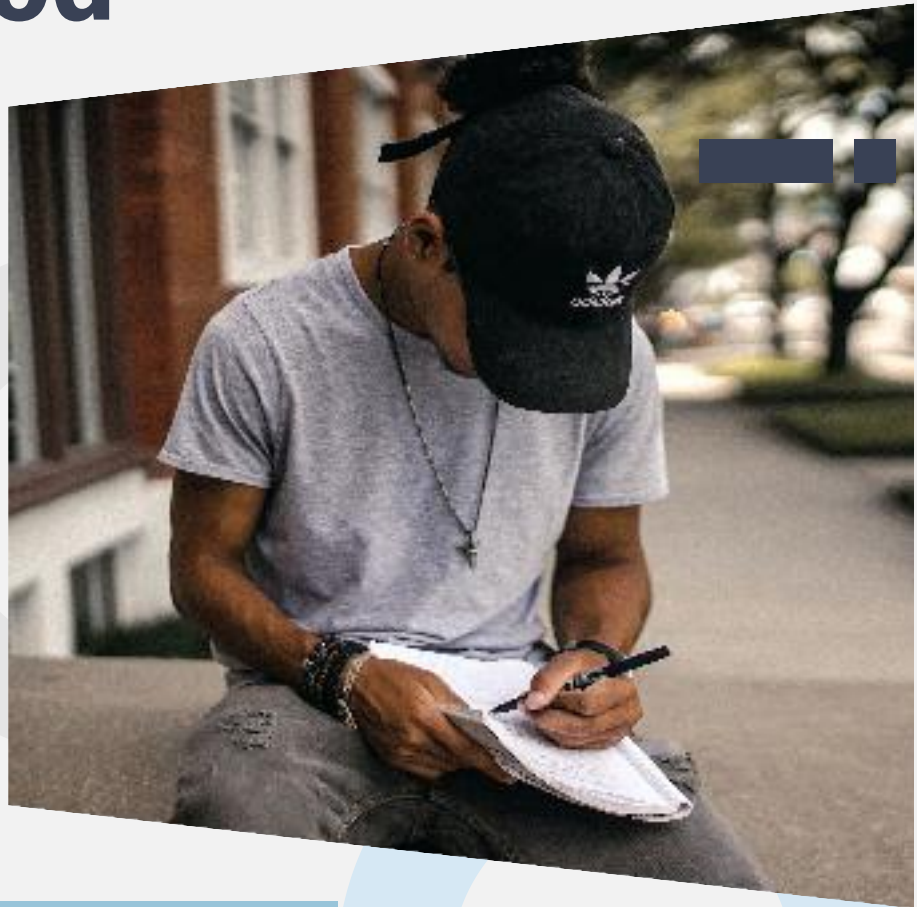


EBOOK

How to Journal Your Daily Life Using The Bujo Method



A short guide to setting up your journal, managing your calendar, and feeling better using the written word

Cal Axe

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Introduction

“I should avoid trends. No one wants to be the last 27-year-old wearing a Champion sweater. If people are already doing it, then forget about it.”

Welcome to the inside of my brain on October 17th, 2017—my first journal entry.

I tried to remember why I started journaling. That would've been a solid introduction to this eBook, don't you think? To talk about what drove me to the activity I'm selling.

Honestly, I have no clue why I felt compelled to journal.

Here's what I do know. My impulse wasn't original.

Benjamin Franklin carried around a journal to note his ideas and record experiments.

Virginia Woolf wrote gossip notes, which she would later use for her novels.

Marcus Aurelius used a journal to monitor his thoughts, question his logic, and keep his focus on things that mattered.

JFK, Ronald Reagan, Krida Kahlo, Emma Watson, Oscar Wilde, David Sedaris. The list of journalers is curiously long.

Anne Frank wrote her first journal entry on June 14th, 1942, two days after her thirteenth birthday. Her family had already gone into hiding.

“I hope I will be able to confide in you as I have never been able to confide in anyone and I hope you will be a great source of comfort.”

Anne was a gifted writer who found herself stuck in one of the worst periods in history. On the one hand, a journal released some pent-up creative energy. On the other, the practice served as her therapy. A means to articulate what was going on and try to make sense of it all—if that was even possible.



The reasons for journaling vary, and the more I learn about the practice, the less I care about the reasons.

What's important is to acknowledge that smart, brave people keep journals and that something has always drawn people to getting things out of their heads and into the physical realm.

Here's the irony: Science now tells us that journaling is one of the most effective activities you can engage in to improve memory, communication skills, and IQ.

A study at Harvard¹ found that participants who journaled had a 25% increase in brain performance compared to the control group who didn't journal. That means they scored 25% better on exams!

Another study at Stanford² University found a critical relationship between writing and speaking. That writing helps you voice your opinions more clearly.

Introduction



The most research around journaling seems to focus on its effects on mental health.

James Pennebaker³, a social psychologist at the University of Texas at Austin, says *“a whole cascade of things occurs when we write. Labeling emotions and acknowledging traumatic events- both natural outcomes of journaling—have a known positive effect on people and are often incorporated with traditional talk therapy.”*

My journal is my foundation. A means of structuring the days to meet priorities, a financial guide so I can spend and save with confidence, and an emotional outlet for all the crap life throws at me.

The cool part, my process is great for anyone wanting to live a life with more intention.

How's that?

Instead of a book full of jumbled thoughts, I leveraged Ryder Carroll's Bullet Journal and best practices from lifelong journalers like Ryan Holiday and Tim Ferris to develop an accounting-like system that's helped me remain calm and focused while others fill their heads with anxieties.

Now I pass it to you!

The eBook is split into 4 sections

1) Productivity - Everyone wants to live in the present. But, like all things, a balance is required. First you need to create an idea of where you're going,

Part 1 will help you there. Here you will learn how to plan your year, month, and day using the Bullet Journal Method to quickly and easily and narrow down your goals so all you have to do is trust the process.

2) Finances – Yes, apps like Mint and excel spreadsheets serve this purpose. Still, I found that I'm more intentional with my money when I revert to old-school methods.

3) Emotions - The stoics believed in the power of emotions but they also believed it was up to us to manage them. To feel them out and keep them from hindering our life's experience. Journaling helps ride the wave of overwhelming emotions. This section will teach you how to do that.

4) Values – Your values and rules help you go out into the world without fear of abandoning your character. Your journal is your lifeboat when it comes to values.

Ryan Holiday wrote that *“all the world's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room.”*

This eBook will teach you the fundamentals of stillness. How to sit with yourself and organize your thoughts so you can go out into the world and complete your goals with confidence.

Honestly, I don't become the man I am today with it.

Good luck and all the best,



How to Set Up Your Journal in 5 Minutes

What is A Bullet Journal?

The Bullet Journal Method or (Bujo if you're a nerd) is a journaling system created by New York-based writer and product designer Ryder Carroll.

In 2018, he published a book called *"The Bullet Journal Method: Track The Past, Order the Present, Design the Future"* which has since become one of the most popular and referenced approaches to journal organization.

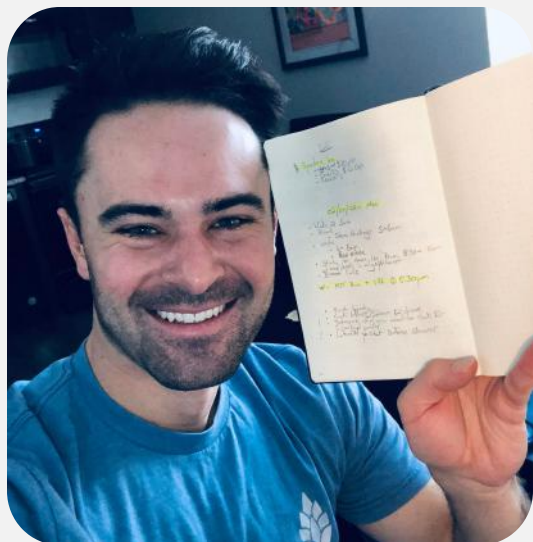
Here's how I'd describe the Bullet Journal Method. Instead of carrying around a book of disorganized thoughts, Bujo turns your ideas into a structured system of accounting, so you won't get lost or frustrated with your journal.

The value proposition of Bujo in a nutshell: Get more from your journal in a fraction of the time.



Notable Users of Bujo

- Ryan Holiday
- Tim Ferris
- Tom Keugler



What Do I Need?



A Dot Grid Journal

You could do it with a notebook, but I have shitty handwriting and can't draw straight lines. A dot grid journal is the way to go.

I use the same brand and journal model every time: [Leuchtturm1917](https://www.leuchtturm1917.com/).



Mechanical Pencils

You can use a pen, marker, crayons, whatever if you'd like. I screw up so pencils are like my safety nets.



Highlighter Marker

Helps call out important things like dates and notes.





How to Set Up Your Index Page

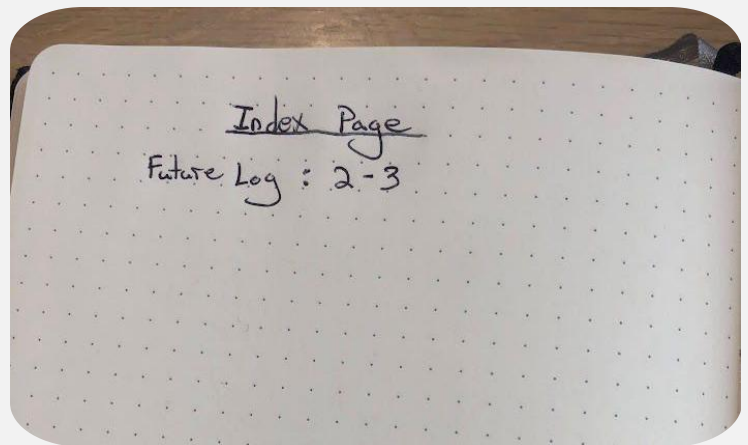
The index page is the foundation of your journal. The first page where you will organize and reference the contents.

The index page works like a table of contents. Every time you create a new page in your journal, whether that's for logging your day, finances, or writing about your feelings. You will give the page a title and a page number, then record it on your index page. Easy enough?

Let's say you want to make a page specific for notes about a book you're reading. First thing you do is find an empty page in your journal. Title the page "Book Notes," add a page number, and record it on your index page.

1 **Step 1**
Open to page 1 of your journal and title the page "Index Page."

2 **Step 2**
Write "Future Log" underneath and write 2 - 3 for the page numbers. Repeat this process for each new section you add to your journal.



That's it! You're ready to start filling out your journal. Now let's talk about how you can use this to become more organized and productive.



Part 1 : Productivity

People get the wrong impression about journaling.

People think journals are for writers and artists who use them as a tool to observe and record all the happenings of their day.

“Today I got latte at Starbucks with a friend. We talked for hours about her ex-boyfriend. Then I went to the grocery store.”

It certainly can be that, but if you’re planning to spend every day in your journal why not make it a more efficient use of your time?

Entrepreneurs like Tim Ferris use the Bullet Journal Method to record their goals, structure their days, and eliminate inefficiencies.

I know what you’re thinking: “Can’t I just use scheduling apps like Ulysses, Evernote, or google docs?”

Sure! Use the tools that work best for you, but here’s why I schedule using a written journal.

1.) You have a better chance of completing a task when you give it a time and a date.

James Clear, the author behind Atomic Habits, says time and location are the most valuable habit cues we control⁴.

Think about it, when we say “I will exercise today”, your brain doesn’t really register what that means. Will you work out in the morning or at 7 pm at night? Will you go to the gym or fire up the Peloton app?

2.) You're not bound to the limitations of digital software

You can doodle, make random notes, and adjust the schedule on your terms. With scheduling software, you’re bound to the limitations and design structures of the software you’re using.

3.) It's a confidence booster

I feel better when I write out my task each morning. There’s no guessing about what I should do and I immediately start processing how I’m going to make it happen. Write it out, then all you have to do is run the program.

Let's get to some strategies.

Future Log

The future log replaces the calendar hanging up on your fridge. It's a reference for all the major events and goals for the year.

Use it as a guide as you plan trips and weddings and important dates like birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries.

1

Step 1

Go to page 3 of your journal. Title the page Future Log. And record the page in your Index.

2

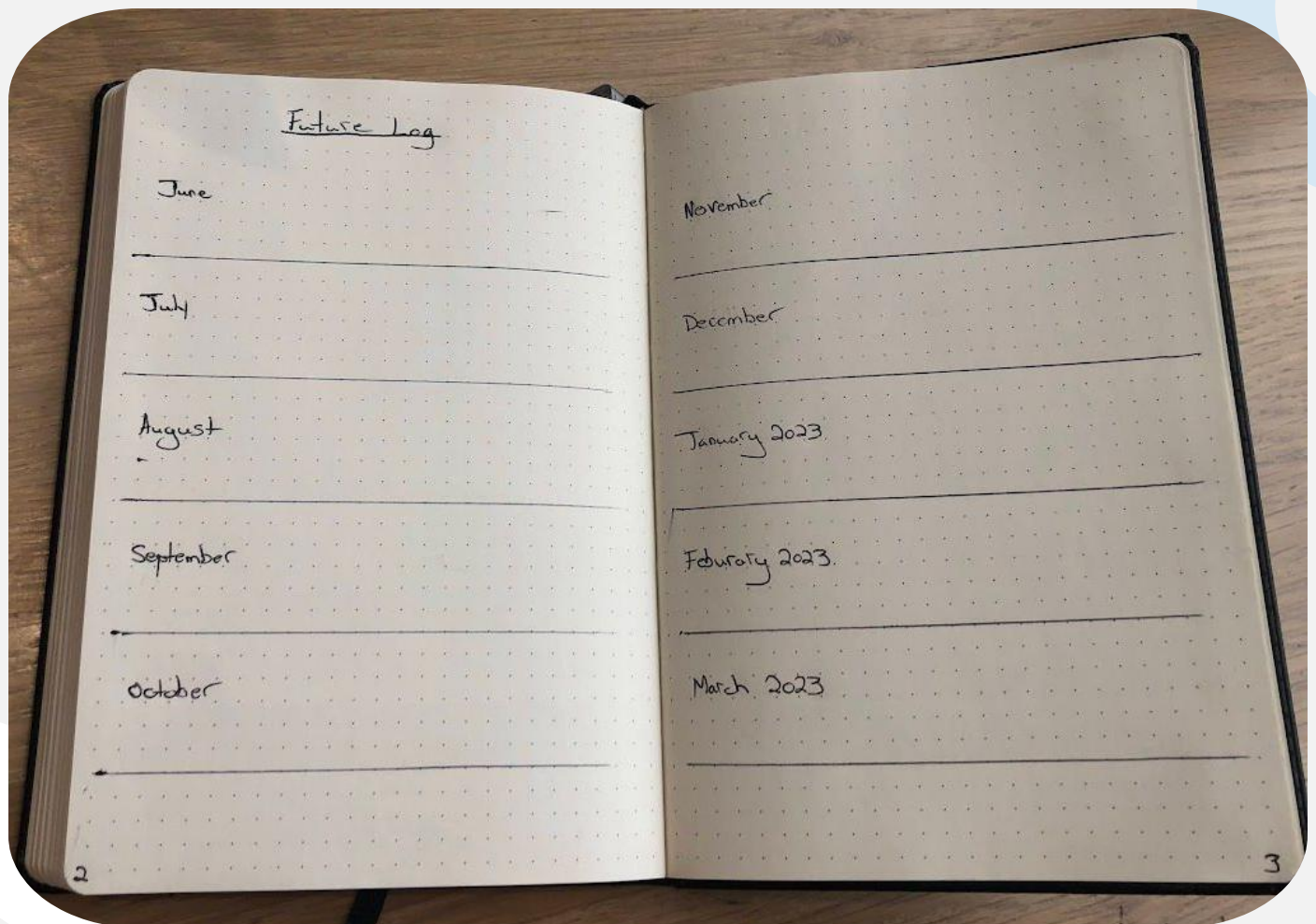
Step 2

Draw a row for each month of the calendar year (start with the current month). For example, if it's May, then start the calendar with May and finish with December.

3

Step 3

Fill out the months with the dates you wish to remember.



Daily Log

The daily log (or Rapid Log) makes the Bullet Journal method unique.

Instead of writing a grocery list of things to do each day or taking an hour to write paragraphs about what you did. Your daily log gets all that information down on paper in 5 minutes. No joke.

Use the hotkeys (or come up with your own) to write all your tasks, events, workouts, and notes during the day.

You can update your daily log as you go at specific times throughout the day. I recommend creating your list in the morning and reviewing it at night.

Why?

Because this will help you visualize your day and think about what you did right and what you could've done better.

Step 2

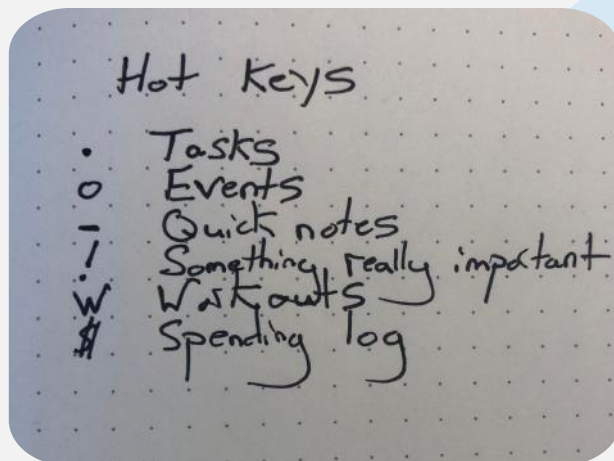
Underneath the title write today's date.

2

Step 3

Using the hot keys found below or any symbols you'd like, bullet all the major task, events, workouts and notes from your day.

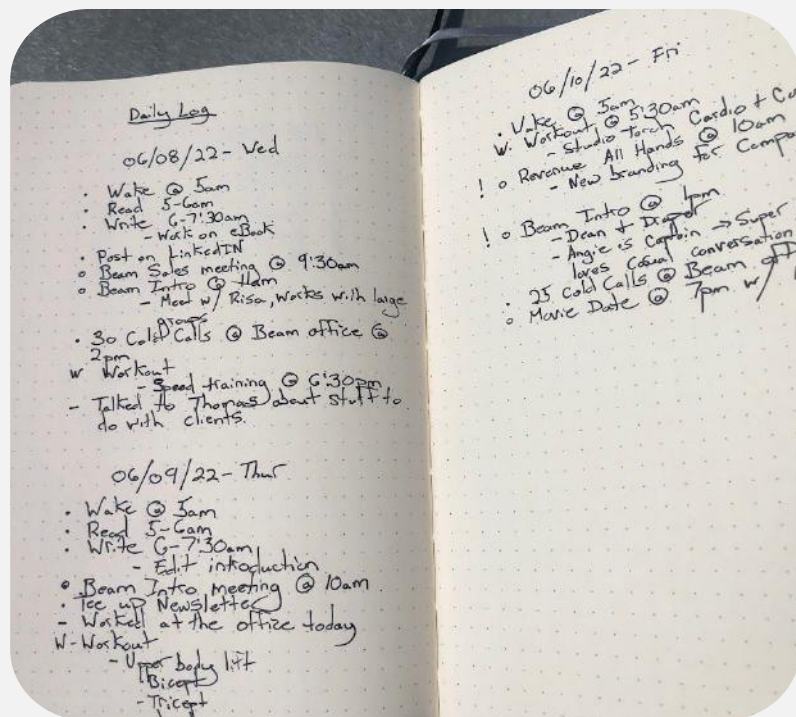
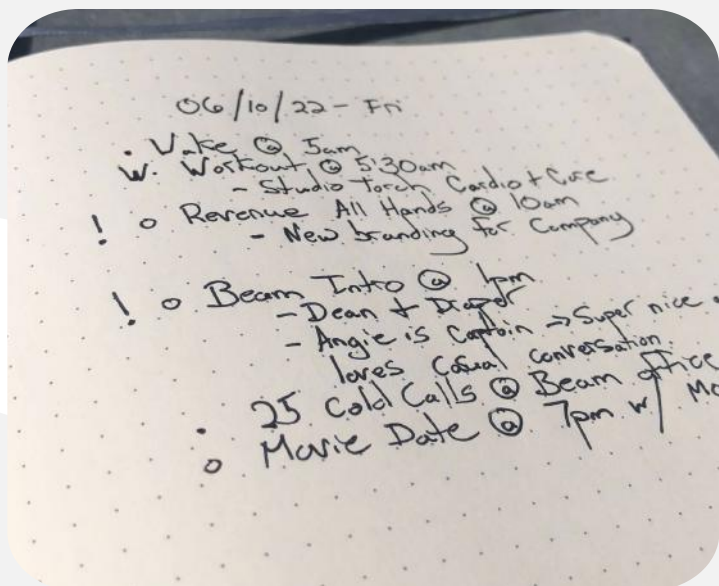
3



1

Step 1

Go to blank page and title it "Daily log." Record the page in your Index.



Big Hairy Goal: 5,4,3,2,1 Strategy

I found the 5,4,3,2,1 exercise about 3 years ago—around the time I started getting interested in entrepreneurship and content creation.

It comes from the 4-Hour Workweek. Say what you will about the guy, but Tim Ferriss masters everything he puts his mind to. Doesn't matter what that is. Podcasting, martial arts, or big game hunting.

He thinks differently about his goals and comes up with creative ways to accomplish them. That's why he's successful.

His 5,4,3,2,1 version is more complex with financial models and stricter timelines, but the main point lands in this version.

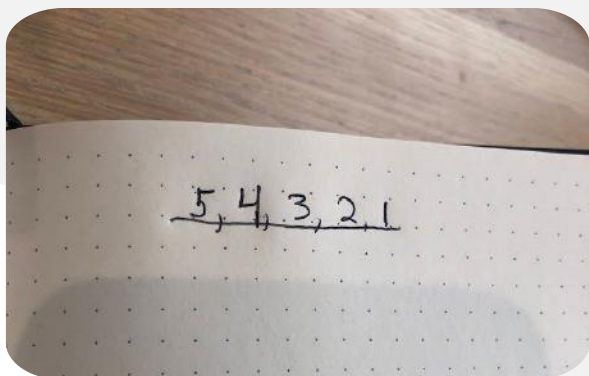
What's the main point?

Momentum.

1

Step 1

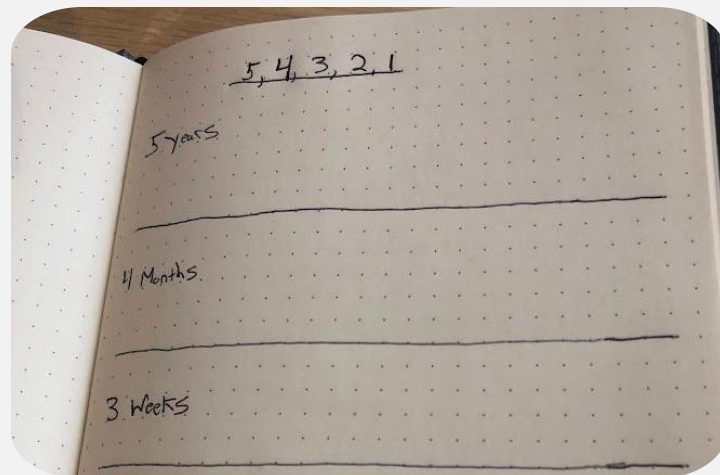
Find a blank page and title it "5,4,3,2,1". Record the page in your index.



2

Step 2

Draw 5 horizontal lines about 6 spaces apart. In each box write 5 years. 4 months. 3 weeks. 2 days and 1 hour



3

Step 3

What do you want to do in the next 5 years? Write it in the 5-year box. Dream big. Whatever it is, it should be a big hairy goal backed by a strong reason.

4

Step 4

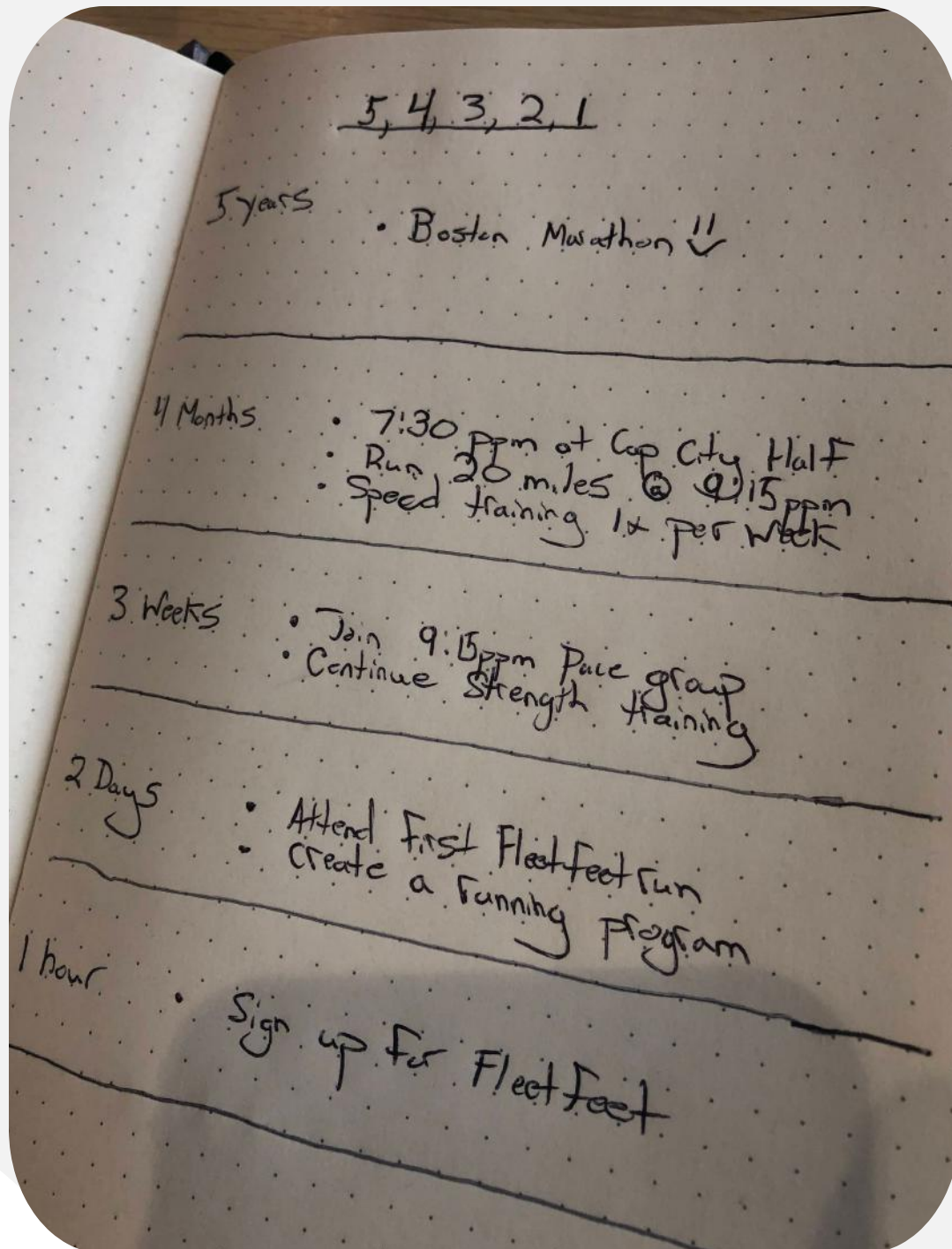
Look at your 5 year big hairy goal and break it down to a smaller goals that's doable over the next 4 months. Repeat for 3 months and 2 days.

5

Step 5

In the last section, write what you can do right now. In this hour.

What it looks like





Part 2: Personal Finances

In 2018, I woke up and found myself \$6k in credit card debt.

And yes, going broke feels like something you just wake up to. There's a famous line from Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* when the character Mike is asked how he went bankrupt.

“Gradually, then suddenly.”

Bad habits have a nasty way of sucker punching you in the mouth when you least expect it.

My progression to \$6k in debt was typical: nights out, vacations, shopping for shit I didn't need.

In case you needed a reminder, going broke sucks. The interests rate and fees associated with credit card debt prevent you from doing cool things with your time like investing, traveling, or going on dates. Plus, it's hard to be a productivity human with looming financial anxiety.

I'm proud to say that I'm cleared of debt and now consider myself a financially healthy and literate person.

How did I figure it out?

Well you have to track your income and spending meticulously. A recent study found that 55% of Americans do not use a budget to manage their finances. Another survey found that people who do keep a budget were less likely to splurge and meet their financial goals.

How did I get back on the straight and narrow? You guessed it, I used a journal.

My income from writing and work. All my expenses from rent, Studio Torch, Fleetfeet, and Uber rides. My savings and investments.

All of it.

It's tedious and I know there are apps built for this purpose.

But here's the thing.

I'm more intentional with my money when I take the time to write out everything that comes in and out of my bank account.

You know, how John D Rockefeller used to do it as a lowly clerk in Cleveland...With a pen and paper.

Here's how.

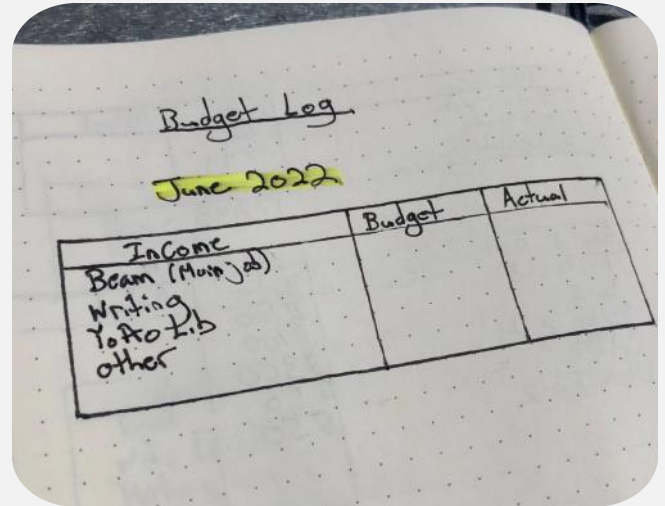
Monthly Budget



1

Step 1

Find a slate of about 12 blank pages. Title the first page "Monthly Budget." Record the page it in your Index



2

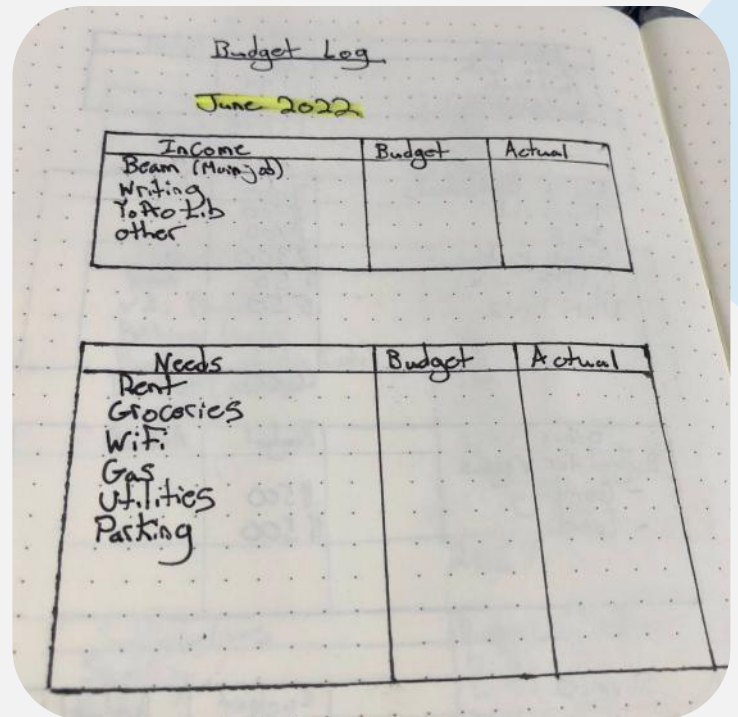
Step 2

Write the current month under the title and draw a box about 4 rows deep.

3

Step 3

Label the shape "Income." Make three columns in the box for the income source, what you expect to earn, and what you actually earn.



4

Step 4

Draw another box about 10 rows deep. Label the shape "Needs." Fill out your necessity costs. Gas Groceries, rent, etc.

5

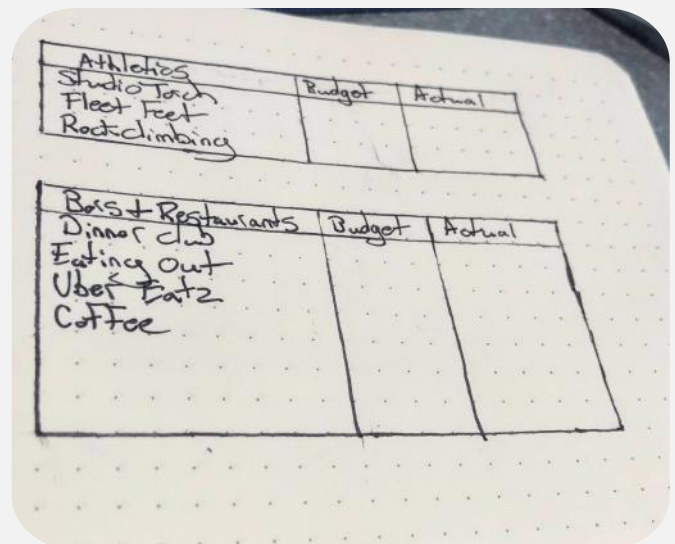
Step 5

Draw another box about 10 rows deep and label it "subscriptions." for all your monthly subscriptions like Netflix and Bumble. Repeat for process for gym, bars, restaurants, loans, etc.

6

Step 6

Draw another box and label it savings. Here you will insert all your savings and investments.



7

Step 7

Draw one last box and label it "Totals". Write income in one row and expenses in the other. Write down what you expect to make that month and what you expect to spend.

Here's a closer look

Budget Log
June 2022

Income	Budget	Actual
Beam (Munjab)		
Writing		
To Pro Lib		
other		
Totals		

Needs	Budget	Actual
Rent		
Groceries		
Wifi		
Gas		
Utilities		
Parking		
Totals		

Subscriptions	Budget	Actual
Nashua		
Hulu		
Disney+		
Amazon Prime		
Hinge		
Bumble		
LinkedIn		
Totals		

Athletics	Budget	Actual
Studio City		
Flax Feet		
Reckoning		

Best Restaurants	Budget	Actual
Dinner Club		
Eating Out		
Uber Eats		
Coffee		

Other	Budget	Actual
Budget for Vegas		
Travel		

Loans	Budget	Actual
Student Loans		

Grand Total	Budget	Actual
All Income		
All Expenses		

Budget Log
June 2022

Income	Budget	Actual
Beam (Munjab)		
Writing		
To Pro Lib		
other		

Needs	Budget	Actual
Rent		
Groceries		
Wifi		
Gas		
Utilities		
Parking		

Athletics	Budget	Actual
Studio City		
Flax Feet		
Reckoning		

Best Restaurants	Budget	Actual
Dinner Club		
Eating Out		
Uber Eats		
Coffee		

Other	Budget	Actual
Budget for Vegas		
Travel		

Loans	Budget	Actual
Student Loans		

Grand Total	Budget	Actual
All Income		
All Expenses		



Part 3: Emotions

At first, journaling helped me gain mindfulness over practical things like productivity and finances.

Then something happened. I won't sugarcoat it. I got my heartbroken. That's not easy to admit.

It's not easy to admit that my world got flipped. It's not easy to admit that emotions got in the way of my happiness and nothing made sense for a while.

Heartbreak sounds trivial because it's the plot of every rom-com and love ballad. But it's something we should take seriously. New studies reveal that the side effects of heartbreak are just as devastating to your health as overeating and smoking. As a matter of fact, the journalist Florence Williams got diagnosed with diabetes after her husband left her.

WTF?

There's plenty of advice on YouTube about getting through emotional turbulence. That it takes time, therapy, or a long vacation.

Whatever...

There's only one strategy that all scientists seem to have a consensus.

Writing about it.

One study conducted at Cambridge University reported that journaling for 15–20 minutes a day can help improve well-being after traumatic and stressful events.

As the psychologist, John Dewey³ said, *"When we take note of trauma our working memory improves since our brains are freed from the enormously taxing job of processing that experience, and we sleep better."*

Look, at some point we must admit that complicated emotions arise whether or not we want them to. Anger, sadness, and fear, they come and go. We don't always control it. We can control where we place those emotions so we don't make things worse.

Sure, you can try to drink them away, work them away, Or ignore them.

Or you could get curious. Articulate your emotions. Give them an objective reality away from the confines of your imagination.

It didn't solve all my problems, but it made me feel 20% better, and if you found something that made you feel 20% better, wouldn't you do it?

I'm guessing you would.

Here's how to journal your emotions.

Daily Stories



1

Step 1

Find a blank page. Title the page “Daily Stories” and record the page in your index.

2

Step 2

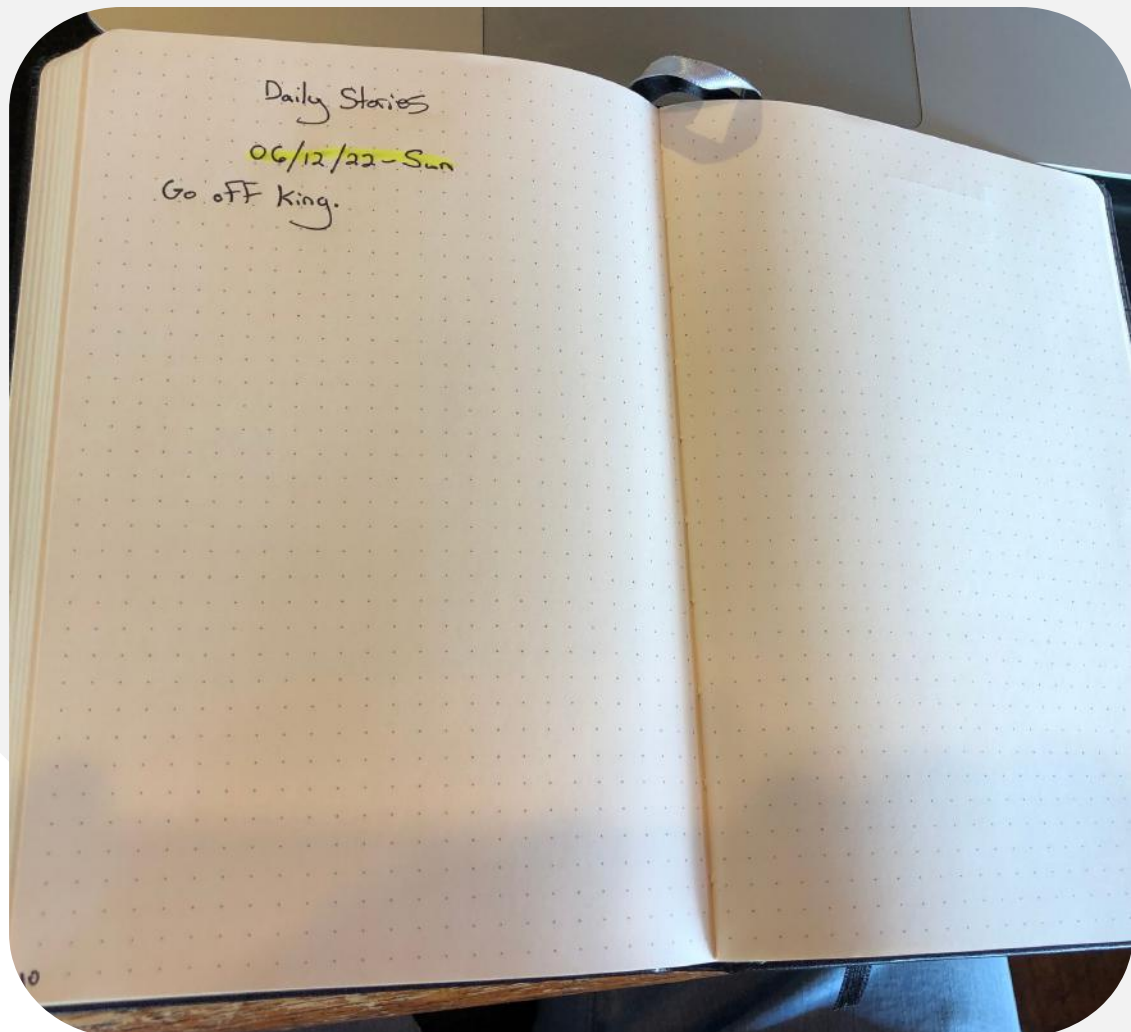
Write today’s date.

3

Step 3

Write. This is your space. The worst thing you can do is pretend someone will read this section. It’s not a performance. Use this section to reflect on how you’re feeling. The work assignment that has you restless. The fight you had with your significant other. The Instagram post that made you feel like comparing yourself to others.

Everything and anything. Write about it. I once wrote 300 words about why I always check my Instagram stories to see who viewed them. Give it a name (or several). Work through your problems on paper. You will be shocked by how much better you feel by the end of your session.





Part 4: Values

Hands down the most important sections of your journal.

They will also be the hardest to live out.

Why is that?

Because your rules and values are you. They're what you deeply care about. What makes your happiest The lens in which you see the world.

But Cal, That's just me being me? that doesn't sound so hard.

But it is. We all betray ourselves. We get swept up in toxic relationships at the expense of our mental health. Buy into get rich quick schemes. Take a jobs we hate for all the wrong reasons. Pick fights with friends. Procrastinate.

Let me tell you story about my own experience.

Commercial real estate was once my forever career.

The high status. The grind. The cool events. I couldn't get enough of it.

Then a strange thing happened.

I changed.

I found that I didn't always mesh well with the industry's culture. The commission-based compensation started screwing with my mental health. I wanted to explore my creative side. It's a horrible feeling to look around an office, at all your friends and mentors, and realize you don't belong anymore.

But it was the moment I recognized my values.

Creativity. Freedom. Experience. Relationships.

They also deserved my attention.

So I switched careers.

Articulating your rules and values helps you remain centered and true to yourself.

Here's how. Let's start with your rules for life.

Values Hierarchy

Your core values are the well from which all your decisions draw from.

They represent the qualities, traits, and ideas that bring you the most joy.

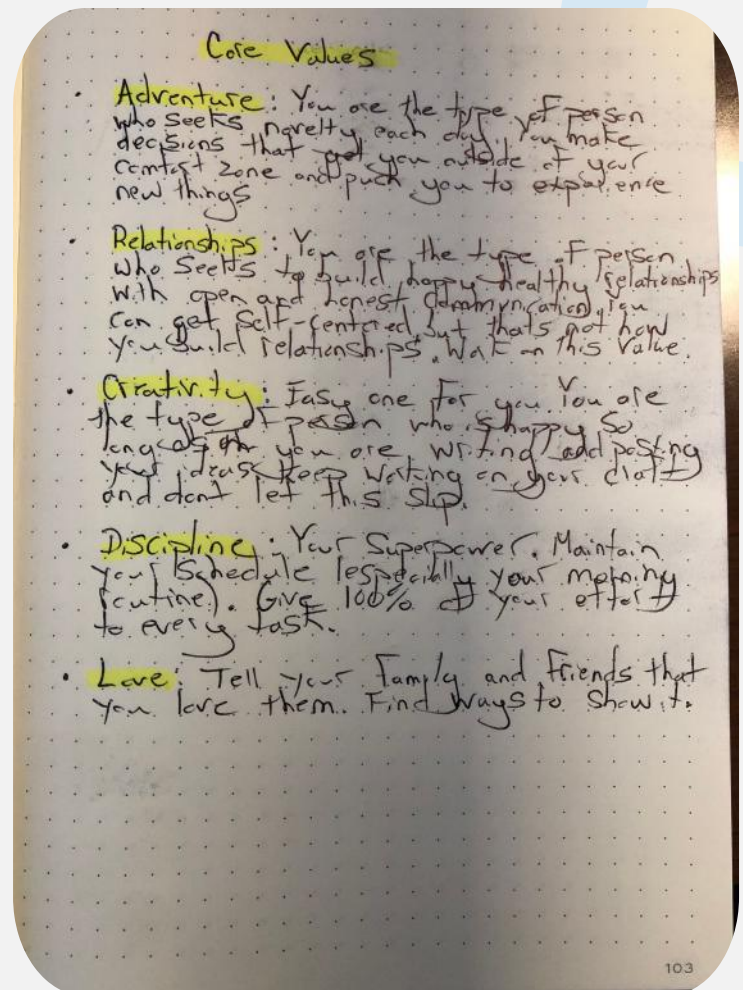
They are the things you've deemed most important to your life. If ignored, then colossal problems occur.

There's a great [article](#) written by Kat Cole⁶ (The COO of Athletic Greens) who forged an extraordinary professional and personal life because she decided to prioritize her core values at a young age.

If you're like most people and having trouble coming up with your core values, she recommends that you reflect and ask.

- What matters most to me now? (If you don't know where to start, Google Core Values Lists')
- Chose your top few values, and rank them. 1 is too few, 10 is too many
- As you think about different opportunities with various combinations of attributes at the end of the exercise, ask, "To what degree is this value able to be met?"

Let's get them on paper!



1

Step 1

Find a blank page. Title the page "Core Values" and record the page in your index.

2

Step 2

Using Kat Cole's reflection method. Identify 4-6 core values and write them down.

3

Step 3

Define what this word means to you. Value words mean different things to different people at different times. In that sense defining your values is a transitory process. That's why constant reflection is important. And hey! That's what your journal is for.

12 Rules for Life

We respond well to rules in society.

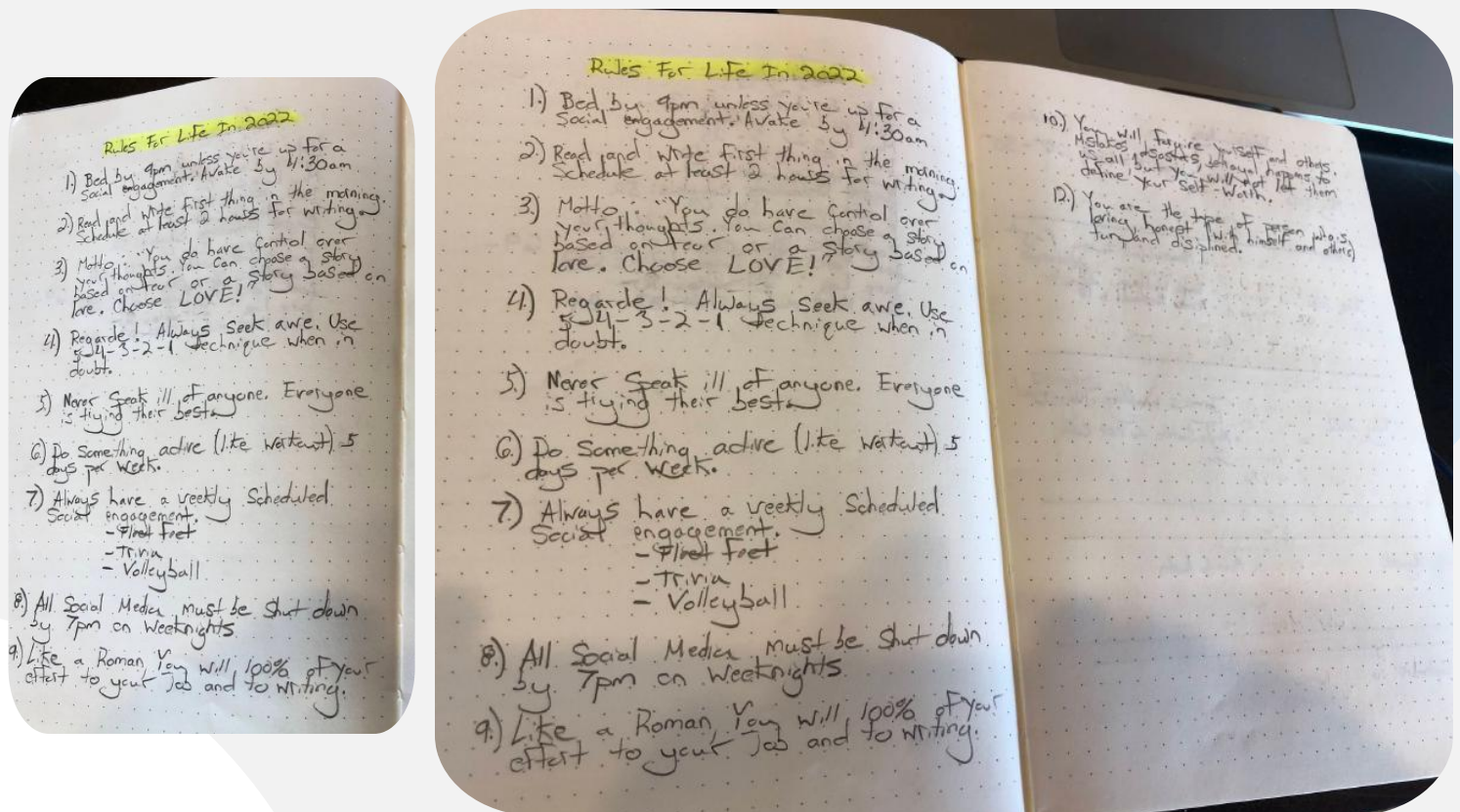
Pay your taxes on time. Don't be late for class. Stop at red lights.

Society creates rules with good intentions (mostly). They're boundaries we shouldn't cross for our own good. Why not create your own set of rules that you know for a fact will leave you happier, healthier, and wise?

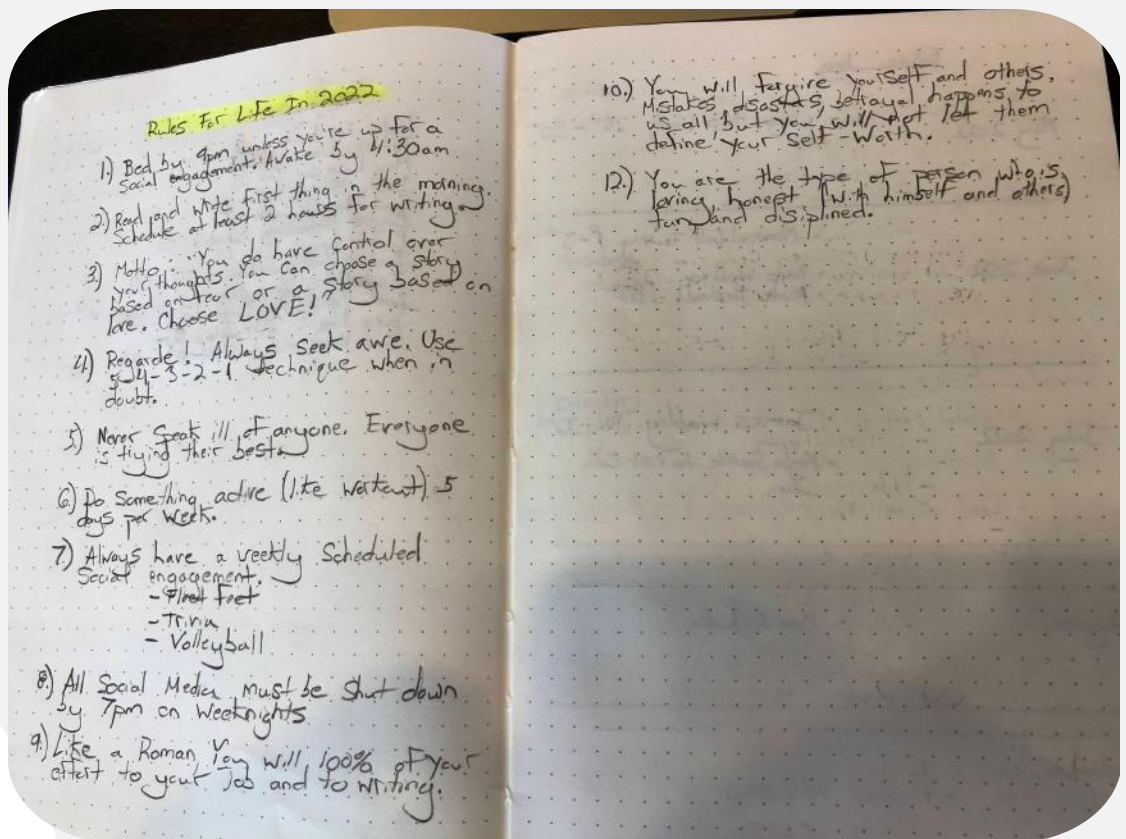
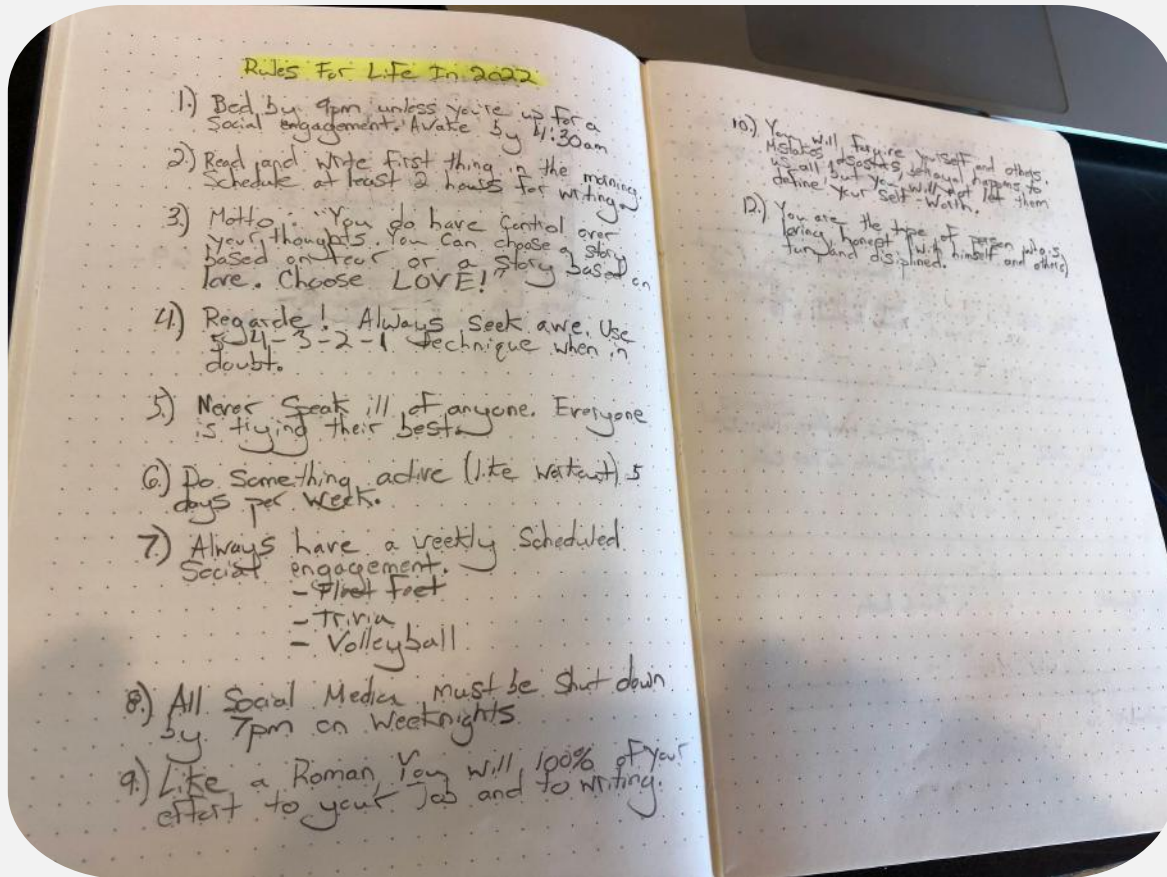
I stole the 12 Rules for Life section from the renowned psychologist Jordan Peterson⁷, who wrote a book by the same name. Although my rules are a little more direct than his, the psychology remains the same: Rules are an antidote to chaos.

Chaos is what occurs in the trivial. When you get laid off. Your significant other leaves. A loved one dies. According to the stoics and psychologists like Peterson, the antidote to all that mess is to be heroic. To walk the line between order and chaos and commit to a higher standard. To shoulder the weight of living and continue to improve yourself despite all the shit.

Your rules are your ten commandments. They're tattooed in your journal. You will see them every day when you open your journal. You will remember that you wrote them for a reason. They're your path, and no one wants to betray their path..



Here's A Closer Look



Extras #1: Book Notes

Have you ever read something that made you go “that’s interesting” and then forget it 2 days later?

We all do, and that’s the problem with reading. We zoom through books so we can stick out our chests and tell our friends that we’re smart but we actually don’t learn anything.

That’s not reading. In fact, you’d probably learn more from watching selling sunset.

So how can we read with more efficiency?

The same way you’d study for social studies exam in high school. Take notes.

Brain performance coach and author of the book “Limitless,” Jim Kwick⁸ says that we often forget what we read because we’re not actively thinking about how it applies to our lives.

“We don’t get excited about how this knowledge could change our lives for the better.

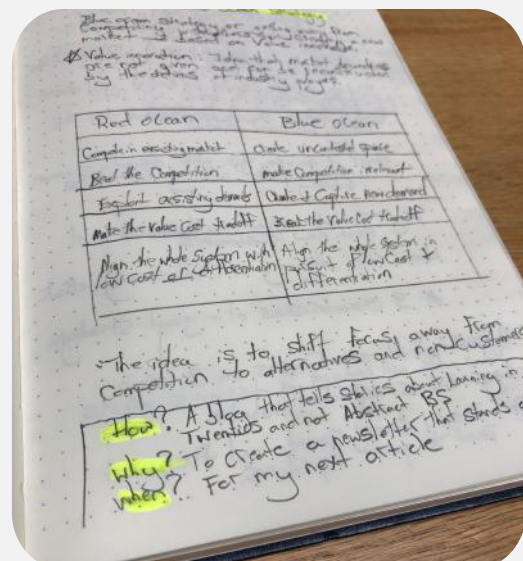
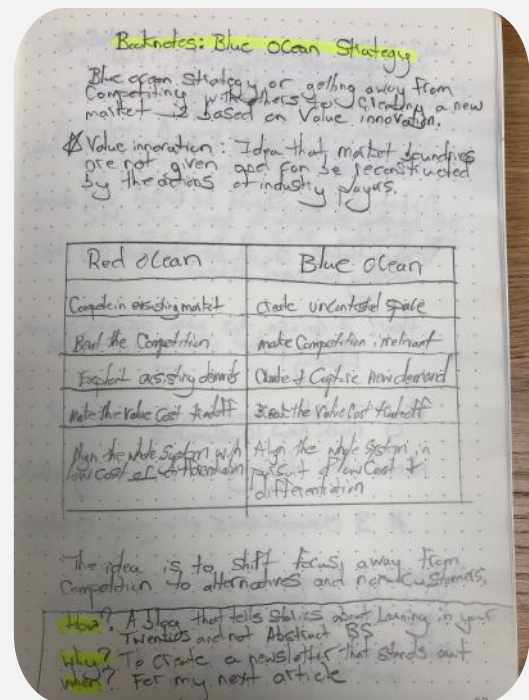
Here’s what he advises:

“Get excited about how you will benefit from what you are about to learn and what you will do with your new knowledge. Remember all learning is state-dependent. Choose states of joy, fascination, and curiosity.”

You accomplish this by asking three key questions while you’re reading.

- 1) How can I use this?
- 2) Why must I use this?
- 3) When will I use this?

Try the exercise using your journal.



Extras #2: Cool Phrases

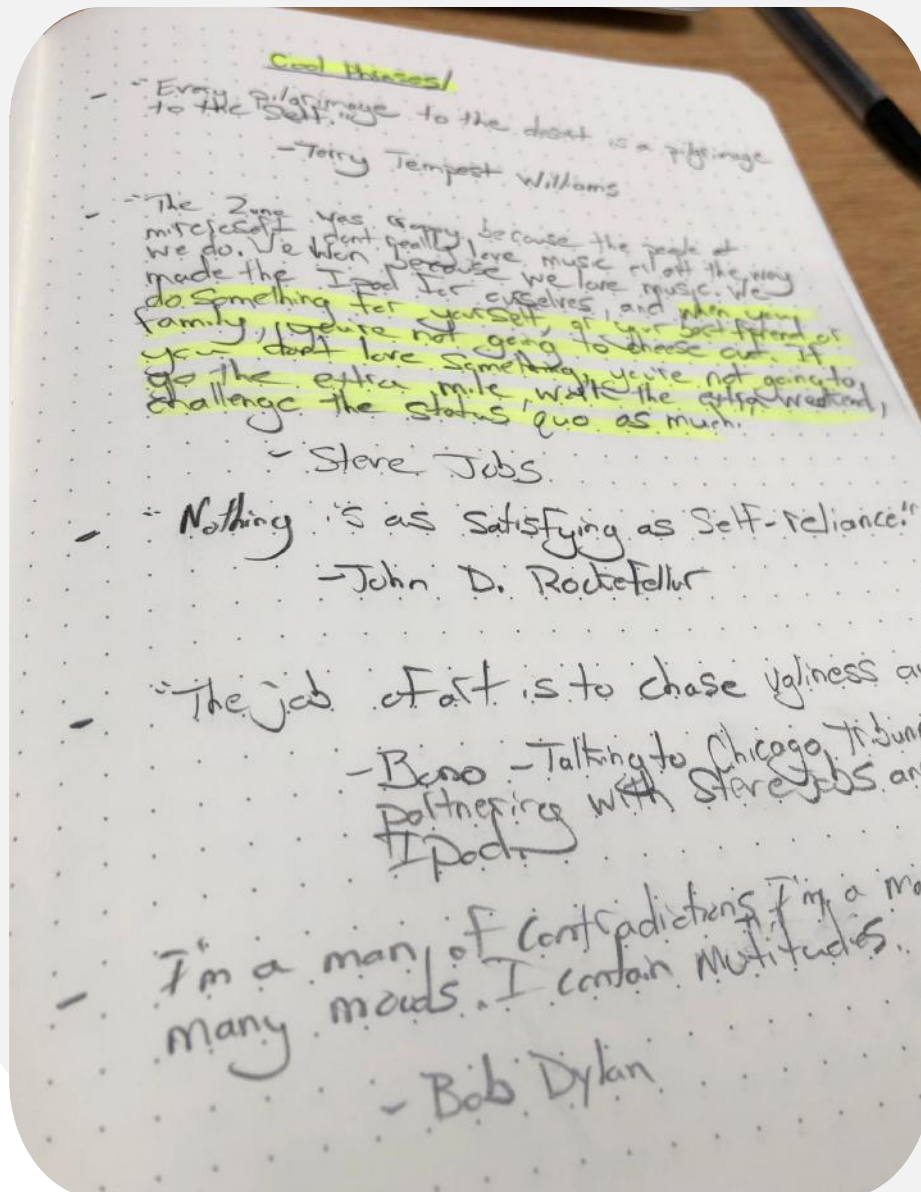
Has a quote ever made stop whatever you're doing and say "Wow! That's powerful!"

Like what we read in books, we go about our lives and a week later forget all about the cool quotes we hear. All that wisdom gone.

The cool phrases section is your antidote to this human mishap.

Make a section in your journal for interesting quotes and phrases that you read or heard from friends and mentors. I stole this habit from entrepreneur Tim Ferris who bookmarks ideas he likes in books with a "CP" for cool phrase.

Do this for a few months and you will build a library of unstoppable wisdom.



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