

How to Create a Kick-Ass Life: 15 Of My Favorite Timeless Tips

1. Woody Allen on showing up.

“Eighty percent of success is showing up”

One of the biggest and simplest things you can do to ensure more success in your life – whether it is in your social life, your career or with your health – is simply to show up more. If you want to improve your health then one of the most important and effective things you can do is just to show up at the gym every time you should be there.

The weather might be bad, you might not feel like going and you find yourself having all these other things you just must do. If you still go, if you show up at the gym when motivation is low you will improve a whole lot faster than if you just stayed at home relaxing on the sofa.

I think this applies to most areas of life. If you write or paint more, every day perhaps, you will improve quickly. If you get out more you can meet more new friends. If you go on more dates your chances of meeting someone special increases. In a way success is quite a bit about numbers. The really successful people have often tried and failed a lot more than the average person.

2. Nike on taking action.

“Just do it!”

Quite a while back I sat around and thought about Nike’s old catchphrase that seems to pop up from time to time. I thought: “Well, that’s easy to say, but it’s not so easy to just do”. So I concluded that it was just another catchphrase that people throw out because well, they have to say something.

Now I can see that there is actually some really useful advice in that catchphrase. So what changed? Well, I guess I figured out that you can’t really sit and think yourself out of something. And I figured out that I was thinking way too much. And that I identified closely with what I thought and felt.

This tip is connected to the previous one. People often have a hard time with showing up consistently. Why? Because of inner resistance and bad habits (such as overthinking things). Sometimes you can motivate yourself out of such a negative headspace by, for example, reviewing why you want to show up (improve your health, earn more money etc).

Sometimes that won’t work though. And it’s those times that can send people spiralling into negative spirals going downwards or positive spirals going upwards. Because some people will stay at home when they encounter the resistance. And some will just go and do what they want to do anyway, despite that their mind and emotions might be saying “no, no, no!”

Don’t trust your thoughts or feelings too much or take them too seriously. You may want change in your life. But your mind may want homeostasis (everything to remain stable). And so there is a conflict. And so there is an inner resistance to change.

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You don't want to get stuck in over thinking things or thinking that your thoughts or emotions are in complete control of what you do. You want to stop listening to what they are saying – or screaming – and go and do whatever it is that you deep down want to do.

3. Anaïs Nin on what we see.

“We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.”

This was one of the biggest revelations I had when I first got into personal development.

I realized that the world was perhaps not fixed in some pattern. I realized that I was mistaking my view of the world with the world itself.

Because the world can be viewed from many different points. And it does change according to who is watching it.

An optimistic person will for example notice the opportunities, things to be grateful for and that even though things may be hard or bad right now they will change once again. The pessimist will likely stay stuck in inaction, think that his or her world will not change and look down on the optimist as some gullible and naïve fool and that way find a way to feel superior and good about himself/herself.

I have tried both ways in my life. I highly recommend going the optimistic route.

This quote is also interesting because it helps you realize that what you see in your world can also say things about you.

If you find a lot of hostility and standoffishness towards you in your world then perhaps you are more like that than you would like to think too?

If something about people irritates you then perhaps it is because that quality is something you yourself have and it is something you do not like about yourself?

Think about your world and what it can tell you about yourself. Think about yourself and how you may be interpreting the world in ways that do not serve you very well.

4. Confucius on the simplicity of life.

“Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.”

The mind loves to think. So it thinks and thinks about things. Making them more and more complex than they ever really were. And so you bog yourself down with too many thoughts and perhaps a lack of action due to things just seeming too complicated and hard.

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Don't get lost in details and unimportant things. Realize what is most important in your life and discard what you don't need.

Then spend more time and energy on the important things in your life. And stop thinking so much and instead take action to gain a better understanding of life and of yourself.

5. Winnie the Pooh on appreciating the little things.

"Nobody can be un-cheered with a balloon"

Daily happiness is to a large part about appreciating the small things. If you just allow yourself to be happy when accomplishing a big goal or when having some great luck then you are making life harder than it needs to be.

Instead, focus on appreciating things that you may take for granted.

Take two minutes and find things in your life you can appreciate now. If you want a few suggestions, here are a few of the things that I like to appreciate:

- My food.
- The weather.
- My health.
- Friends and family.
- This blog and the opportunity to write about what I want.
- You, the reader.
- Myself and the fine things about me.

The funny thing is that if you just start appreciating something you can very quickly start jumping around with your attention and appreciate just about anything around you. You may start with the food you are eating right now. Then move your attention to the phone and appreciate that you can contact anyone – and be contacted by anyone – you'd like. You might then move your attention outside, through the window and see the wonderful sunshine, then kids having fun with a football and then a really attractive person walking by. And so on.

Or you can take a couple of minutes each night and write down 5 things you are grateful for in a journal.

Doing any of these two exercises will over time make it easier to naturally in everyday situations be more appreciative and grateful for your life.

6. Audrey Hepburn on worrying what others are thinking about you.

"I never think of myself as an icon. What is in other people's minds is not in my mind. I just do my thing."

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One of the biggest part of thinking and doing what you really want is to stop caring so much about what other people think of you.

A lot of the actions you take – or do not take – may be because you need approval from other people. When we are young we get grades in school that tells us that we are “good”. This makes it very easy to create a life where you always go looking for the world to give you the next hit of approval. It may be from your family, boss, friends, co-workers and so on.

But this need creates neediness. And the stronger the need the stronger the neediness. And so other people will sense this. And approval may be withheld or used to manipulate you. Or they may just not like your neediness.

The people on the other hand that do not care that much about getting approval often do more of what they want deep inside. They may be considered courageous for instance. So the way they live their lives will gain appreciation and approval from the people around them. It’s a bit counter-intuitive.

7. Helen Keller on fear.

“Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold.”

“Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature.... Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.”

You cannot sit on your hands and take it easy and hope to get things done. At least not the things you really want to get done (which often may be the things you fear doing).

Why do people sit on their hands and get comfortable in their ease and quiet though? Well, one big reason is because they think they are safe there. But the truth is what Keller says; safety is mostly a superstition. It is created in your mind to make you feel safe. But there is no safety out there really. It is all uncertain and unknown.

You may get laid off.

Someone may break up with you and leave.

Illness will probably strike.

Death will certainly strike in your surroundings and at some point come to visit you too.

Who knows what will happen an hour from now?

This superstition of safety is not just something negative. It’s also created by your mind so you can function in life. No point in going all paranoid about what could happen a minute from now day in and day out. But there is also not that much point in clinging to an illusion of safety. So you need to find balance where you don’t obsessed by the uncertainty but also recognize that it is there and live accordingly.

When you stop clinging to your safety life also becomes a whole lot more exciting and interesting. You are no longer as confined by an illusion and realize that you set your limits for what you can do and to a large extent

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create your own freedom in the world. You are no longer building walls to keep yourself safe as those walls wouldn't protect you anyway. You can instead start your own daring adventure. Perhaps slowly at first, but still.

8. Winston Churchill on your troubles.

“When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened”

Most things you fear will happen never happen. They are just monsters in your own mind. And if they happen then they will most often not be as painful or bad as you expected. Worrying is most often just a waste of time.

This is of course easy to say. But if you think back and remind yourself of how little of what you feared throughout your life that has actually happened you can start to release more and more worry from your thoughts.

This makes it a lot easier to start doing more of what you really want in life. And to move through your day to day life with a lighter, happier and more optimistic attitude.

9. Wayne Dyer on what you teach people.

“Maxim for life: You get treated in life the way you teach people to treat you.”

This is a very important point and something I think is perhaps often missed by people who want to improve their social lives and make it more positive. They may think “well, I have been so nice towards everyone for the last few months but it doesn't seem to have changed their behaviour towards me much”.

This is the “nice guy/girl” problem. He or she is very nice but there is no assertiveness. There is no changed feeling within about how you feel you deserve to be treated. You may still be nice just to get approval from other people. You feel the craving need. And you then are less likely to get the approval.

We do to a large extent choose how we want to be treated. How you expect people to treat you can have a big effect on how you allow yourself to act and how people around you view and treat you. If you start creating a role for yourself where you always let people do what they want to you then you may create some pretty destructive and negative things.

- You may create an identity for yourself where you get used to always taking whatever anyone does out. You create a kind of victim identity where you may look happy on the outside but don't feel so good on the inside. But since you have gotten used to it after a while you may accept it and think that: **this is just who I am.**
- You may create a concept in the minds of the people around you that it's OK to treat you this way. Either because you seem so positive despite what they are doing so they think it's OK. Or just because you aren't saying no and some people may take advantage of that.

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Look, you can't please everyone. I think both Eleanor Roosevelt and Buddha have mentioned something along the lines that whatever you do there will always be people who don't like what you are doing. And that's OK. That's normal.

Going around trying to please everyone at your own expense isn't healthy though. Or even a realistic thing to attempt. It eats away at you both mentally and physically.

So be nice. Be positive. But make sure you set your own standards, rules and limits too. And remember that you might as well do what you want because there will always be critics.

10. Kahlil Gibran on sorrow and joy.

“The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain. Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven? And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives? When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy. When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see in truth that you are weeping for that which has been your delight.”

Your pain and sorrow is in retrospect often a gift. It makes you stronger. More empathic and understanding. It helps you out in some way and guides you. You can always look back it when you feel down and be happy that you aren't in that place anymore.

And it's often in the sorrow that we later on create our strengths. Many very fit people started on that path because they had hit a big low point health wise. And many great speakers or just very social people may have been being deathly shy at a young age. It's to a large extent all that emotional leverage and all those painful emotions that at least initially give people a great motivation to change their lives in a radical way.

Your sorrow expands the spectrum of human experience, understanding and emotions for you. You become more grateful because of your sorrow. The sorrow carves deeper. And the deeper it carves, the more joy you will also be able to contain. The sad times make the happy times even sweeter.

11. Mahatma Gandhi on being the change.

“You must be the change you want to see in the world.”

“As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world – that is the myth of the atomic age – as in being able to remake ourselves.”

If you change yourself you will change your world. If you change how you think then you will change how you feel and what actions you take. And so the world around you will change. Not only because you are now viewing your environment through new lenses of thoughts and emotions but also because the change within can allow you to take action in ways you wouldn't have – or maybe even have thought about – while stuck in your old thought patterns.

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And the problem with changing your outer world without changing yourself is that **you will still be you** when you reach that change you have strived for. You will still have your flaws, anger, negativity, self-sabotaging tendencies etc. intact.

And so in this new situation you will still not find what you hoped for since your mind is still seeping with that negative stuff. And if you get more without having some insight into and distance from your ego it may grow more powerful. Since your ego loves to divide things, to find enemies and to create separation it may start to try to create even more problems and conflicts in your life and world.

12. Ernest Hemingway on keeping your eyes on where you are going.

“Never mistake motion for action.”

It’s very easy to get lost in busy work. You may spend much time in your in-box or filing and organizing things. But at the end of the day or week, what have you accomplished?

Just because you’re moving doesn’t mean that you are moving in the direction you really want to go. To do that you have to do the things that you know are really important and in alignment with your goals. And not getting lost in busy work.

So, improve your effectiveness and productivity. But, more importantly, never lose your view of your big picture. And take the action and do the things you need to do to get yourself where you want to go.

13. Samuel Beckett on failure.

“Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.”

This is an easy and relaxed attitude towards failure. An attitude that says that failure is as just about as normal as cooking your food or brushing your teeth. I remind myself of this one when I have failed or made a mistake. Or when the fear of failure pops up. It pulls out all the drama one might associate with failure. And makes it easier and less burdensome to take action.

14. Kristen Zambucka on reality and changing your world.

“Though I might travel afar, I will meet only what I carry with me, for every man is a mirror. We see only ourselves reflected in those around us.

Their attitudes and actions are only a reflection of our own.

The whole world and its condition has its counter parts within us all.

Turn the gaze inward. Correct yourself and your world will change.”

This is perhaps my favorite quote. I like it because it reminds me that even though there is big, big world out there with many possibilities and people in the end big change in your life comes down to you changing yourself.

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As I mentioned above, it's very easy to get stuck in thinking that your perspective, the lens through which you view reality is reality itself. But you can't really see reality. You can only see it filtered through the lens. And the lens is you.

Changing, for example, a very negative attitude to a very positive one changes how you view yourself and your entire world. But it's very hard to convince anyone of this. You just have to choose to try another perspective and just use it for a month or so. Even though homeostasis may want to draw you back to the comfortable stability of your old viewpoint. Which may cause you to rationalize that this positive attitude stuff is uncool or cheesy.

Truth is life will never be as in your dreams if you don't change and correct yourself. No one is coming to save you. No book or personal development guru, not your parents, no knight/lady in white armour. Yes, people around you can of course be a big help.

But as an adult in this world it is time to grow up and save yourself. Not just because it is the right thing to do. But also because it is what actually works.

15. Mark Twain on following your heart.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did so. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

An awesome quote. And I really don't have much to add to that one. Well, maybe to write it down and keep it as a daily reminder – on your fridge or bathroom door – of what you can actually do with your life.