

11 STEPS TO **LIVE BY DESIGN**, NOT BY DEFAULT



D-FORMULA

DANIEL VAZQUEZ

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To God, for guiding my path.

To my children, for giving that path greater meaning.

And to everyone who decides to live by design, not by default.

Your decision will create a ripple effect

that will transform millions of lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Power of D-Formula	1
PART ONE: AWAKEN	
Step One: Default Life	7
Step Two: Sleepwalking	17
Step Three: Catalyst	25
Step Four: Decision	33
PART TWO: ALIGN	
Step Five: Inventory	40
Step Six: Declutter	50
Step Seven: Get Aligned	61
PART THREE: ASCEND	
Step Eight: Your Ideal Day	71
Step Nine: Reverse Engineer	80
Step Ten: Embody	86
Step Eleven: Designed Life	93
A Final Word	102
About D-Author	104

INTRODUCTION

THE POWER OF D-FORMULA

If you're here, you are probably looking to change or improve something in your life. Maybe you're unhappy with where you are and don't know what to do. Maybe something feels off, like the life you're living and the life you know you're capable of living don't match. Maybe you've tried to change before and couldn't make it last. Or maybe you've achieved everything you set out to achieve and still feel unfulfilled, as if something essential is missing.

Most people believe that changing their life, or an area of it, is a long, complicated, and painful process. Something that requires the right circumstances, the right timing, or a major life event. Something distant. Something hard. This book will show you otherwise. Because the truth is, change is far simpler than most people realize.

Your life is not some distant destination you're working toward. It is your average day, lived on repeat. Think about that for a moment. Your average day becomes your week. Your weeks become your month. Your months become your year. Your years become your life.

So the question isn't how do I change my life. The question is how do I design my day so that the life I want is the natural result of living it.

When I first discovered what I now call D-Formula, it came to me at a time in my life when I needed it most. I had reached a point where, despite having accomplished everything I had set out to accomplish, I found myself in a very dark place.

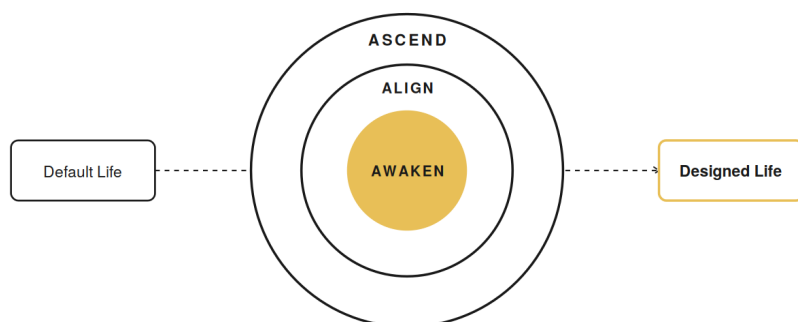
There was nothing wrong with my career, my businesses, or my family, per se. By all external measurements, I should have been fulfilled. I had the law degree, the successful practice, four other businesses, the million dollar home, the cars, the financial security, the wife and kids. Yet, I was not fulfilled by the life I had built, and I couldn't understand why.

For most of my life, like most people, I had been conditioned to look outward. To measure success by external results. To follow the blueprints handed to me by family, culture, and society. And I had done exactly that, with discipline, with sacrifice, and with everything I had. I achieved every external goal I set. And yet the fulfillment I expected to find at the finish line was nowhere to be found. That's what results from a life by default.

It wasn't until I stopped looking outward and started looking within that everything began to change. Not just in one area of my life. In every area. One at a time. The result of that inward turn is D-Formula. And the results it produced in my own life, in my health, my relationships, my finances, my business, and ultimately in my sense of purpose, were so profound and so lasting that I felt I couldn't keep it to myself.

D-Formula is the journey from Default to Design to Destiny. And it is the same journey this book is inviting you to take. The D is personal in more ways than one. It stands for Danny, the person who lived and perfected this process before writing a single word of it. It also symbolizes the journey from a life by Default to one by Design.

But mostly it stands for Destiny, the one I believe each of us carries within us. The life we were meant to live, that becomes possible when we finally awaken and stop settling for what was handed to us, look within and align with who we are at our core, and only then ascend and start building the life that was always ours to create.



This book is my attempt to share D-Formula with you. Not as theory. As a step by step guide built from lived experience, designed to move you from reading to implementation. Every word in this book exists for one reason. To help you stop looking outward for what can only be found within and give you the formula to achieve lasting results in any and all areas of your life you are called to

change.

This book builds around three central ideas:

- **Awaken.** You cannot design a life you truly want until you recognize how much of the life you are living was designed by default.
- **Align.** Once you look within and become clear about what you actually want, you can begin aligning your choices, actions, and life with what matters to you.
- **Ascend.** When you consistently live in alignment with what you want, you begin moving beyond the life you inherited and toward a life designed by you.

I want you to know that the life you sense within, the one you've always known was possible, is already yours. But reaching it requires something different from what you've probably been told. You don't need to work harder or hustle more. You need clarity, a very specific kind, and a process that starts within.

Most books get read the way people watch a movie. You sit back, take it in, walk away feeling inspired, and two weeks later nothing has changed. This book is designed to work differently. It is not here to give you information. It is here to help you change something.

To succeed with D-Formula, follow these three simple steps.

Step 1. Choose one area of your life. The one that is calling you as you read this. It could be your health, your career, or

your relationships.

Step 2. Read each chapter. Each one walks you through a single step of D-Formula.

Step 3. At the end of each chapter, complete the action step for your chosen area.

By the time you reach the last one, you will have a complete personalized blueprint for that area of your life. And, if you've implemented each step along the way, you'll have achieved or be well on your way to achieving your desired transformation.

Let's get started.

PART ONE

AWAKEN



Awaken is the first milestone of D-Formula because nothing meaningful changes without awareness.

You cannot change a life you have not clearly seen. You cannot redesign a reality you haven't been willing to examine. And you cannot move in a new direction from a place you've never acknowledged you've been standing in.

By the time you reach the end of Part One, you will have complete clarity on where you are, how you got there, and the decision you need to make in order to move forward.

DEFAULT LIFE

I still remember sitting in my car in 2008, fighting back tears.

From the outside, there was absolutely no reason for me to be there. I had a successful law practice, several businesses, financial security, a beautiful wife, two amazing children, and a home that most people would have considered a dream come true.

By every external measure, I had won. In many ways, I believed it too. I had spent years working toward a picture of success that had been forming in my mind since I was young, and little by little, that picture had become my reality.

And yet, almost every evening, before walking through the front door, I found myself sitting alone, trying to gather the strength to put a smile on my face. It wasn't that I was unhappy to be home. Quite the opposite. There was nowhere else I wanted to be. I loved my family deeply. The strange part was that I couldn't explain why I seemed unable to leave my car and step into the life I had worked so hard to build.

It wasn't because I didn't love my family. It wasn't because I hated my work. It wasn't because something terrible had happened. The truth was much harder to explain. Something inside me simply didn't feel right. For months, I tried to understand it. I replayed conversations in my mind and searched for some event or circumstance that might explain what I was feeling. I wondered if I was simply tired, stressed, ungrateful, or expecting too much from life.

Maybe this was just adulthood. Maybe this was the price people paid for responsibility. After all, I had everything I thought I was supposed to want. If someone had asked me whether I was successful, I would have answered yes without hesitation. So why did I carry this tension that never seemed to leave me?

Some people, looking at a man of thirty-eight sitting in his driveway fighting back tears in the middle of a successful life, might call it a midlife crisis. I understand why. It's a convenient label and there's comfort in having a name for something that feels inexplicable. But I've come to believe that label misses the point entirely. What I was experiencing wasn't a crisis. It was the beginning of what I now realize was the hardest conversation I had ever had with myself. And it had taken me thirty-eight years to get there.

Looking back now, I realize I wasn't alone, although at the time I certainly believed I was. I thought there must be something wrong with me for feeling unsettled in the middle of a life that looked so complete. Since then I have sat with people from all walks of life, at every stage, successful and still searching, young and well into their second chapter, and what I have come to understand is that this

conversation finds everyone eventually. The details are different every time. The feeling is always the same.

I have come to believe that this inner struggle is far more common than most people realize. It doesn't discriminate between those who appear successful and those who are still searching. It isn't reserved for people experiencing hardship, nor is it automatically resolved by achievement. It seems to emerge whenever the life we are living doesn't align with who we are within.

From the outside, life often continues as though nothing has changed. We go to work, pay the bills, raise our children, meet our obligations, celebrate milestones, and continue moving forward. Friends may look at our lives with admiration or criticism, assuming everything is exactly as it should or shouldn't be. Sometimes we convince ourselves of the same thing.

But beneath all of our daily activities, another conversation unfolds, one that rarely finds its way into everyday discussion because we often lack the words to express it. It asks questions that seem simple until we try to answer them. Is this really the life I want? When did I stop feeling excited? Why do I feel like something is missing when I can't even explain what that something is?

I don't believe those questions are signs of weakness. If anything, I have come to see them as signs of awareness. They emerge when the distance between the life we are living and the life we know we are capable of living becomes difficult to ignore, and they continue returning until we are willing to stop and listen.

Most of us respond the only way we know how. We become busier. We distract ourselves, blame our circumstances, buy something new, chase another goal, or convince ourselves that happiness will finally arrive with the next promotion, the next relationship, the next accomplishment, or the next version of ourselves. Sometimes those pursuits bring genuine joy, but if you've ever experienced that strange feeling of arriving somewhere you desperately wanted to reach only to discover that the emptiness followed you there, then you know the relief rarely lasts.

What I didn't understand then was that the tension I carried had nothing to do with ingratitude or weakness or unrealistic expectations. It had everything to do with the way the life I was living had been built. I thought I had designed it. In many ways I had. I made deliberate choices. I worked extraordinarily hard. I pursued goals with discipline and achieved them at a level that surprised even me.

But what I hadn't yet understood was that the picture I was building from, the one that defined what success looked like, what a good life required, and what I was supposed to want, had been handed to me long before I was ever conscious enough to examine it.

I had been following someone else's design.

Most of us have. The problem is that we rarely realize it because it doesn't feel like someone else's design. It feels like reality. It feels like common sense. It feels like the obvious and natural shape a life should take. Go to school. Study hard. Get a good job. Get married. Have children. Buy a house. Build a career. Work toward retirement. These aren't instructions anyone sits us down and recites. They are

absorbed, gradually, through the families we grow up in, the culture we swim in, the traditions we inherit, and the persistent comparisons we make between our lives and everyone else's.

Nobody handed us a bad design. The people who shaped us were doing what people who love you do. They passed along what they knew, what they believed, what they feared, and what they valued, most of the time with the purest of intentions. They weren't designing our lives. They were simply living from the same inherited picture themselves. And we absorbed it before we were old enough to question it, before we even knew there was something to question.

I know this because I lived it. As a teenager, all I wanted was to be a soccer player. It wasn't simply something I enjoyed. It was something I was really good at. I was the captain of the team and saw becoming a professional soccer player as my destiny. Then during my senior year, in the very first game of the season, I suffered a knee injury that ended that dream before it had a chance to begin.

At the time I experienced it as the loss of a sport. Looking back, I think it was the loss of an identity. Without soccer, I didn't know who I was supposed to become. I enrolled in community college because it seemed like the logical next step, but I was drifting more than deciding. Then I met a man named Pete who was attending law school at the University of Miami. During one of our conversations he asked me: Why don't you become a lawyer? And something in me responded to that question before I even had a chance to think it through.

It wasn't just Pete's suggestion that pulled me in. It was everything that came with it. Law school was prestigious. It opened doors. It commanded respect. At eighteen, significance matters enormously. You want to be someone. You want people to look at you differently. You want to feel like the path you're on is one worth taking seriously. Becoming a lawyer offered all of that, and so I followed it because it was offering something I wanted at that age. I had never asked myself whether law reflected who I truly was.

What I didn't realize was that I was borrowing someone else's definition of significance without ever asking whether it was mine. And, I inherited yet another blueprint when it came to creating a family.

During that time I was dating my high school sweetheart, the homecoming queen. We were young and genuinely in love, and marriage felt like the natural next step. Marrying young was simply what people in our world did. My parents had married young. Her parents had married young. Our brothers married young. It was simply the way things were done.

While I have no regrets and I am grateful for her, our love, the time we were married, the beautiful kids we raised, and the life we had, looking back the decision was driven by our love and tradition. That is the nature of default blueprints that lead to default lives. It isn't built on bad choices. It's built on borrowed ones. Decisions made not from the inside out but from the outside in, shaped by what we were told to want before we were ever invited to discover what we actually wanted.

Default blueprints don't arrive with a label. Nobody sits you down and says here is the picture you are supposed to build your life from. They come through the family you grew up in, the culture you were raised in, the examples that surrounded you before you were old enough to question them. They come through what was celebrated and what was discouraged, what was considered success and what was considered failure, what kind of life earned respect and what kind didn't. By the time you are old enough to make your own choices, those blueprints are already so deeply embedded that they don't feel like someone else's ideas. They feel like common sense. They feel like reality. They feel like you.

But it doesn't stop there. The blueprints keep coming. Every day we are surrounded by images and messages telling us what success is supposed to look like, what our bodies should look like, what kind of home we should live in, what kind of car we should drive, what kind of life is worth admiring. Maybe you have been grinding toward six pack abs not because that is truly what you want but because that is what you have been told a healthy, disciplined, successful person looks like. Maybe you have been chasing a certain income level not because it reflects what you actually need to live well but because it is the number that earns a certain kind of respect. Maybe you have been building a life that looks impressive from the outside while something on the inside has been asking whether any of it is actually yours.

As you read this, I want you to stop for a moment and think about your own life. Not my story. Yours. Think about the career you chose, the relationships you built, the goals you have been chasing, the version of success you have been working toward. How much of

that came from a decision you made from the inside out? And how much of it was shaped by a blueprint you absorbed without ever stopping to question it? You don't have to have the answer right now. Just sit with the question.

Because that is exactly where this journey begins.

Action Step 1: Identify Your Default Life

You may have recognized more than one area of your life where a default blueprint has been running the show. That is completely normal. Most people do. But stay focused on the one area you chose before we began. With that area in mind, ask yourself this:

Did you design it, or did it happen by default?

Think about the goal or vision you have been working toward in the area you chose. Write it down. Then ask yourself one question: is this truly what I want, or is it what I have been told to want?

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Think about the goal you have been carrying. Maybe it is a number on the scale, or a body that looks a certain way. Write it down. Now ask where that picture came from. Did you choose it, or did you pick it up from a chart at the doctor's office, someone at the gym, or a body you keep seeing on your feed?
- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Think about what you have been working toward. A title. A salary. Your own business one day. Write it down. Now ask who handed it to you. Was it your parents, who wanted for you what they never had? Someone a few years ahead of you who made a path look right? Someone who suggested something once and made it sound convincing?

- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Think about what you have been working toward. Being married by a certain age. Keeping the peace at home. Being the one your family can always count on. Being the provider. Write it down. Now ask where that came from. Did you decide it, or did you absorb it from a picture of what a good son, daughter, partner, or parent is supposed to look like?

Action Step 1: Identify Your Default Life

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. What area of your life are you focusing on? Identify the one area you chose before beginning.

(Health, career, relationships, or the area you chose before beginning.)

2. What goal or vision have you been working toward in this area? Write it down as clearly and specifically as you can.

(A number on the scale, a certain body, a title, a salary, your own business, marriage by a certain age.)

3. Where did that goal or vision come from? Decide whether it is truly what you want or something you have been told to want.

(A doctor's chart, social media, your parents, someone you admire, or an idea of what a good partner or parent should be.)

STEP TWO

SLEEPWALKING

There is a medical phenomenon that most people find fascinating and a little unsettling. A person falls asleep in their bed, in the complete absence of awareness, and begins to walk. They move through the house. They navigate hallways and staircases. They open doors. To anyone watching, they appear to be awake. They are upright, moving, functioning. But they are not conscious of any of it. They have no memory of it in the morning. And if you asked them, in the middle of it, what they were doing, they couldn't tell you. They are completely asleep.

Most sleepwalkers eventually make their way back to bed. They lie down, the episode ends, and they wake up the next morning with no knowledge that any of it happened. Life continues. The pattern repeats. And as long as nothing interrupts it, or someone brings it to their attention, they may sleepwalk for years or even their entire lives, without ever becoming aware that they've been doing it at all.

Others are not so undisturbed. In the dark, they walk into something they didn't see coming. A chair left out of place. The edge of a table. A wall they weren't expecting. The impact is sudden and

jarring. And in that moment, disoriented and confused, they find themselves standing somewhere in the middle of their own home wondering how they got there. What just happened? Where am I? How long have I been walking?

I spent twenty years sleepwalking through my life. And I didn't know it until I walked into something I couldn't ignore.

There is something remarkable about the human capacity to adapt. We can adjust to almost anything. A new city, a new job, a new routine, a new version of ourselves that bears only a passing resemblance to the person we once imagined we would become. We adapt so naturally and so completely that after a while we stop noticing we've done it. The adjustment becomes the normal. The normal becomes the life. And the life, however far it may have drifted from something more authentic, begins to feel like the only life that was ever possible.

For twenty years, from the time I was eighteen until that evening in 2008, I lived exactly that way. Not in misery. Not in obvious dysfunction. By almost every measurable standard I was excelling. I graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in English literature and psychology. I earned my Juris Doctorate from the University of Miami School of Law, also cum laude. I spent a decade building a reputation as a litigator before opening my own firm. Then came the businesses, one after another. A real estate practice, a real estate company, a lending institution, an investment company. The million dollar home. The convertible cars. The kind of financial liquidity most people spend their entire careers chasing.

From the outside, none of this looked like sleepwalking. From the inside, I had simply been moving. Doing what the life required, executing it at a high level, and then moving on to the next thing the design called for. The path was clear, I was capable, and nobody, including me, had thought to ask whether any of it truly aligned with who I was at my core or whether capable and fulfilled were the same thing.

That is what sleepwalking looks like from the inside. Not dramatic. Not obviously troubled. Just moving. Functioning. Doing what the day requires and then doing it again the next day and the day after that, with a competence so practiced it no longer requires any conscious thought. The patterns run. The routines repeat. The years accumulate. And somewhere in the middle of all that motion, the most important questions never get asked because there is never a quiet enough moment to hear them.

The thing about sleepwalking is that it is almost impossible to recognize while it's happening. That is what makes it so persistent and so universal. If it felt like sleepwalking, we would wake ourselves up. But it doesn't feel like sleepwalking. It feels like a regular day of the week. It feels like responsibility. It feels like the ordinary way of a life being lived by a person who is doing what they're supposed to do.

And when you're doing it as well as I was doing it, there's even less reason to stop and ask questions. Success has a way of validating the path. Every achievement confirms that you're moving in the right direction. Every external marker of progress makes the internal questions easier to push aside. You become very good at the life you're living, and that goodness feels like evidence that you're living

the right one. It isn't until much later, if it comes at all, that you begin to wonder whether excelling at something and being fully alive inside it are actually two different experiences.

That is the hidden cost of sleepwalking that most people never account for. Not the dramatic failures or the obvious mistakes. The accumulation of ordinary moments lived at less than full presence. The conversations half-listened to. The opportunities half-considered. The feelings that surfaced briefly before being pushed aside because the next obligation was already waiting. Over time, that accumulation adds up to something significant. Not a crisis, not a collapse, but a gradual and almost imperceptible drift away from whatever the truest version of your life might have looked like.

And the most disorienting part is that the drift happens so slowly that by the time you sense it, you have no memory of when it began. There is no single moment you can point to and say, that is when I fell asleep. There is only the gradual recognition, if it ever comes at all, that you have been living at a remove from yourself for longer than you realized.

Most people, when they sense something is off, do what I did for most of those twenty years. They work harder. They take on a new hobby. They take on vices. They add more. They achieve the next thing and then the next, operating on the assumption, rarely examined, that the right external result will eventually produce the internal feeling they've been quietly searching for. It never quite does, but the gap between the result and the feeling is small enough, most of the time, that it's easy to explain away. I'm just tired. I need a vacation. Things will be better when this project is finished, when the

kids are older, when things slow down.

Things never slow down. And the feeling keeps waiting.

I've thought about this often over the years, not just in my own life but in the lives of people I've observed and worked alongside. What strikes me most is how universal this experience is and how rarely it is even discussed. We have language for crisis. We have language for failure. But we have almost no language for the experience of living competently and successfully inside a life that doesn't fully reflect who you are, without quite knowing how you got there or whether anything different was ever possible.

The person sleepwalking through their career looks productive from the outside. The person sleepwalking through their marriage looks committed. The leader sleepwalking through their organization looks engaged. Nobody sees the walking. Nobody sees the sleep. And because nobody sees it, including the person doing it, it simply continues. Until something interrupts it.

I don't tell you this to suggest that those twenty years were wasted. They were not. Everything I built, everything I learned, every relationship I formed and every challenge I navigated during that time contributed to the person who eventually sat in a car in 2008 and finally became willing to feel what he had been avoiding. The sleepwalking years were not a detour. They were part of the journey. They simply weren't the destination.

The truth is, you cannot change a pattern you haven't recognized. You cannot redesign a life you haven't clearly seen. And you cannot wake up to something you don't yet understand you've

been sleeping through.

Think about the area of your life you brought to this book. Have you been moving through it on autopilot, doing what the day requires and then doing it again the next day, without ever stopping to ask whether any of it was something you truly and consciously chose? Or has it simply become the way things are because at some point you stopped questioning it?

You don't need all the answers yet. You only need to stop and think about it. Because you cannot change what you have not seen. And seeing, really seeing, is where everything that follows becomes possible.

Action Step 2: Where Are You Sleepwalking?

Take a moment and think about how you have been sleepwalking in your life. Where have you been going through the motions without truly questioning any of it? You may find this showing up in more than one area. That is normal. But for our purposes, bring it back to the area you chose. With that in mind, how have you been asleep in that area?

Write down two or three patterns, habits, or routines that have been running on autopilot in the area you chose. Don't judge them. Don't try to fix them yet. Just write them down.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like:

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Look at an ordinary day and notice what runs without you deciding. Maybe you tell yourself every morning that today is the day you eat better, and by noon you have already made the same choices you always make. Maybe you finish dinner and end up on the couch without ever deciding to. Write down two or three of them exactly as they happen.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Look at an ordinary week and notice what runs without you deciding. Maybe you say yes to work you don't want because saying no feels like a risk. Maybe you check your email before you are fully awake and the day belongs to everyone else from that

moment on. Write down two or three of them exactly as they happen.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Look at an ordinary day and notice what runs without you deciding. Maybe you automatically avoid difficult conversations because keeping the peace has become easier than saying what you really feel. Maybe you and the person closest to you move through the same conversations, the same distance, and neither of you says anything about it. Write down two or three of them exactly as they happen.

Action Step 2: Where Are You Sleepwalking?

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. What patterns, habits, or routines have been running on autopilot in this area of your life? Identify the ones you notice most.

(Eating the same way, ending up on the couch, checking email first thing, automatically saying yes, avoiding difficult conversations.)

2. What do these patterns actually look like during an ordinary day or week? Describe what happens as specifically as you can.

(When does it happen? What do you automatically do? What tends to happen next?)

3. Which two or three patterns do you recognize most clearly as happening without you consciously deciding? Write them down exactly as they happen. Don't judge them or try to fix them yet.

(Focus on the patterns that feel most automatic or familiar.)

CATALYST

The evenings in the driveway didn't happen once.

I want to make sure that's clear before we go any further, because the way I described it in the first chapter might have made it sound like a single dramatic night. It wasn't. It was a pattern. It probably had been happening for months, but at first I really didn't take notice. It began slowly during the drive home, a few minutes of sitting in the car before going inside, a brief pause before returning to the life waiting on the other side of the front door. At first I could have explained it away easily. I was tired. Work had been heavy. I just needed a moment before shifting gears.

But it kept happening. And each time it happened it was a little harder than the time before. The pause grew longer. The smile I was gathering the strength to put on took more effort to find. What had started as an uncomfortable feeling was becoming something I could no longer dismiss as tiredness or stress or the ordinary weight of responsibility. It was escalating. Something was turning up the volume on what I had been doing my best not to hear. Something inside me was rattling and I didn't know why.

I don't have a clear explanation or the words for what those months felt like from the inside. I had everything I had worked for. By any reasonable measure I had won. But the winning felt hollow in a way I couldn't explain to anyone, including myself, because explaining it would have required admitting something I wasn't yet ready to admit. That all of it, the career, the businesses, the house, the cars, the financial success, the life that looked from the outside exactly like what it was supposed to look like, none of it had quieted whatever was happening inside me. If anything, having it all made the inner silence louder.

There were moments during that period when the darkness became so overwhelming that I questioned whether I wanted to keep living at all. I don't share that lightly and I don't share it to be dramatic. I share it because I know what it feels like to reach a point where you become desperate for understanding, and because I suspect some of the people reading these words know that feeling too. Not from my story. From your own. And if that's where you are as you read this, I want you to know that what happened next was real, and that the place I was standing in when it found me was not so different from where you might be standing now.

By then I wasn't searching for another business strategy or another way to become more successful. I wasn't looking for motivation. I was looking for relief. I was looking for something that could explain why a person who had everything he thought he wanted could still feel so completely disconnected from his own life. And I tried and did anything and everything possible, some things I'm not proud to admit, to simply quiet things down within me. I found

myself reaching my breaking point. But I was too proud to admit it and had too many people counting on me to let them see that side of me.

One evening, after sitting in my car longer than usual, something drew my hand toward the center console of my convertible Jaguar. I'm not sure I can fully explain it even now. It wasn't a conscious decision. I opened the console and found a CD staring back at me. A business acquaintance had handed it to me sometime earlier, months before, maybe even a year earlier, possibly longer. I had thanked him, set it aside, and forgotten about it completely. It had simply become one more forgotten object that traveled with me wherever I went, riding in that console through all those evenings, through all those months of escalating tension, present through all of it without my knowing it was there.

That night it caught my attention. I picked it up and put it in the car's CD player. It wasn't a CD, which is what I had assumed, so I couldn't play it in the car. Not sure why, I carried it inside, opened my laptop, and pressed play. It was a promotional video on DVD for an event with thousands of people attending. I knew nothing about it. I had never heard of it. I just knew of the speaker, Tony Robbins. What I saw on the screen was footage of thousands of people gathered together, and among them faces I recognized. Oprah. Tom Cruise. Other celebrities. And average people too. People laughing, some crying, many of them experiencing something I couldn't fully understand from the outside, but that seemed to be reaching something real inside them.

The event was titled Unleash The Power Within. It caught my attention and I wondered when the next event would be. That was a Tuesday night. Much to my surprise the next event started that same week on Thursday. I thought what are the odds. I paused for a few minutes in silence and something called me to go. I didn't hesitate, I looked for flights and booked it. Initially, I just thought the change in scenery would do me good. By almost every logical measure the decision made no sense. I knew almost nothing about the event. I had no idea what I would find there or whether any of it would mean anything to me. If someone had asked me to explain why I wanted to go, I couldn't have given them a rational answer.

And yet something inside me kept arriving at the same simple word. Go.

I didn't know it then. I couldn't have. In the moment it was just a Tuesday evening, a forgotten object in a console, and a quiet word I decided to trust. But that one moment set off a chain reaction that would change everything. Only in hindsight have I come to realize that was what today I call the catalyst.

That is the nature of a catalyst, as best I understand it now. It isn't necessarily the event itself that changes you. It's the moment you become brave enough, or exhausted enough, or simply willing enough to reach for or acknowledge something you might have overlooked at any other point in your life. What I've come to understand is that a catalyst doesn't create your change. It is the spark that wakes you up to the possibility of it.

A catalyst can show up in many different forms. Sometimes it is impossible to ignore. The loss of someone you loved. A diagnosis that changes everything in a single conversation. A marriage that ends. A business that collapses. A crisis so significant that life as you knew it before and after it are simply two different things. Those catalysts are loud. They don't ask for your attention. They demand it.

But most of the time a catalyst is far quieter than that. It might be the moment you finally reach a point where you've simply had enough, not of any one thing in particular, but of the feeling that has been following you around for longer than you can remember. It might be a conversation that lands differently than it was meant to. A Sunday evening feeling you can't explain. Or it might be something even harder to describe. An unsettling feeling deep within you that has no clear source and refuses to go away no matter how busy you stay or how much you achieve. Something that keeps arriving, patiently and persistently, as if it has nowhere else to be.

Whatever form it takes, the catalyst is not the change itself. It is the moment the door opens. What matters is not how loud it was when it arrived. What matters is whether you are willing to walk through. As I write this I find myself thinking about how many similar moments I overlooked or was simply not ready to acknowledge. And I wonder, as you read this, whether any of it sounds familiar. Whether there is something that has been calling at you, whether it is a major event or something far more subtle, that is ready to ignite your change.

Here's the thing about most catalysts. They rarely announce themselves in the moment as the thing that changes everything. They

appear as ordinary objects in a center console, as conversations that land differently than expected, as a recurring feeling that finally stops accepting the explanations you keep offering it. Or maybe even a book like this that you are now holding. Looking back, they seem inevitable. While you're living them they don't feel like anything more than what they are. A Tuesday evening. A forgotten DVD. A feeling that keeps arriving even when you have no logical reason to trust it.

Most people, when something tries to get their attention, push it aside. They minimize it, tell themselves it isn't that serious, and return to the comfort of what they know. And life, patient as it is, presents the same lesson again in a different form. A little louder this time. A little harder to dismiss. Until eventually the cost of ignoring it outweighs the cost of facing it. I had been pushing things aside for a long time before that Tuesday night. The driveway wasn't the first signal. It was simply the one that finally broke through.

I want to ask you something before you turn the page. What has actually been trying to get your attention in the area of your life you've brought to this book? If you sit with the question, you'll likely find that something has been showing up. A recurring situation. A feeling that returns more insistently each time. A conversation you've been avoiding. A moment you've minimized because acknowledging it fully would ask something of you that you weren't ready to give.

And if you're not ready, that is totally understandable. But there is one last thing you must know about a catalyst. It doesn't change your life. It marks the moment when the turning point can begin.

Action Step 3: Identify Your Catalyst

What brought you to this book, to this page, to this moment? What has been trying to get your attention in the area you've chosen to change?

Write down the catalyst that has been igniting change in the area you chose. It may be one clear moment or a series of signals that have been building over time. Just write it down as clearly as you can.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** The signal may be something you feel rather than something anyone said. Your clothes fitting differently than they did. Being uncomfortable sitting down. Running out of breath on stairs that never used to bother you. Or it may be one moment, a number on a scale or something a doctor said, that you could not explain away. Write down what has been getting your attention, and how long it has been happening.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** The signal may be smaller than you expect. Sitting in your car a few minutes longer before you go in. Dreading Sunday evening. Watching someone further ahead than you and realizing you don't want what they have. Or it may be one moment, a review, a lost opportunity, a conversation that landed wrong. Write down what has been getting your attention, and how long it has been

happening.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** The signal may be exhaustion more than conflict. Feeling drained by people you care about. Answering everyone and having nothing left for yourself. Or it may be one moment, an argument worse than the others, or a stretch of silence that lasted longer than it should have. Write down what has been getting your attention, and how long it has been happening.

Action Step 3: Identify Your Catalyst

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. What has been getting your attention in the area you've chosen to change? Identify the signal or signals you keep noticing.

(Your clothes fitting differently, dreading Sunday evening, feeling drained by people you care about, or another signal you keep noticing.)

2. Was there one clear moment that made you pay attention, or has it been building over time? Describe what happened.

(A number on the scale, something a doctor said, a review, a lost opportunity, an argument, or a series of smaller signals.)

3. What finally brought you to this moment? Identify what happened that made you realize you could no longer ignore it.

(Think about the moment or realization that made this feel different from all the signals that came before it.)

STEP FOUR

DECISION

Before the knee injury, before law school and the litigation career and the businesses and the family, the house and everything else that followed, there was a version of me that I had almost entirely forgotten. A kid who knew exactly what he wanted from deep within and pursued it without apology, without committee approval, without stopping to ask whether the path he was on met anyone else's definition of success. Soccer wasn't just something I did. It was the first and perhaps only time in my life that I was genuinely operating from the inside out. Following something that aligned with who I actually was rather than who I was supposed to become.

The knee injury ended the sport. But looking back from that arena, I began to understand for the first time that it had ended something else too. It had ended my alignment. And into that gap, quiet and gradual and well-intentioned on everyone's part, had stepped the picture of the life I was supposed to want. Law school. Career. Marriage. Businesses. Success by every external measure available.

I had followed that picture faithfully and completely. And I had arrived, as you know, at a driveway where I sat fighting back tears unable to explain why. What I was able to see that weekend, sitting with that idea of the blueprint for the first time, was that I had the right formula all along. Until I lost my way because of the knee injury. I hadn't lost my formula. I had abandoned it.

Long before anyone handed me their picture of success, I already had my own. I already knew what it felt like to be aligned. I had a deep burning desire and passion. I got up early to jog and sprint before going to school. I excelled at school because I knew it would enhance my chances of getting a soccer scholarship. I went to soccer practice for three hours. I returned home, had dinner and went back to either the gym or nearby soccer field to work on my dream. I didn't listen to others or what the outside world dictated. I was focused because I was listening to what I felt within. No one had to ask me nor force me to do anything. I had been doing it naturally, without being taught to, without anyone having to show me how. And then life interrupted it, and in the absence of that alignment I had simply done what most of us do. I reached for the nearest available picture and started building.

Twenty years later, sitting in that arena, I realized that what I had been grieving in those driveway evenings wasn't the absence of more success. It was the absence of myself. That realization didn't feel triumphant. It felt like loss and relief arriving at the same time, which is a strange combination until you understand that both were entirely appropriate. Loss, because I could see clearly for the first time how far I had drifted from who I was at my core. Relief, because

the distance I had traveled suddenly had an explanation. And if it had an explanation, it had a path back.

That was the moment I made a decision. Not a resolution. Not a plan. Not a hopeful statement about what I was going to do differently starting Monday. A decision. Which is an entirely different thing. Most people confuse wanting to change with deciding to change. They sound similar from the outside. They feel similar in the moment. But they produce completely different outcomes, and understanding the difference is one of the most important things this book can offer you.

Wanting to change keeps the possibility alive. You want to get healthier, improve the relationship, grow the business, find more meaning, become more aligned with who you truly are. The wanting is real. So is the desire. But wanting exists in the future tense. It lives in the space between where you are and where you might someday go, and it allows you to stay exactly where you are while feeling as though you're already oriented toward something better.

A decision is different. A decision happens in an instant and it changes your direction before it changes a single visible thing in your life. You don't need the plan yet. You don't need to know every step. You don't need the results to appear before you can know the decision is real. You simply stop wondering whether you're going to change and turn your “should” into “must” change.

Before a real decision is made, the mind negotiates endlessly with itself. Maybe after the holidays. Maybe when work slows down. Maybe when the timing is better, the circumstances are easier, the

fear is smaller. The excuses are always different and they always accomplish the same thing. They postpone the moment of commitment indefinitely while allowing you to feel as though you're still moving in the right direction. A real decision ends that negotiation when your willingness to tolerate staying the same has finally run out.

I decided to find my way back to Danny, no matter the cost.

That's what happened to me in that arena. I didn't leave with a five-year plan. I didn't have a strategy mapped out or a clear picture of what the next chapter would look like in any practical sense. What I had was something simpler and more fundamental than any of that. I had made a decision to stop doing things that didn't align with who I was in order to please everyone else, and to start, however slowly and uncertainly, doing the things that did.

The results of that decision wouldn't appear for months, and in some areas even for years. But the decision itself happened on a specific afternoon in a specific arena. Nothing around me had changed, but something inside me had. The internal negotiation had ended. The debate was over. Long before anyone else could see a difference in my life, I knew something had shifted. And that knowing, private and entirely internal as it was, was the beginning of everything that followed.

I want you to understand something before we move on, because it matters if you are waiting for the right moment to make your own decision. A real decision doesn't require certainty. It doesn't require knowing how everything will unfold or having proof that the path

forward will be easier than the one you've been on. It doesn't even require being entirely free of doubt. What it requires is the willingness to stop leaving yourself an exit. To stop treating the life you want to live as a possibility you're considering and begin treating it as a direction you've chosen. It requires faith!

You may have been telling yourself for months, or years, that you're going to change something in the area of your life you've brought to this book. That you're going to address it, face it, do something different. If that desire hasn't yet become a decision, I'm not going to tell you to force one. A real decision can't be manufactured. It has to come from a place of readiness, or simply, "I've had enough!"

But I will ask you this. Have you reached the point where staying the same costs more than changing? Where the version of your life you've been accepting, in this area, is no longer something you're willing to settle for? If you have, the decision may already be closer than you think.

And everything that follows in this book is designed to help you honor it and get the results you've been longing for, once and for all.

Action Step 4: Make A Decision

As you read this, think about where you stand right now in the area you chose. You may have been wanting to change something there for a while. But have you truly decided? Not hoped. Not intended. Decided.

Write one sentence in the present tense that states your decision for the area you chose. Don't worry about the how. That comes later, and I will walk you through it. Right now all you are doing is deciding.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Your sentence might be, "I have decided I am done feeling this way in my own body." Short. Present tense. Something you have decided, not something you are going to try.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Your sentence might be, "I have decided I am no longer building a career that costs me my life." Short. Present tense. Something you have decided, not something you are going to try.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Your sentence might be, "I have decided I am no longer going to come last in my own life." Short. Present tense. Something you have decided, not something you are going to try.

Action Step 4: Make A Decision

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. What have you been wanting to change in the area you chose? Identify what you have wanted, hoped, or intended to change but have not yet fully decided.

(Think about the change that keeps coming back to you but has not yet become a firm decision.)

2. What are you deciding now? State the decision clearly without worrying yet about how you will make it happen.

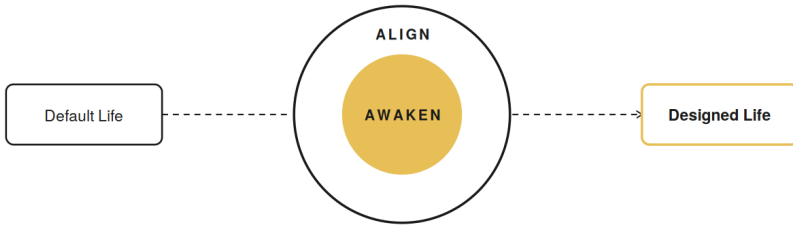
(Focus only on the decision. The how comes later.)

3. Write your decision in one clear sentence, in the present tense.

("I have decided I am done feeling this way in my own body." "I have decided I am no longer building a career that costs me my life." "I have decided I am no longer going to come last in my own life.")

PART TWO

ALIGN



Once you've become aware and made a real decision to change, a shift happens internally, even if nothing around you looks different yet. But your decision is only the beginning. You must now look within and Align.

Alignment is a process. In Part One, you looked at what shaped you from the outside. Now you will look within, not just seeing but choosing. Choosing what stays and what goes. Choosing what is true to your core and what has simply accumulated around you over time.

Once you complete these three steps, you'll have everything you need to design and build something that lasts.

INVENTORY

If you've made a decision, then whether you know it or not something inside you has shifted. And if you're anything like most people at this point in the process, your next instinct is to start changing things. Resist that instinct. At least for now.

Before you change anything, you need to understand your current reality. Not the version you remember. Not the version you hope is true. Your current reality exactly as it stands right now. This is the step most people skip because it asks something that feels counterintuitive when you're finally motivated to move. It asks you to stop. To look. To sit with your current reality before reaching for the one you want to create instead.

Most people try to improve a life they've never fully examined. They rely on memory, on assumptions, on how things feel rather than what they actually are. They focus on the problem as they understand it without ever questioning whether the problem they've identified is the real one, or simply the most visible symptom of something that runs much deeper. And so they change what's on the surface while the root of it continues undisturbed, and six months later they find

themselves wondering why the change didn't hold or they are right back where they started.

The inventory exists to prevent exactly that. Before you can build something new, you need to see your current reality clearly and completely. All of it. Not just the parts that are obvious or comfortable to look at. Everything. I want to tell you where my own avoidance of this step began, because I don't think I fully understood it myself until long after it had shaped decades of my life.

My parents came to this country from Cuba with nothing. They left behind everything they had built, everything they owned, everything familiar, and arrived here starting completely from scratch. They took whatever work was available. They made very little money. And they did what parents who love their children do in those circumstances. They found a way to provide, even when providing required more than they had.

My mother responded to scarcity by spending. Not recklessly, but generously, in the way people do when they've known what it feels like to not have enough and they want their children to feel the opposite of that. My father responded by watching every penny, guarding what little there was with the vigilance of someone who understood exactly how quickly it could disappear. Both responses came from love. Both came from the same underlying fear. And between those two approaches, money became a constant source of tension in our home. Arguments that a child absorbs without understanding, patterns that settle into the nervous system long before you even realize it.

I grew up in that environment and I made a decision I wasn't conscious of making. I was going to find a way to never have to worry about money. Not as a goal I wrote down or a plan I articulated. Simply as a silent, persistent drive that shaped everything I pursued from that point forward. Law school. The litigation career. The businesses. The financial success that followed. All of it fueled in part by a boy who had watched his parents fight about money and decided, somewhere below the level of conscious thought, that he would build a life where that was never the issue. And for the most part, I did. I made significant money. I built multiple businesses. I accumulated the kind of financial security most people spend their entire careers chasing, and my parents never found.

For years, despite everything I had built, I had someone else handle the numbers. I cared about my finances too much in the wrong way. The anxiety I had absorbed growing up hadn't disappeared just because the circumstances had changed. It had simply found a new form. Instead of worrying about not having enough, I worried about discovering that my current reality was somehow less than I believed. So I told myself a story that sounded reasonable on the surface. "I don't worry about the price of gas. I just focus on making more money." It felt like the thinking of someone who had moved beyond financial anxiety. Looking back, it was the thinking of someone who was still completely inside it.

The pattern this created was one I repeated more times than I'd like to admit. My business partner would come to me and say we were running low on money. I would panic. I would do what I knew how to do, which was go out and generate more revenue. For a while

things would stabilize. And then, inevitably, I'd find myself in the same conversation again. The same panic. The same sprint toward more. The same temporary relief followed by the same return to the same place. I was solving a symptom every time it surfaced without ever examining what was creating it, because examining it would have required me to look at a reality I had spent years finding ways to avoid.

It wasn't until my divorce that I was finally forced to sit down and take inventory of my finances. The circumstances left me no alternative. Every account, every expense, every inflow and outflow, every place where money was arriving and every place where it was quietly leaving, all of it had to be examined clearly and completely for the first time. I expected it to be overwhelming, and at first it was very much so. You have no idea how many times I sat down in front of my computer to open my bank accounts and start analyzing, and an anxious feeling grew in me and left me paralyzed, so I would walk away. I expected my current reality to confirm every fear I had spent years running from.

What I found instead was clarity.

Yes, there were problems. Yes, there were habits that needed to change and places where money had been leaking away for years without my awareness. But my current reality wasn't nearly as catastrophic as I had imagined. In fact, for the first time in my adult life, I could actually see it clearly. Not the story I had been telling myself about it. Not the version I hoped was true or feared might be. The actual current financial reality. And with that clarity came something I hadn't expected at all. A path forward.

The uncertainty that had generated years of anxiety began to dissolve because I could finally see my current financial reality clearly enough to do something about it. And that is one of the most important things I want you to understand about an inventory. It doesn't create the problems that are already there. It simply reveals them.

Once I could see my current reality clearly, I did something I'll describe in detail in the next step. I started removing what didn't belong. Expenses that served no real purpose. Financial habits that had accumulated without ever being consciously chosen. Things I was spending money on simply out of habit. Once I had cleared that space, I was able to make decisions about my finances that actually reflected where I wanted to go rather than where I had been drifting. And I realized an important lesson: Financial freedom is not just about how much you make, but how much you keep.

Today I look at my finances every day. There's even a widget on my phone that shows me my accounts the moment I pick it up each morning. It sounds like a small thing. But for someone who once couldn't open a bank account without feeling a wave of anxiety, it represents a complete change in my relationship with money. Because I am no longer avoiding my current reality. I am facing it every day and making decisions from that place.

Ironically, I have more financial peace today than at any point in my life. I also have more money than at any point in my life. And I want to be clear about which one came first. The peace came first. My relationship with my financial reality changed before the numbers did. The internal change preceded the external result. Which, as

you've already come to understand, is exactly how lasting change works.

I want to be clear about something else before we move on. What I just described wasn't a one-time event that I did during a crisis and then left behind. Taking inventory of my current reality, followed by the work of decluttering and alignment that comes next, is a process I return to whenever an area of my life feels out of alignment or needs attention. My fitness and the habits around eating and exercise. My relationships. My businesses. Any time something feels off, any time I sense that an area of my life has drifted somewhere I didn't consciously choose, I come back to this same starting point. I stop. I look. I take inventory of what my current reality actually is. The area changes every time. The process never does.

That is the promise of what you're learning here. Not a solution to one problem, but a process you'll carry with you and return to for the rest of your life.

If your area is finances, your current reality inventory might include your income sources and how consistent they are, your monthly expenses both fixed and variable, your spending habits and where money goes without much thought, your debts and what they're costing you, your savings habits or the absence of them, your relationship with money and the emotions that come up when you think about it, and any beliefs you carry about wealth, security, or what you deserve financially.

If your area is health and fitness, your current reality inventory might include what you eat on an average day and how consciously

you make those choices, how often you move your body and what that actually looks like in practice, how you sleep and what your mornings feel like, your stress levels and how you manage or don't manage them, your relationship with your body and the inner dialogue that accompanies it, and the habits so automatic you no longer notice them.

If your area is a relationship, your current reality inventory might include how you communicate and how often, the patterns that repeat in conflict or distance, what you give and what you receive and whether those feel balanced, the things you've been meaning to address but haven't, the moments of real connection and what creates them, and the unspoken expectations on both sides that have never been discussed out loud.

If you're taking inventory of your life as a whole, begin with your average day. What time you wake up and how. What fills your morning, your afternoon, your evening. Where your energy goes and whether it goes there by choice. What you consistently make time for and what you consistently put off. Your days become your weeks. Your weeks become your months. Your months become your years. Your current reality is the accumulation of your average day, repeated. And seeing that day clearly, without the story you normally tell yourself about it, is one of the most revealing things you can do.

Whatever area you've chosen, the approach is the same. Write everything down. Don't filter it. Don't organize it yet. Don't decide what's good or bad, what belongs or doesn't. Simply capture your current reality as completely and clearly as you can. You're not creating a verdict. You're creating a snapshot. And a snapshot,

however uncomfortable it may be to look at, only shows you where you are right now. It says nothing about where you're going.

The area of your life you've brought to this book is waiting to be seen clearly, perhaps for the first time. Don't edit what you find. Don't judge it. Don't minimize the parts that make you uncomfortable or inflate the parts that make you proud. Don't try to decide yet what stays and what goes. That comes next.

Simply look at your current reality clearly.

Because the moment you're willing to do that, something has already begun to change. Not the circumstances. Not yet. But your relationship with them. And that is always where it starts.

Action Step 5: Take Inventory

When was the last time you stopped and looked at this area of your life clearly, without filtering what you saw?

Take a full inventory of your current reality in the area you've chosen to change. Write down everything that relates to that area without filtering, judging, or organizing. Don't decide yet what belongs and what doesn't. Don't try to fix anything. Your only responsibility right now is to see your current reality as clearly and completely as you can.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Write down what you eat on an average day, all of it, including the things you would rather not put on paper. How often you move your body and what that actually looks like. How you sleep and how you feel when you wake up. What your stress looks like and where you carry it. The habits that are so automatic you stopped noticing them. Don't decide yet what needs to change.
 - **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Write down where your hours actually go in a week. What you earn and what it costs you to earn it. What you say yes to and what you avoid. What you are responsible for and who you are responsible to. The parts of the job you would keep and the parts you tolerate. Don't decide yet what needs to change.
-

- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Write down who is in your life and how often you give them your time. Who you leave feeling filled up by and who you leave feeling drained by. What you give and what you receive. The conversations you have been meaning to have. And write down what you do for yourself in a week, even if the answer is nothing. Don't decide yet what needs to change.

Action Step 5: Take Inventory

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. What does your current reality actually look like in this area of your life? Make a list and be as detailed and complete as possible.

(Think about what you do, how you spend your time, your habits, responsibilities, routines, and the people involved.)

2. What else belongs in your inventory, including the things you might normally overlook or would rather not put on paper? Add everything that comes to mind.

(What you eat, how you sleep, where your hours go, what you earn, what you tolerate, who drains or fills you, what you give and receive.)

3. What haven't you included yet that is part of your current reality? Look at the entire area one more time and add anything that's missing so your inventory is as complete as possible.

(Don't filter, judge, organize, or decide what needs to change.)

DECLUTTER

When most people decide they're ready to change something, their first instinct is to add. A new habit. A new routine. A new goal. A new commitment. Something that will move them toward the life they've decided to create. It's a natural impulse and it comes from a good place. You've made a decision. You've taken inventory of your current reality. You can see clearly where you are. And now you want to move.

But before you add anything new, you need to create space for it!

Think about a closet that is completely full. You can reorganize what's inside it, arrange things more carefully, stack things more efficiently, but no matter what you do, it will always feel crowded because the fundamental problem isn't organization. It's volume. There's simply too much there. And until you remove what doesn't belong, there is no room for what does.

Most of us are living that closet. Not just in our physical spaces, but in every dimension of our lives. Our schedules are full of

commitments we never consciously chose. Our mental space is occupied by beliefs and assumptions we inherited and never examined. Our emotional capacity is consumed by relationships and obligations and unfinished decisions that quietly drain us in ways we rarely stop to measure. We've been adding for years, responding to life's demands and opportunities and expectations, without ever stopping to ask whether any of it still belongs.

When I returned from New Jersey in 2008 with a decision made and a clear look at my current reality beginning to unfold, I didn't immediately know what to do with what I was seeing. I had spent the previous twenty years accumulating, building, adding. A career. Businesses. Commitments. Habits. Beliefs about what I was supposed to be doing and who I was supposed to be. Some of it aligned with me at my core. Some of it had simply arrived over time and stayed, the way things do when you never think to question whether they belong.

In the months that followed, I began doing something I had never done before. I started examining everything. Not just the obvious things, the expenses and commitments that were clearly out of alignment, but the subtler things too. The habits I had maintained for years without ever deciding to maintain them. The beliefs I carried about success and identity that had shaped my decisions long before I was aware they were doing it. The ways I was spending my time and energy that reflected the life I had been living rather than the life I was now committed to creating.

What I discovered, slowly and sometimes uncomfortably, was that a significant portion of what I was carrying no longer belonged. Not because it had ever been wrong. Some of it had been entirely

appropriate for an earlier version of my life. But I was no longer that version. I had made a decision. I had a direction. And a great deal of what I had accumulated was pointing somewhere other than where I was now headed.

I also discovered something that sounds obvious in retrospect but that I had to learn through the actual experience of doing it. You cannot fill a life that is already full. Every commitment you hold, every habit you maintain, every belief you carry, every relationship you invest in, every obligation you honor takes something from you. Time. Energy. Attention. Emotional capacity. These are not unlimited resources. And when they are consumed by things that no longer align with who you are becoming, there is nothing left for the things that do.

Everything occupies space. That's the principle I kept returning to during that period, and it's one I've never forgotten. Not just physical things, though those matter too. Habits occupy space. Commitments occupy space. Thoughts occupy space. Unfinished decisions occupy space. Even the things you've been meaning to address but haven't yet require something from you, a low-grade mental load that accumulates quietly until the weight of it becomes difficult to ignore. The purpose of decluttering isn't to make your life smaller. It's to create space for what belongs.

And every yes, I came to understand, is also a no. Every time you say yes to something that doesn't align, you are saying no to something that does. Every commitment you maintain simply out of habit is occupying the time and energy that belongs to the life you've decided to create. Decluttering isn't about loss. It's about reclaiming.

The hardest part of decluttering, as I discovered during those months, isn't knowing that something may no longer belong. That part is often surprisingly clear once you're willing to look clearly. The hard part is letting it go. We become attached to habits because they're familiar. We hold on to commitments because we've already invested so much in them. We maintain beliefs because they've become part of how we understand ourselves. We stay in patterns because changing them feels like admitting that something was wrong, and admitting that something was wrong feels like a kind of loss we're not prepared to process.

And so the mind begins negotiating. Maybe it'll be different this time. I've already invested so much, I can't stop now. What if I let this go and regret it later? These conversations feel like careful reasoning. They aren't. They're resistance wearing the clothes of logic. And as long as we allow them to run the process, the clutter stays. The space never opens. And the life we've decided to create remains something we intend to build someday rather than something we're actively building right now. This is where most people get stuck. They can see their current reality clearly. They know something needs to change. They simply don't have a reliable way to distinguish between what belongs in the life they're creating and what is simply familiar, habitual, or difficult to release.

I found a way through that stuck place by developing a process that gave me a consistent and trustworthy method for making those distinctions. I didn't set out to design it. It emerged from the practice of examining every area of my life and noticing what happened inside me when I held each thing up to the light. I've since come to call it the

Alignment Filter. And it's the tool I'm going to hand you now so that you can do what I did, work through everything in your inventory and begin identifying, with clarity and confidence, what stays and what goes.

The Alignment Filter is built on a simple principle: making aligned decisions requires listening to your head, your heart, and your gut. Most people make decisions using only one or two parts of themselves. Some rely primarily on logic. They ask whether something makes sense, weigh the pros and cons, and make the most rational choice available. Others rely primarily on emotion. They ask how they feel about something and let that feeling carry the decision. Both approaches have value. Both are also incomplete on their own.

You've likely experienced what happens when you rely on only one of them. A decision that looked perfect on paper somehow didn't work out the way you expected. Or a choice that didn't make obvious logical sense turned out to be exactly right in ways you couldn't have fully explained at the time. Looking back on those moments, most people say the same thing. I should have listened to my gut. Or, I knew something was off but I talked myself into it anyway.

The gut is the third voice. And it's the one most people have learned, somewhere along the way, to override. The Alignment Filter doesn't ask you to choose between your head, your heart, and your gut. It asks you to listen to all three, one at a time, before making any decision about what stays and what goes.

When you pick up something from your inventory, whether it's a habit, a commitment, a relationship, a belief, a financial pattern, a

way you spend your time, anything at all, I want you to imagine placing it inside a ball. The ball is simply a container for the thing you're evaluating. Now move that ball slowly through three places within you.

Step 1: Begin with your head. Picture the ball with your mind and ask yourself, does this make sense? Not does it make sense for someone else, or does it look reasonable from the outside. Does it make sense for the person you are becoming and the life you have decided to create? Allow your mind to answer without forcing it. What does your mind tell you? The first response with no overthinking or overanalyzing is usually the truest response. But you don't need to judge or agree with it. Simply hold that thought.

Step 2: Now picture the ball rolling down as if down an imaginary internal slide and picture it stopping at your heart. Pause there and ask yourself, how do I feel about this? Not how you think you should feel. Not how you wish you felt. How do you actually feel when you hold this thing and consider whether it belongs in your life going forward? Does it feel good? Does it feel like something you truly want? Or does something in you feel reluctant, drained, or simply indifferent? Again, don't overthink the process. Just notice the first emotions you feel.

Step 3: Next, picture the ball one final time, down into the pit of your stomach, your gut. Your gut isn't analytical and it isn't emotional. It simply knows. Give it a moment. Don't force an answer. Don't negotiate with it. Just listen. Ask yourself, what is my gut telling me? And trust whatever comes up before your mind has a chance to talk you out of it or your heart tries to intervene

emotionally.

Finally, take a moment to compare the three responses.

You will likely find several choices. Sometimes your mind said yes, your heart said no, your gut either agreed or disagreed with your mind. Other times, your mind said no, your heart said yes, your gut agreed or disagreed with your heart. And yet other times, your mind, your heart and your gut were all in agreement. When your head, your heart, and your gut are in agreement, the decision is clear. When they aren't, that discrepancy is itself important information. It usually means something needs more examination before you act.

Over the years I've adopted a simple rule that emerged from using this process consistently. If, after moving something through all three, the answer isn't a clear and unambiguous yes, then for me it's a no. Life is not always black and white, but alignment rarely sounds like maybe or needs to be negotiated between the mind, heart, and gut. When something belongs in the life you're creating, there is a confidence that replaces confusion. The decision doesn't always feel easy. But it feels right. And that rightness, recognized through your head, your heart, and your gut, is what the Alignment Filter is designed to surface.

However, I've also discovered through my own experience that when my head, heart, and gut disagree, I cannot afford to ignore my gut. There have been many times that I decided with logic and emotions and ignored my gut. In some cases I ended up regretting my decision, and in others I missed beautiful opportunities. Think about it. Has this ever happened to you? Have you ignored your gut only to

later wish you had listened to it?

I've used this process for years across every area of my life. I've taught it to my children. I've shared it with people I've mentored. And time after time I've watched it bring clarity to decisions that once felt overwhelming or confusing. It ensures that when you make them, every part of you is aligned. The best part about it is, the more you use the Alignment Filter, the easier and quicker it becomes to make decisions, whether big or small. It becomes like tying your shoes, something you don't even think about, you just do it.

So what you need to do to complete this step is take your inventory and begin working through it one item at a time. For each thing you've written down, place it in the ball, move it through your head, your heart, and your gut, and notice what each one tells you. If after moving something through all three the answer is a clear and confident yes, keep it. It belongs. If the answer is anything less than that, place a mark next to it. Don't remove it yet. Don't make any final decisions yet. Simply identify what no longer aligns.

By the time you've worked through your entire inventory, you'll have a clear picture of what belongs in the life you've decided to create and what has simply been occupying the space where that life is meant to live.

Think back to the closet analogy we started with. Once you've gone through everything inside it, some things are easy to deal with. You already know they don't fit. You already know you don't want them anymore. There is no reason to hang them back in the closet. Put them in a bag, donate them, and let them go.

Other things aren't so simple. You may know they no longer belong, but you may not be ready or able to fully release them yet. That's okay. Take them out of the closet and set them aside. You can decide what to do with them when you're ready. What matters right now is that they are no longer occupying the space you're trying to create.

Approach your life the same way.

Look at everything you've marked with an X. Some things you can release now. Release them. Others may require time, a conversation, a transition, or a plan. Set those aside for now and decide what needs to happen before you can fully release them.

The point isn't to clear everything overnight. It's to stop allowing what no longer aligns to occupy the space you need for what does. Those marks aren't a list of failures or mistakes. They're a map of the space you're about to reclaim.

What might become possible in the area you've chosen to change if you were willing to release what no longer belongs?

Action Step 6: Declutter

Take your inventory from the previous step and work through it using the Alignment Filter. Move each item through your head, your heart, and your gut. If something receives a clear yes from all three, put a check mark next to it. If it doesn't, put an X.

Once you've worked through the entire list, return to everything you've marked with an X. If it's something you already know you can release, release it. If it's something you can't fully release yet, set it aside and write down what needs to happen before you can let it go.

You don't need to empty the entire closet today. You simply need to make room for what comes next.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Go down your list one item at a time. The workout you keep forcing yourself through. The meals you eat because someone said you should. The rule about eating a certain way at a certain hour. Run each one through your head, your heart, and your gut. Some of it will be there because it works for you. Some of it will be there because you were told it works.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Go down your list one item at a time. The meetings that fill your week. The obligations you took on and never questioned. The parts of the job you tolerate. Run each one through your head, your heart,

and your gut, and mark the ones that are only there because they have always been there.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Go down your list one item at a time. The people you see out of habit. The commitments you keep saying yes to. The time you give away and the time you keep. Run each one through your head, your heart, and your gut. This one is harder than the others, and it should be. Mark them anyway. You are not cutting anyone off. You are getting clear about where your time and energy actually belong.

Action Step 6: Declutter

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. Go through your inventory one item at a time. What receives a clear yes from your head, your heart, and your gut? Put a check mark next to each of these items on your inventory.

(A habit that works for you, work that still matters to you, relationships or commitments where your time and energy belong.)

2. What does not receive a clear yes from all three? Put an X next to each of these items on your inventory.

(A workout you keep forcing yourself through, obligations you never questioned, people you see only out of habit, or commitments you keep automatically saying yes to.)

3. Looking at everything you marked with an X, what can you release now, and what can't you release yet? Release what you can. For anything you can't release yet, write down what needs to happen before you can let it go.

(You don't have to change everything today. Some things can go now. Others may require something to happen first.)

STEP SEVEN

GET ALIGNED

You've done something most people never do. You stopped. You took a look at your current reality. You ran everything in your inventory through the Alignment Filter and identified what no longer belongs. And you began releasing what no longer belongs, one thing at a time. That process creates space. Real space. The kind that most people never experience because they spend their entire lives adding without ever removing, filling without ever clearing, moving forward without ever stopping to ask whether what they're carrying belongs where they're going.

But creating space is only the beginning. An empty garden doesn't stay empty for long. If you don't decide what grows there, something will grow regardless. And it will almost certainly be a variation of what you just finished clearing. This is why so many people who make changes find themselves, six months or a year later, back in a version of the same situation they thought they had left behind. They created space but didn't decide what belonged there. And nature, as it does, filled it for them more times than not with weeds.

The question that matters now is what belongs in its place. Before I share how I answered that question in my own life, I want to say something about what alignment actually means, because I've come to believe that most people misunderstand it in a way that makes it harder to find.

Alignment is not about creating a perfect version of yourself. It's not about becoming the person your culture celebrates, or your family envisioned, or social media rewards. It's not about building a life that looks impressive from the outside. It's about something more fundamental than any of those things. It's about uncovering who you are at your core and discovering what aligns. The habits, the commitments, the priorities, the ways of living and working and spending your time and energy that fit who you actually are rather than who you've been told you should be.

Most of us have spent so long absorbing other people's definitions of a good life that we've lost the ability to distinguish between what we want and what we've simply been conditioned to pursue. We chase goals that are admired without ever stopping to ask whether we actually want them. We maintain habits that look healthy or productive without asking whether they fit the person we are right now. We hold onto ambitions that made sense for an earlier version of ourselves without noticing that we've changed and that what aligned then may not align today.

This is why alignment is not something you create. It's something you discover. And you discover it by looking within instead of outward at what the world celebrates. That's the gift of the work you've just done. You cleared some of the noise that was getting

in the way. And now, with the space you've created, you're in a position to hear something you may not have been able to hear before.

When I began the work of examining every area of my life, health was the area that showed up most urgently. And looking back, I understand why. I had been an athlete for most of my youth. Soccer had defined not just my ambitions but my identity, my relationship with my body, my understanding of what I was capable of. Then the knee injury happened, and without the sport, I slowly stopped showing up for my body the way I once had.

The responsibilities of building a career and multiple businesses had filled every available hour. Fourteen, sixteen, eighteen hour days became normal. Exercise disappeared first, replaced by the next urgent thing that needed attention. Food became whatever was available, fast food between meetings, restaurant meals that were more about convenience than nourishment. I told myself, the way people tell themselves these things, that I would get back to it when things slowed down. Things didn't slow down. And the gap between who I had been physically and where I actually was kept widening without my fully acknowledging it.

The consequence eventually made itself impossible to ignore. The stress, the lack of movement, the years of poor nutrition landed me in the emergency room several times. I had gained weight, developed high blood pressure and suffered from migraines. My body had been sending signals for a long time before it sent one I couldn't dismiss. By the time I took inventory of my health, the picture was clear. I had abandoned almost everything that had once kept me well. And looking at that reality, I had to make a decision about what to

rebuild.

This is where the Alignment Filter, which I had already been using to identify what no longer belonged, became equally essential for identifying what did. Because the temptation when you decide to change something is to reach for the most impressive version of the change. The version that looks like the most commitment, the biggest change, the most dramatic reversal of where you've been. And I fell into that temptation at first.

My first instinct was to start jogging. I was a former athlete. Running felt like the natural answer. It made logical sense. Emotionally it resonated with the version of myself I was trying to return to. But when I moved that thought all the way through the Alignment Filter and listened to what my gut was saying, something didn't feel right. My body had been through a long period of neglect. My schedule was still demanding. My gut was telling me that starting with running was more about recapturing an image of who I used to be than about building something sustainable for who I was becoming.

So I listened. And I kept looking.

When the idea of walking came up, my first reaction was almost dismissive. Walking felt too small. Too slow. Too unremarkable for someone who had once sprinted across soccer fields. But I ran it through the same process. Logically, it made complete sense. It required no equipment, no preparation, no recovery time. I could do it anywhere, at almost any time. Emotionally, something about it felt accessible in a way that jogging hadn't. And my gut, when I finally

gave it a moment to speak without my ego interrupting, said yes. Clearly and without hesitation.

So I started walking. Not ten thousand steps a day at first. Just walking. After meals when I could. In the morning when the schedule allowed. Gradually and without drama. And something began to happen that I hadn't expected. The consistency I had been unable to maintain with more ambitious routines came naturally with this one. Because it was aligned. It was aligned with who I actually was at that point in my life and what I could sustain, rather than who I used to be or thought I should be.

Today I walk between ten and fifteen thousand steps every day. Some in the morning and some in the evening, without fail. It has become one of the most consistent practices of my life because it aligns with me and the life I've created. My gut confirmed it then. My body has confirmed it every day since.

The fitness story didn't end with walking. Over time I also returned to the gym three to four days a week in a way that fit my actual life, rather than the six days a week I had trained as a young athlete. I made changes to how and what I ate. Each addition went through the same process. I chose what aligned with me, my body, my schedule, my values, and the direction I had decided to move in.

The result, over time, wasn't a dramatic overnight change. It was something more durable than that. A sustainable way of living in my body that has continued to evolve and improve year after year because it was built on alignment rather than aspiration.

So your next step is to revisit your inventory. Set aside everything you marked with an X during the decluttering process. Those items no longer need your attention right now. Focus only on what remains, the things that survived the Filter, the ones that still feel like they belong. Move each of them through the Alignment Filter one more time to confirm them. Head, heart, gut. If the answer is a clear yes from all three, move it to a new list. Your Alignment List. Don't be surprised if little to nothing remains.

Either way, look beyond your inventory. Now that you've created space and begun listening more closely to yourself, new possibilities may begin to surface. Things that weren't on your original inventory because they hadn't been part of your life yet. New habits. New priorities. New ways of approaching an area of your life that fit you rather than someone else's idea of what you should be doing. Run those through the Alignment Filter too. If they align, add them.

Your Alignment List isn't a set of goals. It isn't a to-do list or a wish list. It's a picture of what belongs in the life you've decided to create. It's the life that, when you hold it up to your head, your heart, and your gut, produces a clear and unambiguous yes.

One important thing to remember as you build it. Alignment changes as you change. What aligned with you five years ago may not align with you today. What aligns with you now may look different in another five years. The Alignment Filter isn't a one-time exercise. It's a lifelong practice. And the more consistently you use it, the less time you spend pursuing things that don't align and the more time you spend building a life that does.

In the area of your life you've been working to change, what does alignment look like for who you actually are right now?

Action Step 7: Create Alignment List

In the area of your life you've been working to change, what does alignment look like for who you actually are right now? Create your Alignment List.

Return to your inventory and move each remaining item through the Alignment Filter one final time to confirm it. Add anything new that surfaces during the process and run it through the Filter as well. When you're finished, read the list from beginning to end. What you're looking at isn't a collection of tasks. It's a reflection of what belongs in your life. It's also the foundation for everything you're about to build.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Look at what remains on your inventory. The way of moving your body that you would keep doing whether or not anyone was counting. The way of eating that fits the life you actually live. Then add what has never been on the list. Something you have wanted to try and dismissed as not serious enough. Run it through the Filter the same way. If it comes back yes from all three, it belongs.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Look at what remains on your inventory. The work that aligns with you. The people worth answering to. The commitments you would

choose again. Then add what has never been on the list. The way of working you assumed was not available to you. Run it through the Filter the same way. If it comes back yes from all three, it belongs.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Look at what remains on your inventory. The people who are actually there for you. The ways of showing up you want more of. Then add what has never been on the list, starting with your relationship with yourself. Time that is yours. Something you do because it brings you joy and for no other reason. Run it through the Filter the same way. If it comes back yes from all three, it belongs.

Action Step 7: Create Alignment List

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. Looking at what remains on your inventory, what still receives a clear yes from your head, your heart, and your gut? Run each remaining item through the Alignment Filter one final time. Add every clear yes to your Alignment List.

(The way you want to move or eat, work that aligns with you, people who are actually there for you, or commitments you would choose again.)

2. What belongs in your life that wasn't on your original inventory? Run each new item through the Alignment Filter. If your head, heart, and gut all say yes, add it to your Alignment List.

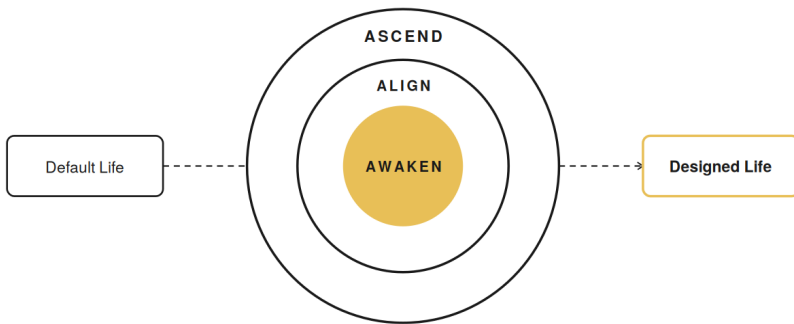
(Something you've wanted to try, a different way of working, more time for yourself, or something you do simply because it brings you joy.)

3. Looking at your completed Alignment List, does everything on it reflect what belongs in your life right now? Make any final additions or changes, then complete your Alignment List.

(Read the entire list from beginning to end. This isn't a list of tasks. It's a reflection of what aligns with you.)

PART THREE

ASCEND



You've awakened to the life you were living by default. You've made decisions and determined what aligns with who you are at your core. Now it's time to design.

Ascend is where the work you've done within begins to take shape in the life you live.

By the time you reach the end of Part Three, you won't simply have a picture of the life you want. You'll have a process for building it, one step at a time, one designed day at a time.

YOUR IDEAL DAY

There is a version of yourself you already know.

You may not have given it much conscious attention. You may have dismissed it as wishful thinking or filed it away under someday, when the timing is right, when the circumstances finally cooperate. But it's there. It has always been there. A version of you that is healthier, more at peace, more fully alive in your relationships, more aligned in your work, more present in your days. A version that isn't some fantasy constructed from other people's highlight reels, but something more personal than that. Something you sense from the inside rather than admire from the outside.

I've come to believe that the gap between that version and the life you're currently living is one of the most significant sources of stress any of us carry. Not the stress of a difficult job or a strained relationship, though those matter too. The deeper, more persistent stress of knowing who you are, sensing what your life could be, and living something that doesn't yet match it. That tension, unresolved, follows most people through their days without them ever quite identifying where it's coming from.

Ascending doesn't mean acquiring more of what the world tells you to want. It means closing that gap. Rising to meet the version of yourself that has been waiting deep inside and is ready to flourish after all of the clearing and the choosing you've just done. Not someone else's ideal. Yours. The one you already recognize when you look within. That's what this step of the book is about. And it begins not with a five-year plan or an ambitious set of goals, but with something far more immediate and far more powerful.

It begins with a single day.

Before D-Formula I had been approaching the idea of changing my life the way most people do. I was thinking about my future in large, sweeping terms. Who I wanted to become. What I wanted to build. Where I wanted to be in five years, ten years, eventually. And every time I sat with those questions, something happened that I didn't expect. I felt overwhelmed. The distance between where I was and where I wanted to be felt so significant that the thinking itself became a source of paralysis rather than momentum. I would imagine the destination and then look at where I was standing and feel, more than anything else, how far away it seemed.

Then one day a different question arrived, and it was so simple that I almost dismissed it. What would my ideal day look like? Not my ideal life. Not the destination five years from now. My ideal day. The ordinary day I would live tomorrow if I could design it exactly as it should be, as the version of myself I already know exists somewhere within me. The day I would be content to live again the next day and the day after that, not because it was extraordinary, but because it was by my design.

That question landed differently than all the others. Because it wasn't asking me to plan a future I couldn't yet see. It was asking me to design a present I could begin living almost immediately. And once I understood that, something else became clear.

Our life isn't something that happens in the future. Our life is the accumulation of our days.

The way you wake up. The thoughts you return to each morning. The choices you make before noon. The quality of attention you bring to the people and work in front of you. The way you treat your body and your time and your relationships hour by hour. Those ordinary unremarkable moments are not the preparation for your life. They are your life. And if enough designed days are lived in a row, they become a life by design. That's why transformation doesn't begin by changing everything.

Changing your life begins by changing your day.

The version of yourself you sense within is not a fantasy. I want to say that plainly because I know how easy it is to treat that inner vision as something too fragile or too ambitious to take seriously. But I've lived long enough and worked through this process thoroughly enough to say with certainty that the life you see within yourself is real. It is the life that becomes possible when you do what you've been doing in these chapters.

The stress you've been carrying, that persistent tension between who you know you are and how you're actually living, doesn't resolve by managing it better or by adjusting your expectations. It resolves by closing the gap. By building the days that match the life you already

know is yours. I've experienced this myself across multiple areas of my life.

The version of me that was fit and energetic and living in a healthy body, I knew that person. I had been that person. And the distance between that inner knowing and my actual physical reality was generating a stress I didn't even realize until I began closing the gap. My health didn't change overnight. It changed by designing what the healthy version of my day actually looked like and beginning to live it.

The same was true with my finances, my relationships, my work. In each area, there was a version of my life that I could sense clearly from the inside. And in each area, the process was the same. See it. Align it. Design it. Embody it. One day, one action at a time.

What I want you to understand is that this isn't about living someone else's version of an ideal life. Two people can go through this exact process and arrive at completely different designs. One person's ideal day includes intense physical training at dawn, ambitious professional goals, and a packed schedule of meaningful work. Another person's ideal day begins slowly, with long mornings, unhurried meals, and deep presence with the people they love. Neither is more correct. Neither is more worthy. They simply align with different people.

The car you drive, the home you live in, the career you pursue, the body you inhabit, these things matter only insofar as they align with who you actually are. If a particular way of living lights something up in you from the inside, that's worth understanding and

worth designing toward. If it doesn't, if it's simply what you've been told you should want, then achieving it will move the stress rather than resolve it. The ideal day by design isn't about impressing anyone. It's about designing something you would be content to live again tomorrow.

One more thing worth mentioning is that your Ideal Day will change. The design you create today may look very different from the one you create five years from now, and that's not a sign that you got it wrong the first time. It's a sign that you've grown. My own Ideal Day has shifted more than once across different seasons of my life. What felt completely aligned at one stage no longer fit at another, and what fits now wouldn't have made sense earlier. The process stays the same. The design evolves with you.

When I decided to change my life, I asked myself one question. Here is the question I want you to sit with and answer as completely and clearly as you can at the end of this chapter.

If there were no limitations, financial, geographical, or otherwise, and you had to live this exact day over and over again for the rest of your life, what would your ideal day look like?

I want you to notice what that question is actually asking. It isn't asking what you would do on the best vacation of your life. It isn't asking for a fantasy you'd enjoy once and then set aside. It's asking you to design an ordinary day, one that is so aligned with who you are that you would choose it again tomorrow, and the day after that, and every day that follows. That condition, having to live it repeatedly, is not a constraint. It's a filter. It has a way of separating what belongs

from what merely sounds appealing. Temporary excitement doesn't survive it. Alignment does.

And the instruction to remove limitations is equally important. Your mind, left to its own devices, will immediately begin editing your vision down to what seems realistic, affordable, achievable given your current circumstances. That editing is exactly what this question is designed to prevent. The Ideal Day isn't a plan. It's a design. And a design, like an architect's blueprint, is created without reference to current constraints. The constraints come later, in the building. Right now, your only job is to see it clearly.

Begin from the moment you open your eyes. What do you see? How do you feel waking up? What time is it? What is the first thing you do? Move through your morning slowly. How do you care for your body? What do you consume, physically and mentally, in those first hours? What is the quality of your attention at the start of the day?

Continue through your afternoon. What does your work look like, and how does it feel to do it? What conversations are you having? What are you creating or contributing? Who are you with and how do you show up for them?

Move into your evening. How do you transition from the activity of the day into rest? What does the end of a well-lived day feel like? And when you finally lay your head down, is there a sense of satisfaction, of having lived a day that aligned with you at your core?

The more detailed you are, the better the results you will achieve. This exercise works for your life as a whole, as you can see.

It also works for any single area you've chosen to focus on.

If you've brought your health to this book, design your ideal day of health. If you've brought your finances, design what an ideal financial day looks and feels like. If you've brought a relationship, design what an ideal day within that relationship feels like, what's present that isn't now, how the quality of connection is different. The principle is always the same. You're not designing a distant future. You're designing the daily experience that naturally creates it.

When you've finished, don't worry yet about how you're going to make it happen. That comes in the next chapter. Today's only job is to design something that aligns with the version of yourself you already know. The one that has been waiting for you to finally design a day around it. Because once the design is clear, the path forward becomes so much easier to see.

Action Step 8: Design Your Ideal Day

What does the version of yourself that you already sense within actually look like on an ordinary day, not on the best day you can imagine, but on a well-lived Tuesday, fully aligned with who you are?

Design your Ideal Day. If there were no limitations and you had to live this exact day over and over for the rest of your life, what would it look like? You can design your day as a whole, or you can focus on just the area you brought to this book, whether that is your health, your career, or your relationships. Write it from the moment you wake up until the moment you go to sleep, one moment at a time.

Be as specific as you can. Don't edit for what seems realistic. When you're finished, ask yourself whether you would be content living this exact day for the rest of your life. If yes, you have your blueprint. If not, keep refining until the answer is a clear yes.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Walk through the day in order. How you feel in the first minute you are awake. What you eat and when, and how you feel after. When you move your body and what that looks like. How the day ends and what shape you are in when it does. Write what you want, not what the chart says you should want. If the number you have been carrying isn't the one that feels right to you, this is where you change it.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Walk through the day in order. What time it starts and whether that is your choice. Where you are working and how you got there. What you are actually doing with your hours. Who you are answering to. What the money looks like and what it is for. When the day ends. Write the day you want, then let the work take whatever shape supports it.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Walk through the day in order. What the first moments belong to and who they belong to. Who you speak with and who you don't. Where your time with yourself sits in the day, and what you do with it. Who you are with in the evening. Write the day you want to be inside of, not the day that keeps everyone else comfortable.

Action Step 8: Design Your Ideal Day

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. If there were no limitations, what would your Ideal Day look like?
Start from the moment you wake up and move through your day in order. Be as specific as you can. Don't edit for what seems realistic.
(When you wake up, how you feel, what you eat, where you are, what you do with your time, who you're with, how you work, when your day ends.)

2. How does the area of your life you've chosen fit into this Ideal Day?
Describe what you actually want that part of your day to look and feel like.
(How you move and care for your body, what your workday looks like, how you spend time with yourself and others, or whatever relates to the area you chose.)

3. Would you be content living this exact day over and over for the rest of your life? Read through what you've designed and refine anything that doesn't receive a clear yes.
(Keep adjusting the day until it feels like a day you would genuinely want to live, not simply an impressive or unrealistic "perfect" day.)

REVERSE ENGINEER

Designing your ideal day is one thing. Living it is another.

Most people, when they finally get clear on what they want, make a mistake that is so common and so understandable that I need to address before we go any further. They look at the distance between where they are and the life they've just designed, and they feel overwhelmed. The vision that felt inspiring while they were creating it begins to feel intimidating the moment they try to figure out how to actually get there.

The gap looks enormous. The questions start. Where do I begin? What if I do the wrong thing first? How long will this take? How do I get from here to there? And in the face of those questions, most people do one of two things. They delay, waiting for more clarity, better timing, the right conditions. Or they try to change everything at once, which creates a burst of activity that burns out within weeks and leaves them back where they started, this time with the added weight of having tried and failed.

Neither approach works. And neither is necessary, once you understand how change actually happens. It doesn't happen in one leap. It never has. Meaningful change happens through a series of steps taken in the right direction over time. Not one extraordinary effort, but a series of ordinary ones, each building on the one before it, each making the next step slightly easier to take. The destination stays the same. What changes is your understanding of the path that leads there.

That's what reverse engineering is. It's the process of taking the outcome you've designed and working backward, step by step, until the very next thing you need to do becomes clear. Not the whole journey at once. Just the next step. And then, from there, the one after that.

When I designed my ideal day as it related to my fitness, walking was one of the things that aligned. I had tested it through the Alignment Filter. My head agreed it made sense, my heart felt at ease with it, and my gut confirmed it without hesitation. So walking was in. But knowing that getting fit belonged in my designed life and actually building it into my days were two different things. The distance between where I was and where I wanted to be required simplicity, not overthinking.

The question I asked myself was simple. How am I actually going to do this? Not a complicated planning exercise. Not a spreadsheet or a training schedule. I didn't go and do more research or look to others to tell me what to do and how to do it. Just a simple look at my average day and what fitness in my life would actually require and what the smallest possible version of it looked like that I

could begin immediately. I decided that in the morning, after waking up and having my coffee, I would go for a walk. It didn't matter how long. Ten minutes. Fifteen minutes. Whatever was available. The only commitment was to go.

And in the evening, after dinner, instead of sitting down in front of the television, something I had removed during the decluttering process because it no longer aligned, I would put my sneakers on and walk again. Same principle. No pressure on distance or duration. Just the act of going.

How I actually put that into practice is what the next step is about. That progression from design to action is what reverse engineering makes possible. It takes a destination that feels distant and breaks it down until the path becomes clear enough to walk. That's the principle I want you to carry into your own reverse engineering process.

When you've worked backward from your ideal day and identified the steps that would bring it to life, don't try to implement all of them at once. Look at the list and ask yourself which one is easiest to begin. Start there. Let that one take root. Let it build the confidence that comes from having kept a promise to yourself, even a small one. Then move to the next item on the list. And the next. Each step you complete makes the following one feel more natural and more possible, not because the steps get easier necessarily, but because you've become someone who does them.

In every case, the approach is the same. Take your ideal day design. Ask yourself what has to happen for it to become real. Then

ask what has to happen before that. Keep working backward until you arrive at something small enough to do today. Then do it. Not Monday. Not when the timing is better. Today. Because the momentum that eventually carries you all the way to the life you've designed doesn't begin with a dramatic commitment. It begins with the smallest step in the right direction, taken before you've talked yourself out of it.

One more thing before you move forward. The steps you identify through reverse engineering don't need to be perfect and they don't need to be complete. You don't need to see the entire path before you take the first step. You only need to see the next one. As you take it, the one after it will become visible. As you take that one, the one after that. You don't need the whole plan in place before moving. The movement itself will reveal what comes next.

Start small. Start immediately. Start with one thing that aligns. And trust that consistency, applied to even the smallest aligned action, compounds over time into something that looks, from the outside, like remarkable change. From the inside, it will simply feel like your life. The one you designed. The one that was always waiting for you to take the first step toward it.

What is the smallest possible step you could take tomorrow that would move the area of your life you've chosen to change one step closer to the ideal day you've designed?

Action Step 9: Reverse Engineer Your Result

What is the smallest possible step you could take tomorrow that would move the area of your life you've chosen to change one step closer to the ideal day you've designed?

Take your Ideal Day design and reverse engineer it. Start with the outcome you've designed and ask yourself what has to be in place for that day to be real. Then ask what has to happen before that. Keep working backward, one step at a time, until you arrive at the smallest possible action you could take immediately.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Start at the end and work backward. If your designed day has you moving your body every morning, what has to be true for that to happen? You have to be able to wake up at the time you've designed. So what time do you need to go to sleep? What comes out of the evening to make that possible? What has to be ready the night before so the morning doesn't require a decision? Keep going backward until you reach something small enough to do today.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Start at the end and work backward. If your designed day has you working somewhere different, on different terms, what has to be true for that to happen? What has to exist before it can? What has to come off your plate to make room? What is the first piece, the

one that everything else sits on top of? Keep going backward until you reach something small enough to do today.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Start at the end and work backward. If your designed day has an hour that belongs to you, where does that hour come from? What are you currently saying yes to that would have to become a no? Who needs to hear something from you first? Keep going backward until you reach something small enough to do today.

Action Step 9: Reverse Engineer Your Result

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. Look at the Ideal Day you designed. What needs to be true for that day to become your reality? Start with the outcome you want and identify what must be in place for it to happen.

(If you want to move your body every morning, you need to be able to wake up at that time. If you want to work somewhere different, something has to exist before you can make that change.)

2. Now work backward. What has to happen before that? Then what has to happen before that? Continue working backward one step at a time.

(What needs to change? What needs to come off your plate? What needs to be prepared? What decision or conversation needs to happen first?)

3. What is the smallest possible action you arrive at that you could take immediately? Write it down clearly.

(Keep working backward until you reach something small enough to do today.)

EMBODY

Preparation is not the same as living what you've designed.

Everything you've done in the prior steps, the awakening, the inventory, the decluttering, the alignment, the ideal day design, the reverse engineering of the steps that lead there, all of it has been preparation. Important preparation. Necessary preparation. But living what you've designed happens when you begin putting the design into practice and continue living it on repeat every day until it becomes part of who you are and your designed lifestyle.

That's what embodiment is. Not doing the things on your list. Becoming the person for whom those things are simply natural. The person who doesn't remind themselves to walk. The person who is a walker. The moment when the life you designed stops being something you're working toward and becomes something you're actually living, that's embodiment. And it arrives through the accumulation of aligned actions repeated consistently, each one building on the one before it, until the design and the life become indistinguishable from each other.

That's what happened with my walking. I didn't wait until Monday. I didn't wait until I had a plan mapped out or the right gear purchased or a schedule that perfectly accommodated it. I started that day. And the next day, I did it again. And the day after that.

The walks were short at first. Then they got a little longer without my deciding they would. The morning walk became something I looked forward to rather than something I reminded myself to do. The evening walk became the natural ending to a day rather than a disruption of it. And over time, without forcing it, without measuring it obsessively, without turning it into a project, I went from ten or fifteen minutes of walking to ten, sometimes fifteen thousand steps a day between morning and evening. It became a habit. Then it became a lifestyle. I started small enough that consistency was possible from the very first day.

Walking was only the beginning.

After the walking became consistent, I returned to the gym. Not six days a week the way I had trained as a young athlete, because that version of the blueprint belonged to a different season of my life. Three, sometimes four days a week, in a way that fit my actual life and that I could sustain indefinitely rather than heroically for a few weeks before burning out. That aligned with the life I was building. And because it aligned, it held.

Then came the eating. For years, going back to my days as a skinny teenager trying to put on weight and muscle, the blueprint I had followed was eat every three hours. Six meals a day. Constant fueling. It had worked then. It reflected who I was at that stage of life

and what my body needed at that time. But I was no longer that person, and that blueprint no longer served the direction I was moving in.

During the decluttering process I had removed it. And when I started looking at what to replace it with, I discovered fasting. My first instinct was skepticism. I was someone who had trained himself to eat constantly. The idea of deliberately not eating for extended periods seemed to run against everything I had ever believed about nutrition. But I ran it through the Alignment Filter. My head agreed it made sense based on what I was learning. My heart was open to trying it. And my gut confirmed it. So I started small.

Eight to ten hours. That was the first fast. Nothing dramatic. Simply extending the natural overnight window by a couple of hours. When that felt manageable, I moved to twelve. Then fourteen. Then sixteen. Each increment came only after the previous one had become easy enough that the next step felt natural rather than forced. Today I fast between fourteen and sixteen hours consistently. It is no longer something I practice. It is simply how I eat. A way of living in my body that has become as natural and unremarkable as the walking, as the workouts, as the adjustments to what I put on my plate.

Somewhere in the accumulation of all those small aligned actions, the version of myself I had seen within, the one that was fit and energetic and at home in his body, stopped being a vision and became simply who I am. I didn't arrive at a destination. I became the person for whom that destination was the natural expression of an ordinary day.

This is what I want you to understand about embodiment before you live it yourself. It doesn't feel the way change looks from the outside. From the outside, change can appear sudden, dramatic, the product of one defining moment or one extraordinary effort. From the inside, it feels like an average day. It feels like doing the next aligned thing, and then the next, and then the one after that, until you look up one day and realize the distance between who you were and who you are is much larger than you noticed while you were closing it.

And I want to add something about the days when you fall off track. Because you will. Not might. Will. There will be mornings when the walk doesn't happen, workouts you miss, and days when the design you worked so hard to create gets set aside for whatever the day demanded instead. That is simply a life being lived by a human being. Think of it like a GPS. You're driving from where you are to where you're going, following the route you've designed. And then you make a wrong turn. The GPS doesn't shut off. It doesn't tell you the journey is over or that you've proven you were never capable of arriving. It simply recalculates. It finds the next available path back to the route and continues guiding you forward.

One wrong turn doesn't change the destination. It simply adds a small detour. You get back on track and keep going. The designed life you're building works exactly the same way. Miss a day and it's a detour. The map still exists. The direction hasn't changed. Simply recalibrate and return to it tomorrow.

There is one principle, though, that I want you to carry with you because it has proven itself true again and again. If you miss one day of something you're trying to build into your life, that's a detour. Miss

two days in a row, and you risk beginning a new pattern. The same consistency that creates the habit of walking also creates the habit of not walking, if you give it enough consecutive days to take root. Missing once is human. So the principle is simple. You can miss a day. Never miss two in a row. That principle protects the momentum you've built from being gradually dismantled by the kind of drift that created the default life in the first place.

If you find yourself drifting away from your design, don't overcomplicate it. Simply return to the life or area of your life you designed and pick up where you left off. At this stage, the question that matters most is simple: Did you live your designed day today? If you did, you succeeded today. And tomorrow, you ask the same question again.

That is how a designed life is built. Through the accumulation of ordinary days, lived in alignment, one at a time, each one making the next slightly more natural than the one before. Stop measuring your progress by how far you still have to go. Start measuring it by whether you lived your designed day today. The destination will take care of itself. Your only responsibility is today.

Action Step 10: Embody One At A Time

What is the smallest aligned action you could take today that would move you one step closer to the person you've designed yourself to become?

Return to your reverse engineered list and identify the first action, the one that aligns most and requires the least to begin. Take it today. Not Monday. Not when the circumstances are better. Today.

Once that action is in place and beginning to feel natural, move to the next one on your list. Then the next. Each small aligned action builds on the one before it, until the life you designed stops being something you're working toward and becomes something you're simply living.

Examples

Here are a few examples of what that looks like.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your health.** Your first action might be a ten-minute walk after dinner tonight. It might be going to sleep thirty minutes earlier. It might be planning your next meal around healthy, real foods instead of processed foods. It will feel too small to matter. Take it anyway, and take it again tomorrow. Small and repeated beats large and abandoned.
- **Let's say the area you chose is your career.** Your first action might be blocking the first hour of tomorrow before anyone else can have it. It might be one conversation you have been

putting off. It might be canceling one thing that did not survive your Filter. It will feel too small to matter. Take it anyway, and take it again tomorrow. Small and repeated beats large and abandoned.

- **Let's say the area you chose is your relationships.** Your first action might be fifteen minutes tomorrow morning that belong to you before anyone else needs you. It might be one no you have never said. It might be putting your phone down at dinner tonight. It will feel too small to matter. Take it anyway, and take it again tomorrow. Small and repeated beats large and abandoned.

Action Step 10: Embody One At A Time

Type your answers in the spaces provided. Remember to save to keep your responses.

1. Look at the actions you identified when you reverse engineered your result. Which one aligns most with the person you've designed yourself to become and requires the least to begin? Choose that action first.

(Look for the action you can actually begin now, without waiting for Monday, better circumstances, or everything else to be figured out.)

2. What will taking that action actually look like in your life? Decide specifically what you will do and how you will begin making it part of your day.

(Keep it small and specific enough that you can begin today and continue until it starts to feel natural.)

3. Once that action becomes part of how you live, what is the next action on your reverse-engineered list that you will embody? Identify it now, but don't begin adding more until the first one is in place.

(One aligned action at a time. Then the next. Then the next.)

DESIGNED LIFE

I want to share with you what my average day looked like in 2008. The alarm went off early. More often than not, I hit the snooze, sometimes multiple times, dreading the thought of getting out of bed. I was exhausted before the day even began. Eventually, I forced myself up, got dressed, left the house, and battled traffic.

I spent my days moving between four or five different companies, each one with its own demands, its own problems, its own people needing something from me. Lunches were business meetings. Dinners were client obligations. The hours between were filled with the kind of relentless activity that looks like productivity from the outside and feels like drowning from the inside.

At the time I was responsible for somewhere between eighty and a hundred people across my various businesses. I had the million dollar house, the hundred thousand dollar convertible cars, the money in the bank. I had built everything the blueprint had promised and arrived at a life that, by every external measure, was exactly what it was supposed to be.

And I was exhausted in a way that sleep couldn't fix. I had developed high blood pressure. I had abandoned my body, my health, and eventually my sense of self to the machinery of a life that had been designed by everyone except me. There were moments during that period, as I shared earlier in this book, when the darkness became so overwhelming that I questioned whether I wanted to keep living at all. That was what twenty years of following someone else's blueprint, executed flawlessly and at the highest possible level, actually felt like from the inside.

That was my life by default.

My average day today looks almost nothing like the one I just described. I wake up without an alarm. The sun is usually what brings me back, sometimes before it rises, sometimes with it, depending on what my body needs. There is no rushing. No traffic to battle. No army of obligations waiting to consume me before I've had a moment to myself.

I make my coffee and sit on the balcony on the 50th floor of my high-rise condominium, which overlooks the water on one side and the city on the other. Sunrise on one side. Sunset on the other. I thank God for another day filled with blessings. I think. I plan.

Then I work out and take my morning walk, usually ending at a coffee shop where I work on the things that matter most to me right now. Writing this book. Developing programs and courses. Building a platform from which I can share what I've learned. Or any other vision I see deep within or I am called to pursue.

I fast through the morning, breaking it around noon with a meal I make myself. I work through the afternoon, sometimes from the condo, sometimes from a nearby Starbucks, always focused on what I've chosen or called to do.

In the evening I have dinner and then take my second walk of the day, moving through the night air thinking about what the day produced and what tomorrow holds.

I have more money today than at any point in my previous life. I live more luxuriously. I am healthier and more physically fit than I have been since I played soccer as a teenager. I have loving relationships with my children, with friends, and with my family.

And I have something that none of the success of my former life ever produced. A deep relationship with God, with myself, and the certainty that the life I am living is actually mine.

That's my life by design.

I don't share this to brag or try to impress you, but to impress upon you what is possible when you take the steps I've outlined in this book. Every single detail of what I just described was designed, one area at a time, one step at a time, using the exact process you've been learning throughout this book.

I also want to address something that I believe in deeply, even though it runs contrary to what most people are told about living a balanced life. I don't believe in work-life balance as most people define it. There will always be seasons when one area of your life needs more attention than the others. And there is nothing wrong with

that. Focus on one area, design it, build it, and establish it. Then move to the next.

That is how I have lived this process. I started with my health because that was the most urgent. I applied what I call the Rule of Three: identifying the three things that would make the most impact. For me, those were walking, working out three to four days a week, and eating at home with attention to my protein intake. I focused there until those things were no longer efforts but simply how I lived. I lost over twenty pounds. I got into the best physical shape I had been in since my soccer days. Then I moved to my business. Then my relationships. One area at a time. Each one designed. Each one eventually embodied. Each one now part of the ordinary fabric of the life I designed.

I also want to share with you something else that I've come to understand through living this process, something I didn't fully anticipate when I began. When you start walking the path that aligns with the version of yourself you see within, something can begin to happen that is difficult to explain and impossible to manufacture. Doors open. Opportunities appear. People show up in your life at moments you couldn't have planned. Things begin falling into place in ways you couldn't have predicted.

I don't know precisely why this happens. I believe God has a hand in it. Others may understand it differently. When you stop spending your energy maintaining a life that doesn't fit and begin directing that same energy toward the one that does, things change. The clarity you gain. The peace you feel. The focus you're able to bring to what actually matters. All of it compounds.

And here is the gift D-Formula gives you beyond the change itself. When you drift, as you will, as I have, you don't have to start over. You already have the map. When my weight creeps up because life has pulled my attention elsewhere for a while, I don't stress about it. I don't reinvent the wheel. I simply return to what I designed. The walks. The workouts. The eating habits. The fasting. Within a short time I am back. No crisis. No catastrophic failure. Just a brief detour followed by a return to the road I already know. D-Formula gives you a process you can return to for any area of your life, for the rest of your life. One that is yours by design.

We live in a time of infinite advice. There is no shortage of people telling you what your morning routine should include, which diet is the right one, how many steps to follow to optimize your health, your productivity, your relationships, your finances. Social media, podcasts, books, coaches, influencers, all of them competing for your attention with their version of what you should be doing. And what I've found, both in my own life and in watching others navigate this process, is that all of that noise doesn't accelerate change. It paralyzes it.

The answer I keep returning to, the one that has consistently proven itself true across every area of my life, is this: less is more. Less complexity. Less noise. Less of everyone else's prescription and more of your own decisions. Block the noise. Look within. Listen closely. Identify what aligns with you. Run it through the Alignment Filter. Pick the first one that confirms. Start there. Then the second. Then the third. And trust that those aligned actions, repeated consistently, will compound into a life by design.

Action Step 11: Your Road Map

I know we've covered a lot of ground in this book. So before you go, I want to give you a simple road map you can follow whenever you choose an area of your life you want to change.

Start by choosing one area. Your health. Your finances. Your marriage or relationships. Your career or business. Your spirituality. Your overall life. Whatever it is, make that your focus and walk it through the eleven steps.

Use the Rule of Three. Ask yourself: What are the three things, from everything I've identified through this process, that align most with who I am and that I could begin implementing right now?

Not twenty things. Not ten. Three.

Three things in your morning routine that align with you. Three things in your health that align with your body, your schedule, your current reality. Three things in your finances. Three things in your relationships. Whatever the area, three things.

The mistake I see most often is that someone identifies three things, starts building momentum, and then adds a fourth and a fifth and a sixth because they read somewhere that it's the thing to do. And slowly, without noticing, they drift back toward the same pattern of overwhelm that created the default life in the first place.

Your Road Map

Use this road map to guide you through the process. And whenever you need more clarity or context, go back and reread that step in the book before continuing.

Then, when you're ready to work on another area of your life, come back to the road map and begin again.

Step One: The Default Life: Look clearly at your current reality in the area you've chosen and identify the blueprints, expectations, and outside influences that helped shape it. Recognize how much of what you're living came from choices you made and how much came from a blueprint you simply inherited or followed.

Step Two: Sleepwalking: Identify the habits, routines, behaviors, and recurring patterns you've been living without questioning. Look at what you've been doing, avoiding, or accepting automatically and recognize what living on autopilot in this area has been costing you.

Step Three: The Catalyst: Recognize the signals, moments, feelings, or realizations that have been trying to get your attention. Identify what finally brought you to the point where you knew something needed to change.

Step Four: The Decision: Decide to change. End the internal negotiation, the excuses, the delays, and the conditions you've been placing on moving forward. Make a clear decision about the direction you're going.

Step Five: The Inventory: Take a complete inventory of what currently exists in this area of your life. Habits, patterns, behaviors, beliefs, relationships, commitments, and results. Put everything in front of you so you can clearly see the reality you're working with.

Step Six: Declutter: Run everything in your inventory through the Alignment Filter using your head, your heart, and your gut. Identify what no longer aligns. Release what you can now. Set aside anything that requires more time, a conversation, a transition, or a plan. Make room for what comes next.

Step Seven: Get Aligned: Build your Alignment List. Confirm what remains by moving it through the Alignment Filter again, and consider anything new that surfaced after you created space. Keep what receives a clear yes from your head, your heart, and your gut. Your Alignment List is the picture of what belongs in this area of your life.

Step Eight: Your Ideal Day: Design your Ideal Day without limiting it to what currently seems realistic or achievable. Imagine the ordinary day you would be content to live again and again. Design it clearly enough that it becomes the blueprint for the life you want to build.

Step Nine: Reverse Engineer: Work backward from your Ideal Day and identify what needs to happen to bring it to life. Continue working backward until you reach the smallest possible action you can take today. Start there.

Step Ten: Embody: Take that first aligned action today and repeat it until it begins to feel natural. Then move to the next action, and then the next. Let small aligned actions build on one another until what you designed becomes simply how you live. Protect your momentum with one simple principle: you can miss a day. Never miss two in a row.

Step Eleven: The Designed Life: Live what you've designed. When you drift, return to your Ideal Day and the steps you've already identified instead of starting over. When you're ready to change another area of your life, return to Step One and bring that area through the process.

A FINAL WORD

I want to say something to you before we part ways.

What you've just done, working through these eleven steps, sitting with the questions they raised, taking inventory of a life you may have never fully examined before, making decisions aligned with who you are rather than borrowed from someone else's picture of what your life should look like, is not a small thing. Examining your life this closely and deciding what belongs requires something most of us were never taught how to do. Nobody handed us a process and said, here. Start here. Go inward first.

You now have that process. And more importantly, you've begun living it.

I don't know what your life looked like when you picked up this book. I don't know which area you chose to focus on, what your current reality revealed when you finally looked at it clearly, or what your Ideal Day looks like in the specific and personal detail that only you could have designed. What I know is that whatever you found when you looked within, and whatever you're building toward, is worthy of your commitment in a way the default never could be.

The default life is always available. It will always be there ready to receive you back the moment you stop paying attention. That's its nature. It doesn't announce itself. It simply fills the space you leave

unattended. Once you've learned how to build a designed life, however, you have something the default can never give you: a way back.

Whenever life drifts, whenever a new area calls for your attention, whenever you find yourself back in a driveway you don't recognize, you know the way forward. You've walked it before. You'll walk it again.

That is what I set out to give you with this book. Not a destination. A compass. I hope it serves you well for the rest of your life.

And if you'd like to continue the journey with me, you can find everything I'm currently working on, along with ways to go deeper with D-Formula, at Daniel-Vazquez.com.

Until we meet again.

ABOUT D-AUTHOR

Daniel Vazquez is an attorney, entrepreneur, trainer, speaker, and author with more than 25 years of professional experience. He has built several multimillion-dollar businesses and spent more than two decades training individuals, students, professionals, and companies across the country.

Danny was a competitive athlete who, after years of neglecting his health, ended up hospitalized several times because of stress and poor health decisions. He built a beautiful family, successful businesses, and financial abundance, yet eventually found himself unfulfilled.

In 2008, Danny awoke to the fact that he had spent much of his life pursuing a version of success he had been conditioned to want, just as many of us do. He discovered that this disconnect was the root of his lack of fulfillment and successfully rebuilt his life around what actually aligned with who he is at his core. Through that process, he developed the principles that eventually became D-Formula.

Today, he shares what he learned to help others awaken, align, and ascend, and build a life and business by design, not by default.

Daniel-Vazquez.com