels like we’re out of air.

And yet, the instinct to inhale isn’t triggered by a lack of oxygen, but by a buildup of carbon dioxide. Our bodies can’t even measure oxygen levels and so they opt for measuring the opposite, assuming that if carbon dioxide levels are high, we must be in grave danger.

But even the average person can increase their breath holding time to 5 minutes with some practice.

It's not that you can't hold your breath.

It's not that you aren't making progress.

It's just an instinct — a knee jerk reaction — triggered by fear that you might not succeed, that you might be wasting your time.

I recently overheard two people in a coffee shop discussing a new business they were going to build. At one point, one of them said, "And we've got nothing to lose. We just try it out for three months and see how it goes." I chuckled to myself. Three months isn't enough time to gain meaningful ground on any pursuit.

This is how we typically think about our pursuits... not in terms of decades or lifetimes, but in terms of months or years.

But the person who can "hold their breath" long enough to see the fruit of their labors — which, as a good friend of mine recently said, is "always longer and harder than you expect" — is the one who will emerge to the surface victorious.

Here are some ways to increase your breath holding time.

Work With a Partner — I used to try things on my own because I figured depending on someone else was a recipe for disaster. But I've now found the opposite to be true. When we do something alone, it's much easier to quit. I currently have three different businesses... and all of them have a business partner.

Don't Make a Major Decision in a Valley — This is a rule I never break... perhaps the most important rule in my life. Because I have a fair amount of "down seasons". But when I'm in those seasons, I know I'm not allowed to make major decisions. Which means my lowest mode of being is at least maintaining the things I've got going.

Accept The Possibility Of Failure — What you're doing might fail... by that I mean that it might not pan out how you originally intended. We often quit because we're afraid of the possibility of failure and it's less embarrassing to quit than it is to fail. But once you accept that you can give something your all and it still might not work out... you steal this fear of its power.

Believe in The Power of Time — Time is the most powerful contributor to success. I'm never the smartest person in the room... or even the most hard working... but I'm determined to be the most resilient. And that resilience (I've found) pays off big.

— *Journaling Prompts*

1

Reflect on a time when you felt like giving up on a pursuit due to a lack of progress. How did you handle it? In retrospect, do you think you could have "held your breath" longer?

2

Considering your current pursuits, how can you apply the strategies mentioned (working with a partner, not making major decisions in a valley, accepting the possibility of failure, and believing in the power of time) to increase your resilience and commitment?

3

How do you typically react to the fear of failure? How can you shift your perspective to see failure as a part of the process rather than an end point?

— Day 3 —

“Most people die at 25 and aren’t buried until they’re 75.”

— *Benjamin Franklin* —

Facing death often makes us rethink our life, as it did for one author on Medium. In *Letter 33, On The Shortness of Life*, the author shares a few lessons he’s learned since dealing with death in the family...

Control Your Thoughts — “Our default modes of thinking are entirely self-centered, but that at every moment of every day we can make a conscious choice to view the world however we want. It is very hard, but it is possible, and I posit that it is absolutely worth attempting.”

Enjoy Time With Loved Ones — “Treasure the moments you have with your closest friends and family, and try to spend as much time with them as you can, while you can. Maybe say yes to a few more lunches with friends, and no to a few more business meetings.”

Value Your Time — “It’s time to start valuing my time more than I value other things. I encourage everyone to take this approach. Time is LITERALLY the most valuable thing we have. We think it’s infinite because we don’t like to think about death, and we generally don’t think twice about wasting it because it’s intangible, ephemeral, and it just keeps coming! There’s more time tomorrow, and the day after, and next week. Until there isn’t.”

These are good reminders for all of us.

We have limited time to live and it’s important that we make the most of it. Enjoy it. Do something crazy. Or fun. Juice it for all its worth. Whether you’re 25 or 85.

Get out and do something you want to do.

 *Journaling Prompts*

1

How do you currently prioritize spending time with your loved ones? Can you think of ways to increase the quality and quantity of time spent with them?

2

How do you value your time? Are there areas in your life where you feel you're wasting time? How can you better utilize this time to align with your values and goals?

3

How can you practice mindfulness to better control your thoughts and choose a more positive or empathetic perspective?

— Day 4 —

“Success and failure do not exist in the present, only effort and action exist.”

— *Arno Ilgner* —

If you’ve seen the documentary, *Alone on the Wall*, which chronicles Alex Honnald’s nail-biting free solo (i.e. without a rope) ascent up Yosemite’s El Capitan, then you’ve probably asked yourself, what is going through that guy’s head?

The common assumption is that he’s an adrenaline junky.

One interviewer asked Alex, “Is it an amazing adrenaline rush?”

His response: “There is no adrenaline rush. If I get an adrenaline rush, it means that something has gone horribly wrong.”

When he’s on that wall, dangling thousands of feet up from his fingertips, he’s as calm as a cucumber (if you don’t believe me, watch the documentary).

You’re probably not going to be scaling El Capitan without a rope anytime soon. But you do want to do hard things.

You do want to face your fears and overcome difficult challenges.

So... what might Alex Honnald have to teach us about navigating our fears and overcoming obstacles?

In a [Men’s Health article](#), Honnald explains, “You’re not trying to control your fear. You’re just trying to step outside of it... I do this by practicing the moves over and over again, to work through the fear until I can’t feel it any more.”

Alex Honnald doesn’t just start climbing El Capitan without a rope and hope for the best.

He does the route dozens of times, practicing and perfecting every move until it's as natural to him as going for a walk.

Then he takes away the rope.

In other words, practice is a great antidote to fear.

The more you do the thing you're afraid of — the more that you make yourself do it — the less afraid you're going to be... and eventually, you might even find that you enjoy it.

— *Journaling Prompts*

1

If you were to approach a fear or challenge with the mindset of "practice makes perfect," how would that change your approach? What specific actions would you take?

2

What is one fear or challenge you've been avoiding? Write down a small, achievable step you can take today to start facing it.

3

Imagine yourself successfully overcoming a current fear or challenge. What does that look like? How does it make you feel?

— Day 5 —

“It is so easy to overestimate the importance of one defining moment and underestimate the value of making small improvements on a daily basis.”

— *James Clear* —

My dad had been trying to lose weight for years.

He'd tried lots of different diets, workout programs, and weight-loss fads.

I remember that occasionally, in an effort fueled by rage and frustration, he would kill himself at the gym every day for a week... only to retreat the next week to his previous sedentary lifestyle.

But when he finally succeeded... it wasn't so dramatic.
He just started walking to work every day.

Weight loss was only one result of this little habit. It slowly snowballed into greater self-confidence, better eating habits, a more positive outlook on life.

Just by walking every day.

In [this video](#), Jordan Peterson explains why, if you're struggling to hit your goals, it very well might be because you're aiming too high...

“Let's say you've got a kid and you want the kid to improve. You don't set a bar that's so high that it's impossible for them to attain it. You take a look at the kid and you think, okay this kid's got this range of skill; here's a challenge we can throw at him or her that exceeds their current level of skill but gives them a reasonable probability of success.

I don't know how to improve my life, someone might say, and I would say, well you're not aiming low enough. There's something you could do that you are regarding as trivial — that you could do, that you would do, that would result in an actual improvement, but it's not a big enough improvement for you so you won't lower yourself enough to take the opportunity.”

For my dad, the little thing was walking everyday.

What is the little thing YOU could do — that seems trivial but really isn't — to make your life better?

— *Journaling Prompts*

1

Reflect on your current goals. Are there any that seem overwhelming or unattainable? How could you break these down into smaller, more manageable steps?

2

What is one small, seemingly trivial habit you could start implementing today that could potentially lead to significant improvements in your life over time?

3

How do you typically approach goal setting? Do you aim for large, dramatic changes or small, consistent improvements? How might your approach change after considering the power of small habits?

— Day 6 —

“Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.”

— *Gloria Steinem* —

I wanted to raise my rates as a freelance writer.

Trouble was, I had 5 clients, most of which I'd been working with for several years... and I was terrified of losing them.

So I did something I often do.

I played pretend.

I got on my computer and imagined that I was writing an email with my rate adjustment to my biggest client.

I carefully thought through what I would say and how I would say it so that I'd get my new rate with as little risk of the client leaving as possible.

By the time I was done, I was 100% sure that the email I'd written wouldn't lose a client.

It was only a 10% increase, it gave me an opportunity to discuss the rate change with them in the case that they didn't like it, and it gave three months of notice.

I sent the email and every client approved it without a hitch. But it was only through sitting down and playing pretend that I was able to gain the confidence to do something that scared me.

I did the same thing before I gave a speech as the best man at a wedding. Before my wife and I planned out our move to Portugal. Before I went full-time as a freelance writer. And even before I co-founded The Tonic.

Playing pretend gives you the opportunity to see what something feels like before you actually do it — and you'll often find that the thing feels far less scary and intimidating once you've spent a bit of time with it.

Your imagination is what makes you fearful.

Play pretend a little more often and it'll also be what makes things feel possible.

— *Journaling Prompts*

1

Reflect on a goal or decision that currently feels intimidating to you. How would it feel to "play pretend" and imagine yourself successfully achieving or navigating it? Write down the scenario in as much detail as possible.

2

Consider the potential of integrating this practice of "playing pretend" into your regular decision-making or goal-setting routine. How could this influence your self-assurance, resilience, and overall success in the long run?

3

Reflect on the role of imagination in your life. How has it contributed to both your fears and your achievements? Can you identify a specific instance where harnessing your imagination positively or negatively influenced the outcome?

— Day 7 —

“Boredom is the conviction that you can't change ... the shriek of unused capacities.”

— *Saul Bellow* —

Leo Tolstoy once defined boredom as “the desire for desires”.

We all know the feeling — there's some stuff that should be done, there are multiple things we could do, and then there's our feeling of indecision.

Because of technology's near-constant ability to stimulate us, this sensation is more chronic than ever before. We know we shouldn't just keep scrolling... but it's the fastest and easiest way to get a dopamine hit; it's certainly a lot easier than doing the things that would actually fulfill us.

And so boredom is that place where we teeter between knowing what we should do while being drawn to what's easy.

As such, it's an opportunity to stop doing something meaningless and start doing something meaningful — it's a signal from the self-aware part of our brain that we need to put our energy into something with more long-term rewards.

Boredom is just the withdrawal symptom of constant stimulation.

And while it feels like the answer is to stimulate ourselves yet again, that will only provide short-lived relief. The lasting answer is to decrease our baseline stimulation — to make a habit of spending less time on our phones and more time reading, writing, journaling, meditating, hiking, walking, learning music, and so on.

The more we lower our baseline stimulation, the easier it becomes to work on the things that we actually want to work on — because our brain is no longer expecting the quick-fire seduction of our smartphones, but the long-term satisfaction that comes with doing something difficult and meaningful.

1

Reflect on your own experiences with boredom. How often do you find yourself reaching for quick, easy stimulation versus engaging in more meaningful activities?

2

Consider your current habits around technology use. How might these be contributing to your feelings of boredom or dissatisfaction?

3

How can you actively work to decrease your baseline stimulation? What steps can you take to shift your focus from short-term gratification to long-term satisfaction and fulfillment?

— Day 8 —

“Life is a journey, and if you fall in love with the journey,
you will be in love forever.”

— *Peter Hagerty* —

It's common for people who lose weight quickly through fad diets to gain it all back in the following months.

And there's a really simple reason for this.

Short journeys produce short-lived results.

This is also why 30-day challenges, one-page book summaries, and one-hour webinars don't create long-lasting change.

They can't.

Because they mistake the value of the journey for the value of the goal.

The value doesn't lie in achievement.

It lies in becoming.

The goal isn't to lose 30 pounds, or finish your first book, or get a promotion...
The goal is to become the type of person who maintains a healthy weight,
writes books, and excels in their career.

It's about doing... for the sake of becoming.

And in so becoming, doing without an end in sight.

1

How can you redefine your current goals to focus more on the journey and the person you are becoming, rather than just the end result?

2

What are some habits or qualities you believe are integral to becoming the person who can maintain the achievements you aspire to? How can you start cultivating these habits or qualities?

3

In what ways can you incorporate the concept of "doing for the sake of becoming" into your daily routine? What specific actions might this involve?

— Day 9 —

“Being able to quit things that don't work is integral to being a winner.”

— *Tim Ferriss* —

If you're like most people, then maybe you think of quitting as being synonymous with failure. We've been told by Hollywood as well as our grandparents that quitting doesn't lead to an easier life, but to a dissatisfied and bitter one. And there's a lot of truth to that. When done preemptively, as a knee-jerk reaction to slow success (and most success is slow success), quitting isn't the answer.

HOWEVER...

Quitting isn't always not the answer, either. Some people mistakenly think that quitting, in and of itself, is bad... and so they continue to do things that aren't getting results, aren't making them happy, and aren't progressing them forward, all in the name of perseverance and grit.

But there is a time and a place to quit — to quit well — not as a knee-jerk reaction to slow success, but as a thoughtful decision in order to pursue something more fulfilling, impactful, or achievable.

If, for example, you've been working on something for years with very little results and too much burn out, then doing something else might be to your (and the world's) benefit — it's also possible that you simply need to alter your approach to something more sustainable and effective.

There's no 100% right answer here... and we're not telling you to quit — we're simply telling you to recognize quitting for what it sometimes can be: an open door to something more fulfilling and impactful.

1

Are there any areas in your life where you feel you're persisting without seeing the results or fulfillment you desire? How can you evaluate whether it's time to quit or change your approach?

2

How do you typically view quitting? How might reframing quitting as a potential opportunity for growth and change impact your decision-making process?

3

If you were to quit a certain activity, habit, or pursuit that isn't serving you, how would that decision align with your long-term goals? What new possibilities could this decision create for your personal growth and fulfillment?

— Day 10 —

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then,
is not an act, but a habit.”

— *Will Durant* —

Some highly speculative research suggests that you and I make about 35,000 decisions per day.

How did they come up with that number?

I don't know.

But the important thing is that we make more decisions than we think.

I remember in Joe Rogan's jaw-dropping podcast interview with Yeonmi Park, a brave woman who escaped North Korea at the age of 13, Park said that the number of decisions she had to make after gaining her freedom (even when doing something simple like grocery shopping) was overwhelming, having grown up in a country where the only thing anyone ever thought about was finding their next meal.

For you and I, it doesn't feel like 35 thousands decisions because the vast majority are automatic (like getting your morning coffee), and only a few actually require conscious awareness (like trying to decide whether to keep your kid home from school even though they might be — probably are — faking it).

What's freaky is that those decisions — whether automatic or conscious — define us.

They define what we do, what we don't do, and by proxy, who we become.

In fact, who you are now (who you've become) is just a result of thousands of previously conscious decisions gaining enough reinforcement to become automatic.

In the past, many of your current habits demanded conscious consideration. Now they don't.

For better or worse, you made those repeat decisions (and forged the bedrock of your habits) at a time when you didn't fully understand how they would impact you over years or decades.

It wasn't really a fair fight.

The good news is that you now know better.

You know who you want to be. And you know what habits and routines you need to build to become more of that person.

The question, then, is how do you replace your old habits with better ones?

Here are five dead-simple, science-back steps...

1. Start SMALL — You want to snap your fingers and change everything all at once. You can't. Don't try. Choose a single habit that you want to change in 2023.

2. Choose a Keystone Habit — You might be starting small, but that doesn't mean you should play small. Choose a "keystone habit" that will "trigger widespread change", in the words of Charles Duhigg. Exercise, for instance: "Typically, people who exercise, start eating better and becoming more productive at work. They smoke less and show more patience with colleagues and family. They use their credit cards less frequently and say they feel less stressed. Exercise is a keystone habit that triggers widespread change." Other examples are eating healthy, making your bed, journaling, or meditating.

3. Don't Try To Break Old Habits — Quitting old habits is far more difficult than replacing old habits (which is why people quitting smoking chew gum). Don't think about how you can stop doing something... think about a new healthy habit you can build to replace the bad habit.

Charles Duhigg calls this the golden rule of habit change: “You can't extinguish a bad habit, you can only change it.”

4. Make It So Easy You Can't Fail — Want to run 10 miles every day? Start with a single step. Literally. James Clear writes, “Pick a new habit that is easy enough that you don't need motivation to do it. Rather than starting with 50 pushups per day, start with 5 pushups per day.

Rather than trying to meditate for 10 minutes per day, start by meditating for one minute per day. Make it easy enough that you can get it done without motivation.”

Journaling Prompts

1

Reflect on your current habits. Which ones are serving you well, and which ones might be holding you back from becoming the person you aspire to be?

2

How can you approach replacing an old habit with a new one, rather than trying to simply break the old habit? What new habit could effectively replace an old one?

3

How can you make the process of cultivating a new habit so easy that you can't fail? What small, achievable steps can you take to start building this habit today?