

Getting A Little Better Every Day (Free Version)

A Guide To Successful Systems and
Habits

The Day Warrior

The Day Warrior LLC

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To my loving wife and boys who encouraged me write this book.

*To the members of the Brigade. This group of bold and courageous men
were the catalyst for this books creation.*

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Introduction

“Every skill you acquire doubles your odds of success.”

Scott Adams

There is a power in combining complementary skills to create unique advantages. Instead of striving to be the best at one thing, consider the importance of becoming “good enough” in multiple areas to amplify your overall value and opportunities for success.

A skill stack allows you to combine abilities in a way that magnifies your value. For example, being a good communicator and having technical expertise can make you an invaluable asset in many industries.

A diverse skill stack prepares you to adapt to various situations and challenges, making you more resilient in an ever-changing world.

Few people have the exact combination of skills you do, which can set you apart and make you more competitive in your field. You don’t need to be the best at any one skill.

Being above average in multiple skills is often more practical and achievable, yet it can make you highly effective and successful.

By intentionally cultivating and combining skills, you create a unique profile that opens doors to opportunities and positions you for success in ways that a single skill alone might not.

This book aims to get your mind flowing about various skills you could pick up to increase the inventory of your unique skill stack.

What Does It Mean To Get A Little Better Daily?

“If you can get 1% better each day for one year, you’ll end up 37 times better by the time you’re done.”

James Clear

I highlight this all the time in my newsletters and X posts. What does it mean to get better every day? If you get 1% better every day, over time, this will add up, and you will be able to measure some level of success towards achieving your goals.

In my newsletter, *Systems vs Goals*, I dive deep into the importance of these two items.

Goals are the desired outcomes we aim to achieve. Goals are the destinations of dreams we want to reach. They are specific, measurable, and time-bound. For example, "Losing 20 pounds in three months," "Write and publish a book by the end of the year," or "Save \$10,000 by next December."

Goals are tangible, time-sensitive, and measurable. They are designed to give you a finish line to cross.

On the other hand, **Systems** are the vehicles that get you there. They are the "how"-consistent habits, processes, and routines that drive daily progress and lead to the desired outcomes.

Instead of focusing on the finish line, systems focus on the journey: eating a balanced diet, exercising daily, or setting aside 30 minutes daily for reading and writing.

Getting Better 1% Every Day

What does it mean to get 1% better every day?

The power of getting 1% better each day lies in the concept of **compound growth**—small, consistent improvements that accumulate over time to create remarkable results. Here's why it's transformative:

- **Exponential Growth.** At first, when we try to improve by just 1% each day, it might seem insignificant, but over a year, these small gains are compounded. By the end of the year, you could be nearly **37 times better** than when you started. Track your progress and make it visible so you can see the value that investing in 1% improvements each day makes in your personal and professional life.
- **Builds Momentum.** Motivation is an emotion, but it is not very dependable. Building habits and systems that create small wins is a more predictable method of building confidence and motivation. Progress or wins create momentum each day.

A Few Examples

Reading 10 pages a Day equals roughly 12-18 books a year. That translates to approximately a book a month. How many of you struggle to sit down and read a book? That book, whether 50, 100, or even 200 pages, often feels like an impossible task to accomplish. Reading one book for some is a challenging task. Reading twelve books in a year feels like a mission impossible.

Suppose you break this scary task of reading 12 or more books in a year to just 10 pages a day. Suddenly, the small wins can come easier. Each day you read 10 pages turns into a small win. Seven days turns into a week. Four weeks turn into a month, and 30 days of small wins

turn into medium-sized win; you have completed a book and increased your knowledge, which you can start to apply to building new skills and experiences.

Walking 30 minutes after each meal. Having a goal to lose weight can feel overwhelming. A weight loss journey's daily ups and downs can be very frustrating. Many of us can quickly lose a pound or two, only to regain the weight over the next few days. How many of us have met our short-term goal of losing 10 to 20 pounds only to rebound and gain it all back?

How do you reframe the idea of losing weight into positive habits you will improve daily, leading to a healthier weight over time?

The average person can walk about 3500 steps for each 30-minute walk. What if you start by walking 30 minutes each day after one of your meals? Think of all the daily wins this can lead to. Did you realize that 30 minutes of walking daily will lead to approximately 1,277,500 steps in one year?

Doing this will transform the negative, and mostly demotivating, weight loss experience into daily motivating wins that accomplish your walking goals. This positive habit is easy to maintain and has many health benefits, such as improved digestion, blood sugar management, heart health, weight management, better sleep, and increased circulation.

It is also a perfect activity to test getting better every day. Start with 30 minutes after one meal, then add 30 minutes after meal two, and finally add 30 minutes after meal three. Do you know what this leads to? Approximately 3,832,500 steps a year! That translated roughly to

1800 miles. Walking 30 minutes daily would allow you to complete Spain's Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route.

Save \$5 every day. Good money management is an excellent opportunity to get better every day. It is easy to measure and track and is one of the most essential life skills we can teach our kids. If you save \$5 a day, this would be \$1,825 in savings by the end of the year. This is enough for a short holiday, a new laptop, or a rainy day fund. Another great option is to take that money and introduce your kids to the wonderful world of index funds. Investing \$5 a day for 45 years in an index fund with a 10% annual return would result in a future value of \$1,376,000. Your kids would be millionaires in their forties if they learned this skill from you. Their learning experience will be even better if they observe you practicing this real-life skill.

Documenting one small win daily. All of us need to journal more and celebrate our wins more. Keeping a journal is foundational to figuring out where you are, where you're going, and how to stay on course. It's not just writing—it's an active step toward building a better version of yourself. Writing in a journal daily and reflecting on what you are thankful for can benefit your mental health and overall well-being. Ensure you focus on what you are grateful for. Do not forget those small wins. If you only remember one from this article, the key to personal growth is not just focusing on what is wrong. You must also appreciate your accomplishments and take proactive and consistent steps toward your goals. Practice gratitude for what you have daily. Recording this daily for one year creates a powerful record of your progress. Something to continuously learn from and celebrate your progress.

Learning One New Skill Every Week

There is a power in combining complementary skills to create unique advantages. Instead of striving to be the best at one thing, consider the importance of becoming “good enough” in multiple areas to amplify your overall value and opportunities for success.

A skill stack allows you to combine abilities to magnify your value. For example, being a good communicator and having technical expertise can make you an invaluable asset in many industries.

A diverse skill stack prepares you to adapt to various situations and challenges, making you more resilient in an ever-changing world.

Few people have the exact combination of skills you do, which can set you apart and make you more competitive in your field. You don’t need to be the best at any one skill.

Being above average in multiple skills is often more practical and achievable, yet it can make you highly effective and successful.

By intentionally cultivating and combining skills, you create a unique profile that opens doors to opportunities and positions you for success in ways that a single skill alone might not.

Using the power of getting a little better every day and adding one new skill each week for one year would result in fifty-two new skills, which could include soft or hard skills.

Hard skills are specific, teachable, and measurable abilities or knowledge that are often job-specific. They are acquired through formal education, training, or hands-on experience. Some examples of hard skills include coding (e.g., Python, Java), data analysis, graphic design,

accounting, proficiency in foreign languages (e.g., Japanese, Chinese, Spanish), and technical certifications. They learn these skills through structured courses, programs, workshops, or practice. You can then measure your success in adding new hard skills using tests, certifications, or demonstrated performance.

On the other hand, **soft skills** are interpersonal and behavioral skills that influence how you interact with others and navigate the workplace or that remarkable journey we call life. They are more challenging to learn and measure but are critical for effective communication, teamwork, leadership, and execution. Soft skills include communication, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, leadership, time management, adaptability, and resilience. While you will see online courses that claim to help you master these skills, most learning comes from personal experience, self-reflection, mentorship, or feedback from people you trust. They are very difficult to measure and are often evaluated through observation, feedback, or subjective judgment.

Hard skills often represent the technical expertise needed to perform tasks or solve problems. Soft skills enable you to apply hard skills effectively, work well with others, and adapt to challenges.

A real-world example of this could be a software developer. A hard skill would be a software developer proficient in Python (to build and debug code). A soft skill would be his ability to communicate (explain the technical aspects to non-technical team members).

When stacking skills, a combination of hard and soft skills ensures versatility and maximizes your value in any context.

By learning one new skill each week, you're not just expanding your knowledge base but creating a unique and powerful skill stack. This

combination of abilities can set you apart personally and professionally, making you more adaptable, valuable, and resilient in an ever-changing world.

Imagine the impact of adding 52 new skills to your repertoire over a year. Each skill, whether big or small, contributes to your overall growth and potential. It's not about mastery in every area but about being "good enough" in multiple areas to create unique advantages.

Let's Get Started

Life is a journey of continuous growth and learning. Whether striving to build a successful career, improve your relationships, or become the best version of yourself, the skills and habits you develop today lay the foundation for tomorrow's success.

I encourage you to embrace the power of small, daily improvements. Remember that significant change doesn't happen overnight, whether in your personal or professional life. It's the result of consistent, incremental progress.

By focusing on getting 1% better each day, you're not just working towards your goals but building a lifestyle of continuous growth and improvement. And that is the true path to lasting success and fulfillment.

Here are the first ten of twenty essential areas you can focus on to enhance your skill stack and build a better future.

Here's to your journey of daily improvement and exponential growth!

Chapter One

Systems Versus Goals

"Losers have goals. Winners have systems."

Scott Adams.

I talk a lot about setting goals on my blog. Many people I follow also discuss the importance of setting goals. In our pursuit of success, we often set ambitious goals to measure our progress and celebrate our achievements. But what if there's an alternative approach to setting goals that can challenge the idea and lead to more sustainable success? This perspective is worth exploring. Scott Adams, the renowned creator of 'Dilbert,' strongly advocates for systems over goals. He argues that systems are more effective than setting specific goals. He is famous for saying, 'Losers have goals. Winners have systems.'

System vs. Goals

I hate using straightforward definitions in my articles. Nothing is worse than someone writing, "According to Webster's dictionary, XYZ is defined as...."

I will not bore you with textbook definitions. Instead, let's break down the definitions of goals and systems to help you better understand the differences.

Goals are the desired outcomes we aim to achieve. Goals are the destinations of dreams we want to reach. They are specific, measurable, and time-bound. For example, "Losing 20 pounds in three months," "Write and publish a book by the end of the year," or "Save \$10,000 by next December."

Goals are tangible, time-sensitive, and measurable. They are designed to give you a finish line to cross.

On the other hand, **Systems** are the vehicles that get you there. They

are the "how" - consistent habits, processes, and routines that drive daily progress and lead to the desired outcomes.

Instead of focusing on the finish line, systems focus on the journey: eating a balanced diet, exercising daily, or setting aside 30 minutes daily for reading and writing.

Systems are less about achieving goals and more about creating a lifestyle or collection of habits naturally aligned with desired outcomes. Because they are naturally aligned, these systems are easier to execute regularly.

The Benefits of Systems

We have been told most of our lives to create goals and then work hard to obtain those goals. The goals we set are exciting. They promise transformation but can also leave you lost or stranded in the middle of your journey.

What happens once a goal is reached? What is left? Systems are sustainable. They make progress part of your daily life. They ensure that you continue to grow, even when the original goal changes. Consider the following example. Let's say that your goal is to lose 20 pounds. What happens when you reach your goal?

If you rely solely on the goal, you might revert to your old habits once the goal is reached. That means you would regain the 20 pounds you worked so hard to lose. However, if you've built a system of regular exercise and mindful eating, you've created a foundation for long-term health, regardless of weight fluctuations. It is a big step to reframe the

age-old concept of setting goals and obtaining goals to one of creating systems. Here are some of the benefits.

- **Consistency Over Time.** Systems emphasize regular, small actions that compound over time. By focusing on daily habits, you create a sustainable path to improvement without the pressure of looming deadlines.
- **Ability to Get Started.** This closely relates to the previous point: Many people fear getting started. More specifically, they have anxiety or fear of the gap between where they are today and where they need to be to accomplish their goals. They also fear the mistakes they might make along the way. This fear causes people not even to start working towards achieving their goals.
Systems help you break down your efforts into smaller, more manageable tasks, making them easier to tackle. This makes the process feel less daunting and minimizes the impact of any mistakes along the way. Focusing on these smaller steps reduces the mental barriers of time, effort, and risk that often hold you back. Systems provide the foundation for small wins, fostering consistency and building the experience needed for long-term success.
- **Reduced Stress.** Goals can create anxiety and stress. We typically do not like it when our deadlines approach. We get stressed out over things in the future. We worry about all the unknown variables between today and our deadline at some point in the future. Systems allow us to shift our focus to what we can control today. It lets us focus on smaller pieces and create the confidence to get things done. It helps reduce

future uncertainties, and we have less stress. Less stress means having more energy to focus on what will make you successful.

- **Continuous Improvement.** By implementing systems, you are setting yourself up to shift to a mental mindset of constant improvement. A goal is a fixed point in time. The systems you implement encourage small, steady work that drives continuous improvement as you figure things out and build experience. Once these systems are in place, you will find that instead of stopping once the goal is achieved, systems encourage you to keep refining your process, leading to continuous growth.
- **Flexibility.** You know what? You might not always set the right goals. Goals can be rigid. What do you do if the circumstances change? What happens to your motivation, work ethic, finances, and confidence if factors outside of your control make your goals unobtainable? Systems are more flexible, and they allow you to adjust your approach while still making progress.

"It's not the destination, it's the journey." - Ralph
Waldo Emerson

- **Focus on the Progress.** As Ralph Waldo Emerson famously states, "It's not the destination, it's the journey." Systems prioritize the journey over the destination. It is the journey that allows you to build experience and learn from mistakes along the way. This experience is critical in maintaining your

success once you become successful. This shift from goals to systems helps you develop valuable skills and habits beyond achieving a single goal.

A system does not rely on external outcomes to validate success. If your system is to walk 15,000 steps daily, you succeed daily when you go for a walk, even if you have not lost 20 pounds. This builds momentum and confidence, which are both critical for long-term success. Goals, while motivating, can feel like distant climbs up steep mountain slopes; in other words, they feel unachievable. Progress towards goals can be slow, leading to lost motivation and, in the worst case, giving up. Systems keep you focused on the present and give you small, actionable, obtainable wins.

Real World Examples

There are many benefits to focusing on systems over goals. Several real-world examples support this. Here are some examples of goals versus systems and their associated outcomes. These examples give you a better idea of the difference between a goal and implementing a successful system.

1. Scott Adams (Creator of Dilbert)

Goal: Scott Adams wanted to become a successful cartoonist.

System: He created a system where he would draw at least one cartoon daily.

Outcome: Scott Adams did not just create a goal of creating a successful comic strip. Instead, he implemented a daily system of drawing. The key to this is that this consistent practice allowed him to build experience over time. Instead of just planning for success, he started and improved over time. This daily commitment allowed him to improve his skills, generate ideas, overcome obstacles, and eventually become the successful comic strip creator we know today.

2. James Clear (Author of Atomic Habits)

Goal: James wanted to write a best-selling book.

System: Write every day, learn from the experience, and focus on improving the writing process

Outcome: Instead of fixating on the end goal of writing a best-selling book, James focused on developing a daily writing habit. This system set James up to ensure that his writing improved continuously. The result was the book Atomic Habits, which became a best seller.

3. Athletes and Training Regiments

Goal: Win a medal or a championship

System: Train every day. Implement a system that encourages rigorous daily training.

Outcome: Instead of focusing on winning a championship, professional athletes often implement systems that encour-

age daily training, nutrition, and regular rest. Michael Phelps focused on a strict training regime. The outcome was winning a gold medal without specifically having that outcome as a goal. Putting the correct systems in place helped him become the most decorated Olympian ever.

4. **Business environment**

Goal: Increase profitability

System: Implement lean practices that reduce waste and improve efficiency.

Outcome: Kaizen (改善) is a Japanese term that means continuous improvement. It is a philosophy or practice that focuses on making small, incremental changes to improve processes, products, or services. The concept emphasizes that even minor improvements can lead to significant positive changes. Companies like Toyota have focused on systems like this that encourage continuous improvement. Significant gains can be obtained by clearly focusing on improving processes daily, leading to increased profitability.

5. **Personal Fitness and Health**

Goal: Lose 40 pounds.

System: Make exercise and healthy eating habits part of your daily routine

Outcome: This example hits home for many of us. How

many of you have set a weight loss goal and met the goal, only to put the weight back on only a few months later? This is because you did not put the correct systems in place to make exercise and eating healthy part of your daily routine. People focusing on implementing systems that encourage exercise and healthy eating habits tend to see more sustainable weight loss and improved health. Instead of setting a goal of losing 30 pounds, implement a system or work out three times a week. Put a system in place to prep your meals for a week so you have something healthy available when you are hungry. This can lead to a more lasting weight loss and a healthier lifestyle.

6. Writers and Content Creators

Goal: Gain a large following or write a novel

System: Publish content regularly and engage with the audience

Outcome: This is a repeat of what I said above. Successful bloggers, writers, and YouTubers often focus on producing high-quality content. They tweet and use Instagram daily for regular audience engagement. This daily discipline leads to an increased content library, creating more experience as a writer and gradually building a large, engaged audience. Tim Ferriss built a significant following by producing insightful content on a regular basis. This eventually led to him publishing a number of best-selling books. These examples show that focusing on the daily systems and routines that lead to

success is often more effective than fixating on specific goals. Committing to a process ensures continuous improvement, adaptability, and long-term success.

Let's Get Started

Even if you are starting to understand the difference between systems and goals, how the heck do you create and implement systems? To transition from a goal-centric life to one focused on systems, identify the habits and routines that will lead to your desired outcomes.

1. **Identify Key Habits** - Identifying the actions contributing to your overall success is extremely important. For weight loss, you might implement regular exercise and healthier eating habits. It could even include daily reframes of what you eat. You could implement a system that filters out things contributing to an unhealthy lifestyle. A system that eliminates processed foods such as soda from your diet because you have reframed them as "poison" could greatly benefit your health.
2. **Set up Routines** - Creating a schedule that incorporates your key habits is vital. They have to become a non-negotiable part of your day. Walking has become a habit for me, and I make it part of my morning, lunch, and evening routine. It is something that I do not miss and have not missed in 498 days. That is an average of 15,000 to 16,000 steps a day since 2022. What is your daily non-negotiable?
3. **Track Progress** - This is key for me. I am crazy about my Apple Watch health tracking. I know my 498-day Move,

Exercise, Stand completion record well. It used to be watch the scale. I would watch my weight go up and down with no real progress. Instead of measuring progress solely on goal completion, I have had more fun tracking the consistency of my system. In this case, my Apple Watch daily closure badge. A paper journal works just as well. It needs to be easy and something that holds you accountable.

4. **Adjust as Needed** - Systems are meant to improve over time. No system is perfect; depending on the system and how your experience grows over time, you may have to adjust your system. Don't follow the system over the cliff. If it does not give you the outcomes you are looking for, there is nothing wrong with tweaking it. Remember, we are not looking for perfection out of the gate. It is often better to get started and learn along the way. With this approach, it is expected that you will have to modify your systems as you learn more.

5. **Celebrate the Wins** - You will make many mistakes along the way. It is essential to celebrate these mistakes because every mistake you overcome and learn from builds the experience you will need to become successful. At the same time, acknowledge your wins. Daily improvements and efforts are wins. Implementing this level of discipline into your life is a win. Celebrating these wins is a form of motivation and helps to keep you focused.

While goals give you direction, systems give you a roadmap and forward progress to get you there. By focusing on the process rather than the outcome, you create a system of sustainable output that leads to success. The journey helps create an experience that allows you to

adapt to changing circumstances, leading to continuous improvement.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the key is not to completely choose between goals and systems but to let them complement each other. Goals provide direction, while systems provide consistency, habit, and action. A goal without a system is, at best, wishful thinking. The worst-case goals are abandoned before they even start. Systems without goals lack purpose and direction.

Shift from a goals-only mentality to a systems today. Implement a system that works for you. By shifting your attention from the outcome to the process, you'll find that success becomes inevitable—and the journey more fulfilling.

Chapter Two

How to Be Disciplined

"Discipline equals freedom."

Jocko Wilink

This is one of my all-time favorite quotes.

Practicing self-discipline leads to greater personal freedom and control over your life. At first, discipline may seem restrictive because it requires structure, routines, and sacrifices. However, in the long run, it unlocks opportunities and independence.

- **Freedom Through Control:** Discipline in exercising well can lead to the freedom of having a healthy and energetic body. Discipline in our finances but budgeting and saving consistently can lead you financial freedom and few money worries. More professional and career advancement options become available if you consistently work hard and are disciplined about building new skills.
- **Freedom From Regret:** Being disciplined prevents us from making impulsive decisions that cause regret or long-term consequences. If we are disciplined about our choices, our accomplishments will exceed our failures. Failures often lead to regret.
- **Freedom from Dependence:** Personal sovereignty is a great word, and discipline leads us down a path of personal sovereignty where we have reduced reliance on others for motivation or support. When disciplined, we are better prepared for the challenges we face. This creates personal freedom to adapt and thrive.
- **Freedom to Choose:** Discipline leads to the execution of positive habits. Positive habits create personal growth, which provides more opportunities in life. One example might be time management. Managing time through disciplined rou-

tines frees up time for what truly matters.

By committing to discipline, you gain control over your actions, decisions, and future, ultimately creating the freedom to live on your terms. Discipline isn't about limiting life but empowering yourself to achieve more.

Discipline is a foundational element for personal and professional growth. It helps you achieve your goals, build good habits, manage time, and enhance overall well-being.

The most basic example of discipline might be getting up early daily, working long hours to accomplish one's goals, and facing problems head-on.

Most people fail at self-discipline due to a lack of clear goals, inconsistent habits, and the temptation from short-term dopamine hits. It is easier to binge-watch Netflix for the day than to get the exercise you should be getting instead.

I am a work in progress and developing method to improve my self-discipline, but I would like you to walk away with the following concepts after reading this newsletter:

- **Create Effective Systems:** Effective systems create a structured approach focusing on consistent, repeatable actions rather than specific goals. These systems help drive discipline, not a focus on goals. This process involves creating systems from habits and routines that are directionally aligned to your long-term goals. You break things down into smaller, manageable steps and try to integrate them into your daily life. The goal is to form repeatable habits that

become second nature and drive you towards an incremental path of improvement. Creating systems and positive habits is a high-impact method to see improvement. You can dive deeper by reading *Systems vs. Goals*.

- **Prioritize and Execute:** We must prioritize what we need to accomplish. There are a few practical steps to achieve this. Identify your goals, break down goals into tasks, prioritize the tasks, create a plan, execute with focus, review and adjust, stay accountable, and develop consistent habits. By following these steps, you can effectively prioritize the work you need to complete and execute the critical tasks that will make you successful.
- **Build Positive Habits:** Building positive habits plays a crucial role in achieving personal sovereignty through self-discipline. Positive habits create a level of independence and consistent progress towards our goals. Having goals is a good thing. Having dreams is also a good thing. Creating the habits you need and the discipline to execute every day is incredible. Positive habits create routines and consistency. Routines help promote discipline, and consistency helps us manage time effectively and focus on our long-term objectives.

Positive habits lead to personal growth. These positive habits include regular exercise, healthy eating, reading books daily, and continuous learning. They can all enhance physical health, mental clarity, and personal growth. All these things lead to greater self-reliance and less dependence on external factors like support, motivation, and validation.

Positive habits break down larger goals into smaller, manageable tasks, making them easier to achieve over time. Having a growth mindset is critical for self-discipline and personal sovereignty. Cultivating habits like reading, continuous learning, meditation, prayer, and personal reflection on our path all foster a growth mindset, which encourages continuous improvement, self-improvement, and individual excellence.

- **Embrace Ownership:** Embracing ownership is critical to maintaining discipline. It fosters a sense of ownership, responsibility, and accountability. Embracing ownership is essential for maintaining discipline.

By embracing ownership, we take responsibility and become accountable for our actions. Ownership drives proactive behavior and enhanced problem-solving because we are not waiting for others to solve our problems. Ownership and discipline involve making deliberate decisions and exercising self-control. One of the biggest challenges to maintaining discipline is prioritizing our long-term goals and the systems we have established for success over immediate gratification. What excites me about ownership is the opportunity to become the best version of myself.

One thing that many people fail at is taking on new challenges and not being afraid of making mistakes. Owning your goals forces you to take on the challenges in front of you head-on, and when you embrace ownership, you are more

likely to learn from your mistakes and make those critical adjustments that take you down a path of success instead of failure. This continuous learning process has only one outcome: it enhances your discipline. Another benefit is that overcoming your challenges and learning from them builds self-confidence.

Embracing ownership is vital for maintaining discipline because it instills a sense of responsibility, fosters intrinsic motivation, encourages proactive behavior, supports continuous improvement, and empowers individuals. Embracing ownership is vital for maintaining discipline because it instills a sense of responsibility, fosters intrinsic motivation, encourages proactive behavior, supports continuous improvement, and empowers individuals.

- **Monitor and Adjust:** It is critical to monitor and adjust your goals and systems to maintain a high level of discipline. You want to ensure that your efforts remain aligned with your objectives, adapt to changes, and address emerging challenges or inefficiencies.

If you walk away from this article with just one crucial nugget of information, it is this: Discipline is not a one-time achievement.

It is not something you accomplish and then be done with. It is a lifestyle. It is a continuous process that requires regular evaluation and adjustment. As you progress, your goals may change or evolve. External circumstances may impact the

approach you have planned.

Regularly monitoring your progress and plan allows you to ensure that your actions and systems remain in alignment with your objectives.

Everything is dynamic. Life changes daily. Unexpected things can happen that throw your perfect plan into disarray. You have to be able to adapt to change. This flexibility helps you rethink your approach, adjust, and prevent setbacks that could derail your progress. By monitoring and adjusting, you consciously identify obstacles, problems, or inefficiencies early so they can be corrected instead of suffering material losses. Addressing challenges early prevents problems from becoming more extensive and more discouraging.

Discipline fuels success. Develop routines, set achievable goals, and stay consistent to see long-term progress.

The Day Warrior

Discipline is the bridge between sovereignty and personal success. It transforms dreams into reality, providing the foundation for self-governance and achieving your highest potential.

This topic is extremely important, and you can learn more in a few articles I have written related to this:

- Master the Art of Self-Discipline

- Overcoming Regret with Discipline

Chapter Three

How to Think Critically

“Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.”

Albert Einstein

I have always loved this quote. Albert Einstein's words remind us that true education is not about cramming facts but cultivating the ability to think critically. Critical thinking forms the foundation of intellectual growth, enabling individuals to analyze, question, and deeply understand the world rather than passively absorb information.

The Essence of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking goes beyond mere memorization of facts. It involves analyzing, questioning, and understanding information in a more profound, more meaningful way. This skill is crucial in today's information-rich world, where the ability to discern credible sources and make informed decisions is more critical than ever.

Whether you're solving problems at work, debating social issues, or making personal life choices, the ability to think critically is a skill that empowers you to approach challenges with confidence and clarity.

When we are younger, we often approach disagreements emotionally because our decision-making is heavily influenced by immediate feelings, personal pride, or a desire to "win" an argument.

Imagine a teenager who gets into a heated argument with a friend about whose fault it was that they missed a group project deadline. The teenager might instinctively blame the friend, passionately defend their position, and feel offended if their friend criticizes them. They might focus on proving they are right without fully considering the situation's context or the friend's perspective. The argument escalates, and the relationship strains. The focus is on *feelings* rather than find-

ing a constructive solution.

To this day, I can remember broken relationships from my youth because of emotional fallout or pride. My best friend and I stopped talking over our ability to keep emotion out of how to do something as basic as dividing up the funds from our window-washing business.

As we gain life experience, we start to see the value of pausing, analyzing situations, and seeking understanding rather than reacting impulsively. For example, an adult in a typical 9 to 5 workplace faces a similar situation—a missed team deadline. Instead of reacting emotionally, the adult takes a moment to reflect on what happened. They might ask probing questions like, what were the specific reasons for the missed deadline? How did my actions contribute to this outcome? How can we work together to prevent this issue in the future? The response shifts from assigning blame to analyzing the problem, understanding the bigger picture, and collaborating on a solution. The relationship is preserved or strengthened, and the group identifies practical steps for improvement.

As an experienced professional, I am amazed at how many people late in life cannot make the jump and still act as high school teenagers when dealing with personal or workplace conflicts. They react emotionally and do not think critically.

Building a Skill Stack for Critical Thinking

Another essential item to add to our skill stack is the ability to question

assumptions, analyze information, and approach problems logically to make informed decisions in all aspects of life.

- **Filter for Reality.** A systems thinking approach is one of the most effective tools for critical thinking. This method involves analyzing situations holistically and understanding how components within a system interact rather than viewing them in isolation.

Why does this matter? Humans are naturally prone to cognitive biases that skew our perception of reality. For instance, we often seek information confirming our beliefs (confirmation bias) and ignore evidence that contradicts them. Systems thinking helps counteract this tendency by encouraging a deeper understanding of interconnected factors influencing outcomes.

By stepping back and considering how each puzzle piece fits into the larger picture, you're less likely to be misled by surface-level emotions or fleeting trends. This logical, structured thinking fosters clarity and allows for better problem-solving.

- **Avoid Cognitive Biases.** Recognizing cognitive biases and avoiding common mental traps that hinder clear thinking is vital. Cognitive biases are mental shortcuts that can lead to flawed judgments, missed opportunities, and suboptimal outcomes. Cognitive biases skew reality. Critical thinking can improve decision-making, maximize success, create better systems, and enhance our ability to persuade and influence.

Critical thinkers make a conscious effort to identify and overcome these biases. This requires reflection and the willingness to challenge your own thought processes. Addressing biases head-on creates space for more transparent decision-making and more innovative solutions.

- **Question Assumptions.** We should always encourage the challenge of assumptions and view problems from multiple perspectives. Challenge your beliefs all the time. We often focus on what we think is true instead of thinking outside the box, especially when confronted with perspectives we disagree with. Make an effort to find innovative solutions and avoid conventional thinking traps.

Critical thinking requires the ability to challenge assumptions. Often, we rely on ingrained beliefs or conventional wisdom without considering alternative perspectives, which limits our creativity and blinds us to potential solutions.

Instead, make it a habit to question the “why” behind every assumption. Ask yourself: Is this belief based on evidence or tradition? What if the opposite were true? Are there perspectives I haven’t considered?

By questioning assumptions, you cultivate an open mind and develop the ability to think “outside the box.” This approach fosters innovation and ensures outdated or narrow viewpoints do not trap you.

- **Focus on Systems Over Goals:** This is one of my favorites, and I referenced my newsletter, *Systems vs. Goals*, above.

Critical thinking involves creating systems for success rather than relying solely on goal-setting. Systems allow for ongoing improvement and adaptability, which are crucial for long-term success.

One of the most powerful shifts in critical thinking is moving from a *goal-oriented* mindset to a *systems-oriented* mindset. While goals are valuable, they can be rigid and short-term. On the other hand, systems create a framework for continuous growth and adaptability.

A Real World Example

An example might be setting a goal to be promoted to manager within one year. To achieve this goal, you must focus entirely on getting the promotion. You apply for it, work extra hours, and give it your all, waiting for the right opportunity. If the promotion does not occur because of things you cannot control, you become frustrated and feel like a failure. You pour all your energy into this objective—working overtime, applying for roles, and waiting for the right opportunity. But what happens if external factors (like company restructuring) prevent the promotion? You might feel frustrated or view yourself as a failure. Now, imagine leveraging *critical thinking* and taking a *systems approach* instead. Instead of fixating solely on the promotion, you focus on a process that builds your career over time. First, **critically analyze your goal** of becoming a manager. Ask you key questions like:

- Why do I want this promotion?

- What skills or qualities does a manager need that I may lack?
- What factors beyond my control could affect this goal, and how can I mitigate them?

This analysis helps you shift from emotional reactions (e.g., frustration over delays) to practical, forward-thinking solutions. Second, **create a process for continuous improvement**. Develop systems that prepare you for management and open doors to other opportunities. For example:

- **Pursue Professional Development:** Take leadership and management courses or certifications. These efforts demonstrate initiative and enhance your qualifications.
- **Seek Feedback Regularly:** Meet with supervisors and mentors to identify areas of improvement and adjust your approach based on constructive input.
- **Build Relationships:** Network within and outside your organization. Strong professional relationships often lead to opportunities you might not otherwise encounter.
- **Stay Updated:** Keep up with industry trends and best practices to stay competitive and demonstrate expertise.

Finally, make sure that you **evaluate your progress systematically**. Regularly assess your progress to make sure your assumptions and systems are correct. Again, ask yourself questions like:

- Are you improving your leadership skills?

- Have you expanded your professional network?
- Have you received any certifications in your area of expertise?
- Are you being recognized for your contributions to the organization?

By focusing on critical thinking and continuous improvement, you increase your chances of promotion and position yourself for other opportunities you might not have considered. Systems create resilience, ensuring you're always moving forward, even if specific goals shift.

Why Does Critical Thinking Matter?

Critical thinking isn't just a tool for solving problems—it's a pathway to creativity, resilience, and long-term success. When you commit to thinking critically:

- **You make better decisions:** By analyzing situations thoroughly, you reduce the risk of making impulsive or poorly informed choices.
- **You foster innovation:** Questioning assumptions and thinking creatively opens doors to novel solutions.
- **You enhance influence:** The ability to present logical, well-reasoned arguments strengthens your ability to persuade and lead.
- **You build adaptability:** Systems thinking prepares you to navigate uncertainty and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

- **Reduce failing twice:** Systems help us be open to analyzing obstacles and learning from our mistakes.

Next Steps

Critical thinking is a skill that develops through deliberate practice, self-awareness, and consistent reflection. Make it a daily habit to question assumptions, challenge conventional thinking, and identify biases—both in yourself and in the information you consume. Embrace a systems mindset to approach problems holistically, seeking connections and solutions that lead to meaningful, lasting results.

When we incorporate critical thinking into the daily routine we call life, we sharpen our ability to make well-informed decisions, adapt to challenges, and seize opportunities. This practice enhances our personal and professional growth and empowers us to inspire and influence others in positive, impactful ways.

Becoming a critical thinker is a lifelong journey. It is not a one-time event but evolves with every challenge, success, and lesson learned. The rewards of this journey create valuable deliverables such as greater clarity, unshakable confidence, and the power to create positive change. All are well worth the effort.

Wrap Up

Combining complementary skills creates powerful advantages by enhancing your value and increasing your opportunities for success. This is the secret to success that only some people understand. It is not taught in school.

Instead of aiming to be the absolute best at a single skill, consider becoming proficient in multiple areas. This approach, known as building a “skill stack,” allows you to merge abilities in ways that make you uniquely valuable. No person has the same skill stack, and building this skill stack is a foundational part of our journey. Adding to your skill stack never ends; improving and implementing it is a continuous effort.

For example, combining technical expertise with strong communication skills can set you apart in many industries. How many incredible computer programmers do you know who have great product ideas but, because of poor communication skills or an inability to sell, the value of what they have created goes unrecognized through an entire nine-to-five career?

A diverse skill stack helps you adapt to changing circumstances and makes you more competitive, as only some people will have the same combination of skills.

Remember, being above average in several skills is often more achievable and practical than mastering just one. I will never be able to write as well as Ernest Hemingway, but if I combine my basic writing skills with the experience I have gained during my life journey, I can help others learn and achieve more success.

By intentionally cultivating various complementary skills, you position yourself for greater success and open doors to new opportunities that a single skill alone might not unlock.

This mindset encourages continuous growth, making lifelong learning and personal development key strategies for long-term success.

Let this be your starting point—consider which skills you can add to your personal inventory and begin building your unique skill stack today.

Let's continue this journey together. What are some ways you encourage your children to embrace authenticity? Share your thoughts—I'd love to hear them!

The Day Warrior