

## **Praise for *Your Future Self Will Thank You***

“Coach Sara Doell takes us on her life journey and along the way expertly shares simple and real life lessons learned from her vast experiences as a competitor and coach. Sara doesn’t edit or temper her feelings on a variety of topics and offers concrete, simple advice that can help anyone, young or old, deal with obstacles and become a better version of themselves. This book is an enjoyable and often funny read that is full of life lessons including a mini workbook at the end of each chapter for those who want to work hard on self improvement or growth. It’s a practical guide to life that I highly recommend.”

**Kay Cockerill**

**Commentator for Golf Channel and NBC Sports**

**LPGA member since 1988**

“Reading Sara Doell’s book is a beautiful journey back in time illuminating the lessons learned along the way. She incorporates great humor and vulnerability in a quest for wisdom and peace. I wholeheartedly recommend *Your Future Self Will Thank You* for its clever delivery of life lessons. The bonus self-reflective questions at the end of each chapter are sure to trigger greater insight and personal growth. An inspiration for all.”

**Yvonne Gómez**

**Olympian**

**Mental Performance Coach**

“Sara Doell’s accessible self-help book *Your Future Self Will Thank You* talks about the intersecting pathways to a positive

lifestyle. Sara gives a warm and hilarious guide to better physical health, increased productivity, confidence, and stronger relationships. I found myself, on every page, relating to the struggles and triumphs that often come with personal responsibility – because getting there depends not on what a person has, but on how they feel about what they have. Effectively, what matters the most is being able to master your mind rather than trying to change the world around you. And Sara does this with a brave and generous voice.”

**Katie Morgan**  
**Emmy Award Winning Sports Producer**

“*Your Future Self Will Thank You* – seriously! This book delivers on its title. Through a mix of humor, vulnerability, and actionable steps, Sara offers truly accessible ways to make meaningful shifts and create a strong personal foundation. Whether you read this book cover to cover, or start with the life area you most want to support, the version of you that finishes this book will thank you.”

**Lara Heacock**  
**MBA, PCC, Leadership Coach,**  
**Doing (good) Business podcast co-host**  
**Editor in Chief, KindOverMatter.com**

“Past, present, future...all of me feels nourished and well served by reading *Your Future Self Will Thank You*. This book is such a compelling combination of different versions of the author and it offers the reader the chance to embrace all of the parts of themselves in a deep and meaningful way. Through a

series of lessons, Sara invites the reader to explore the stories of their own life. Whether you are someone who is just beginning the exploration into who you are or someone who is wanting to shift gears and reconnect to what is true about yourself, you will find a clever, funny, and poignant doorway into your own wisdom by reading this book.”

**Valerie Tookes**  
MA, NBC-HWC, PCC  
**Health and Wellness Coach, Her Holistic Health,**  
**and The Women’s Vitality Center**  
**Lead Coach, Courageous Living Coach Certification**

“Where was this book when I was 22? In this candid letter to her former self, author Sara Doell addresses the many challenges that college graduates and young professionals will face in the early years of living on their own. As a certified life coach and college golf coach, Sara shares both practical advice with readers and addresses complex issues on topics such as fitness, routines, mental health, sexuality, and family dynamics. Sara’s vulnerability makes the book real and relatable. At the end of each chapter is a list of questions for readers to reflect on how they can make actionable changes to improve aspects of their life. This book serves as both a resource and compass as young women and men navigate the world on their own for the first time. I would recommend it to anyone who wants guidance and practical recommendations with a touch of humor.”

**Dr. Katie Brophy Miles**  
**Founder & CEO of Golf Globally LLC**

“From the opening chapter I was pulled into the book. A life journey through the Serenity Prayer. I easily placed myself in these lessons and parallel Sara’s life with my own life struggles. I only wish “13 year old” Sara had a crystal ball vision to write this book 27 years ago! My hope is those who read and complete the lessons have an enlightened awakening that I experienced.”

**Ian V Lagowitz**  
**Managing Partner Trigild IVL**  
**Associate Head Men’s Golf Coach**

*“Your Future Self Will Thank You* is the handbook we all should have been given. What starts as a letter to young Sara turns into advice and insight we all need to hear. Not only are Sara’s words inspiring, they are vulnerable, authentic and at times - damn funny. This is a read that is not just about Sara’s journey but about all of ours. A must read!”

**Liz Applegate**  
**Liz Applegate Coaching**

“Join Sara’s team - as a reader - as she empowers you to be proactive in reflecting on your life. Be inspired - through Sara’s stories, humor, and real life wisdom - to discover what small positive steps you can take now to lead a life you’ll look back on with gratitude.”

**Erica Quam**  
**Leadership Coach, Prime Sports Institute**

# YOUR FUTURE SELF WILL THANK YOU

A Book for You. By Me. About You.  
*(told through stories about me)*

SARA DOELL

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**For my Cat.  
And our dog.**





# FOREWORD

*I met Sara in January 2020.  
She had just joined a life coach training program  
for which I serve as the Director of Training,  
the Courageous Living Coach Certification.*

Sara's training year started off with an in-person retreat and was disrupted mid-year as the pandemic hit and everyone began to experience layoffs, no childcare, and watching as people we care about became sick. And, of course, 2020 was a time when we saw even more of a painful—yet much needed—reckoning around social justice. No one in Sara's training year was immune to those experiences or from aching in response to the difficulty and struggle that our world was going through.

I noticed something about Sara though. As she worked through each module of our training program, she was espousing the very things that she writes about in this book. Namely, that the power to change one's life is something that comes from within, and that while we are affected by external

circumstances (like pandemics, or how we were raised, or how much access to resources we have at any given time) the place to point your arrow is always in asking what we *can* focus on and what we *can* change.

This will involve making difficult choices. This will involve not always liking the work it takes. This will involve resisting the urge to shut down out of fear, and instead deciding to ask yourself what you want for your future and keep heading in that direction.

Sara's book acts as a guide for making those difficult choices. She's an invitation for exploring who you are and what you really want, and then asking the tough questions about what it's going to take to get there. Most often? You're going to be looking at what your future self would want, and then working backwards, from there, to see what shifts need to be made in the here-and-now to get the compelling future that you desire.

That's what I saw Sara do during 2020, and it has made all the difference. During a time of incredible stress, she completed her coach training, still acted as a model and mentor for the collegiate golf students that she has had the privilege to teach, started a podcast, packed up one house and moved to another, navigated job disruptions, and began writing this book. She made a conscious choice to look at the external circumstances of her situation, and align her life with what she knew she was going to want for herself on the other side of this pandemic. The book you hold in your hands right now stands

as evidence of many, many daily choices that were made in the name of that future self.

This isn't to say that Sara never had days that were difficult. In this book, you aren't going to find a "perfect" guide (because Sara isn't interested in trying to be your guru). She's open about the places where she still is working through her own judgments or imperfections, at the same time that she keeps rallying for this essential message:

Keep going. Keep trying. Your future self will thank you.

— **Kate Swoboda**

Author of *The Courage Habit*



## LOOKING BACK

Dear 13-Year-Old Sara,

Hi! It is me—well, it's actually 40-year-old YOU, writing from your future apartment in San Francisco. Yup, we made it to the West Coast. Before I explain your path from there to here, let's address some things happening in 1991.

You are a scared and fashionably-challenged teenager who is starting to figure out who you are. You love sports, Madonna, the New Kids on the Block, wearing three pairs of socks in different colors with tight rolled jeans, and have perfected that haircut with the poofy bangs that takes half a bottle of hair-spray to stay put all day long.

You are feeling uncomfortable, sitting in between who you are and who you think you should be. You have your first crush on a girl and she doesn't feel the same way, which is breaking your heart. Also, you are scared, 'cause aren't you supposed to feel this way about boys? But you don't and you will try very hard to have and successfully fake a few crushes on boys. Deep down, you know that is not who you are and that is okay. *You do you*, little me.

Life for the LGBTQIA community is much easier now than it is for you in the early 90s. Same sex marriage became legal, you have a lot of rights, you do not have to hide who you are and your wife often attends work functions with you—trust Dan Savage, *It Gets Better*.

You are currently starting on a path to something great, but life feels hard right now. You recently started to explore your sexuality and it's scary and confusing. You don't really fit in anywhere in school.

You do get along with most of your classmates, though. Sometimes you get picked on which takes a shot to your confidence. Remember that it feels shitty to get picked on for being different, so make sure to be kind to others regardless of your differences.

Put down your cassette tape player for just a second and listen to me. You are awesome and unique and following your own path will feel hard, but eventually you will see how important it is to be your true and authentic self. As you get to high school, you will start creating a path that often feels awkward, but it will be worth it. Because you choose the road less travelled, you become a strong and successful athlete and coach who goes back to your high school to give a speech in 2016 as you are inducted into the Gates Chili High School Hall of Fame. Keep trudging that road, Sara. It will make you stronger, more confident and happier than taking the more crowded easier route with limited obstacles.

Mom's mental health problems are just becoming evident to you. Although you don't really understand why she is the way she is, you know that it is not normal to act that way. You wake up often wondering which mother is going to show up that day, the soft-spoken and kind one or the depressed, angry, and cruel one. The one who is encouraging and on your side or the one who questions who you are and feels like the enemy. Understand that this never changes as Mom suffers from bipolar disorder and you can't change who she is. You don't know much about it now, but you will understand it more deeply in the future. Be patient.

This strained relationship with Mom causes you a lot of angst. You often feel that you are never good enough, no matter how great you do in school, sports, your personal life or your career. You eventually figure out that Mom's outbursts and cruel words are not about you, they are about her unhappiness, chemical imbalance, jealousy and her disease. She is not full of hate, she just doesn't know how to react when she is angry other than to fly off the handle. That doesn't make it hurt any less or make you stop wishing that you had a different mom. You will feel those things and eventually grasp a better understanding of her mental health issues after some really intense therapy. You even get to a point that you like her and care for her deeply. Unfortunately, that happens a bit late because she only lives to be 72 when cancer takes her away.

My advice? Try a little less to wish that she wasn't your mom because she is the only one you have. And let me tell you

that you ARE good enough. You turn into a strong, independent, and successful woman who ends up winning a bunch of awards, marries an amazing and beautiful woman and moves to the West Coast to follow her dreams, despite some of the trauma you are about to go through. Don't get scared. It all makes you stronger and more empathetic to other people's experiences. Experience it and feel the fuck out of your feelings along the way.

Through the next few years, you will learn so many lessons and truths through sports, coaching, coming out of the closet, and being the child of a parent with severe mental health problems who dies of cancer. Each of these unique things help you to be who you are and you are fabulous at it.

And here I am, over 25 years later, hoping that I made you proud so far. I have been working really hard to do the right thing, to get out of the shadow of Mom's mental illness and a tough childhood and to help other people find happiness.

Have I found happiness? Mostly. I am in a marriage with an extraordinary woman that feels amazing most of the time. Other times it is like a root canal without Novocaine. Marriage is hard and wonderful. Don't take it for granted. Make sure you do the work because she is amazing and brings out the best in you. Let me rephrase; she sees the best in you and helps you to see it, too.

I have struggled with my health and body image my whole life to this point, and it is okay. This is who I am, and it is



something that will always be a thing, so lean into it a bit. Know that at age 40, you're pretty damn healthy, you work hard, take care of yourself and you focus on paying attention to what matters.

So, as I sit here in your future apartment on your future couch with your future dog waiting for your future wife to get home, let me take the time to explore some of your future with you. Gather your friends and let's talk about life.

Love,  
Your Future Self

P.S. Hot Tip: In late 2019, or early 2020, make sure to invest in a ton of home workout equipment, buy stock in Zoom, the video conferencing app, and get a haircut. Just trust me.



# WISDOM FOR YOUR FUTURE

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\* Please only do this action if you are a certified medical professional. Thank you.

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# LESSON #1

*Take care of your body.  
You can't move out of it.*

## **True Meaning**

You are born into this world with certain inherent features. You cannot control how tall you are, how green your eyes are, how your skin reacts to the sun or latex or poison ivy. You cannot control what hereditary traits you have, good and bad. You may be predisposed to diabetes or high blood pressure or freckles or rheumatoid arthritis or breast cancer. You may have an awesome metabolism or the ability to run a mile in five minutes without training or to read at lightning speed or have an IQ of 150.

The traits you are born with are beyond your control. What is in your control is how you take care of, and love your body. Everything that you do is a choice. Some choices are much harder than others, but you have control over how you treat

yourself. So, treat yourself like the wonderful, smart, strong, and awesome person that you are. You only get one shot at this. Give yourself a fighting chance to be the best version of you.

### **How I Learned This**

I have always had a negative body image. I think my butt is too big, my boobs are not perky enough, my face looks fat, my hair is too thick, and the mole on my face looks like cancer. Regardless of this body image, I have also always found it really important to take care of myself because I was born with genes that offer up some potential health risks. My mother died at 72 of “cancer of an unknown source” as they found it in the gallbladder and liver but believed that it had originated elsewhere. It was stage four and she was given six months to two years to live. Less than eleven weeks later, she passed away. That was the ending, but throughout her life, she struggled with bipolar disorder, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, back pain and some heart issues. She was not proactive in taking care of herself. Her blood sugar was often out of control because of the amount of Hershey Kisses she ate. Her mother died of lung cancer, had breast cancer and her biological father was bipolar. And that is just my mom’s side! Luckily, on my dad’s side I have less risk, so there is a 50% chance for me at this point. Fingers crossed.

I have worked hard against the odds that are stacked up against me and I am up for the challenge. My goal is to be opposite of my mom, which sounds like a horrible thing to say, but I don’t want to depend on insulin, drastic medications



and other intense regulatory treatments to live a healthy life. Some of the problems she had were beyond her control, but others were not. I saw the things that my mom missed out on because of her limitations and often thought of the possibilities for things to be different had she made different choices.

*I don't want to miss out on those possibilities.*

I spend time doing the work to take care of my body. I want to see that view of the Golden Gate Bridge that you can only see from a hidden path through the trails of the Presidio. I do it so I can cross the finish line at a half-marathon feeling overwhelmed at what I just accomplished. I do it so I can enjoy daily walks with my dog in the beautiful but exhausting hills of San Francisco, to see the view of the Painted Ladies from a spot you can't get to in a car. I do it so I can experience things while on my feet, not just in some type of motor vehicle. I do it to explore the world while feeling powerful, strong, and healthy. I do it because maybe I will inspire another.

That is my *why*.

There is no sideline in healthcare—either you are in the game working towards a victory, or sickness and health problems will eventually defeat you sooner than they need to. This isn't a best-of-three series, people. This is it, this one time.

I would be lying if I said that I have always been great at this and I'm not pretending to be some health guru. I am not a doctor, so any advice I give is solely coming from my experience and things I have learned that have worked for me or for

others in my life. So please don't mean-tweet me. Go write to Dr. Oz, instead. He IS a doctor. Thank you, in advance.

I was not brought up with information and education from my parents on eating healthy and taking care of myself. That is not intended as a criticism of Chuck and Jude, it's just a fact of the times and reflective of the ways in which they were brought up. We ate lasagna, macaroni and cheese casserole with hot dogs baked into it, Wendy's broccoli- and cheese-baked potatoes made with 100% processed cheese food, and pizza from Pontillo's Pizzeria. Did you catch that—hotdogs in the mac and cheese? It was delicious, however not the balanced and nutritious meal that I would soon learn to appreciate as a way to fuel my body and my mind.

I also had a mother who often asked me what I weighed when I was younger. She would treat me differently when I was in a "fit" stage and I could feel the judgment if I had put on a few pounds.

When I left home, I learned a lot of lessons about health and wellness in my experience as a student-athlete at Penn State. It was certainly a winding road for me as I had a lot of habits to break and a lot of education to gather about nutrition, the proper form for strength training and the value of moderation. I left college with a stronger foundation of what works for me, my body and my lifestyle.

This crooked health journey of mine started in my younger years when I was obsessed with my weight and appearance as a

way of making my mother proud of me. Through time, experiences, education and reframing my narratives around this, I have been able to stop focusing on what the scale says and have shifted my attention to how I feel in my body. I encourage you to find a roadmap to navigate your health journey and do your best not to take too many detours.

## **The How To**

Ok, now that I got all serious and talked about my sad genes, let's discuss some ways to take care of your body. From what you put into your body to what you put out, you should be intentional with your decisions. And yes, I know that it is not that easy. We are inundated with \$.99 value menus, fast food restaurants, large portions, fried foods, high calorie, high fat and high carb options—and the Cherry Garcia from Ben and Jerry's is so freaking good!

In my experience, we make it difficult to seek wellness through food and find fitness in America, and it is easier and more convenient to make unhealthy decisions. There is a drive-thru for everything—coffee, burgers, tacos, and even your medicine from the pharmacy can be picked up at a drive-through window. That is no excuse. When you make your health and wellness a priority and focus on the way you want to feel, the things you are able to do and enjoy, and even the way you look, you will find a way to make the decisions that align with this. You may decide to eat the more colorful vegetables, park the car farther from the building and you might take the stairs

instead of the elevator. You will seek to surround yourself with like-minded people who live a similar lifestyle and help you on your road of health and wellness.

## **Water**

Drink it. A lot of it. Staying hydrated is important for health, energy, and to keep your insides running smoothly. Once you are thirsty, it is too late and you are already dehydrated. When you go to the bathroom, look into the toilet. Does your urine look like the color of an IPA or like a margarita? You want the latter. You always want margarita pee. Funny how if you drink a bunch of margaritas, you end up with IPA pee.

Think of water as a lubricant for your organs, muscles and tendons. You change your oil in the car every 3,000 miles or three months, right? If not, the car will not run as well. Same for your body. It needs water to keep moving smoothly, plus you use and discard a lot of water every day so you must replace it.

Here's a fun test. You, right now reading this, hold up your right hand and point your pointer...pointy...pointer—the finger next to your thumb. Take that finger and push it together with your thumb and then release it. Did the skin on your thumb return quickly to its upright and locked position? Or did it gradually find its way back up slowly, like that guy who refuses to put his seat back until the flight attendant tells him? The slow-returning thumb is possible evidence of more

dehydration. Is this a fact? I don't know, but my thumb returns slower on the morning after a wine tasting tour and at the same time that my pee is IPA-colored, so there seems to be a link.

Here in California, we carry reusable water bottles. People will glare at you if you are carrying a one-time-use plastic water bottle, am I right? We also don't use straws or plastic bags and our compostable utensils typically break when you use them. But I digress. Get yourself a great reusable water bottle and carry it everywhere. There are purified water fountains with a place to refill your bottle in about every setting. Save the planet and hydrate in the process. Mother Nature says thank you.

## **Food**

Food can be complicated for many people. It is often cheaper and easier in our country to get a high processed and low nutrient meal than to get a fresh, high nutrient meal. You have to do the work to make these decisions and have the balanced options within reach. There are many ways that I have learned to eat healthier and make it more convenient to do so while not breaking the bank.

Meal plan on Sunday night by choosing what you will eat for dinner all week, as well as what lunches you can make out of leftovers and what you need for breakfast. This will cause less food waste and be better for your wallet. Also, it will minimize the, "I don't know. What do you want to eat?" fifteen-minute conversation that wastes time and usually ends up in a poor choice of burgers and fries or cheese pizza with extra pepperoni

delivered. As an aside, ever wonder why it isn't deemed odd to eat the same exact thing for breakfast for fourteen days in a row, but if you had the same thing for dinner three days in a row, people would ask you if you are okay? Once you have the meal plan, make a detailed and organized grocery list so going to the grocery store won't feel like nailing your shin on the coffee table. Make a list by food group; put the fruits together, vegetables together, meats together and so on. This will help as you make your way through the store as these items tend to be near each other and will make the trip much more efficient so you can get back to watching Netflix.

When you get home, make pre-portioned snacks and sides in reusable plastic containers. Throughout the week, you can make lunches out of leftovers from dinner, add a few sides with it such as fruit, a serving of crackers, pretzels with hummus or a salad and you have a meal. Ta da.

Make a slow cooker dish on Sunday night such as vegetarian chili, soup or pulled pork that can be used for Sunday night dinner as well as for several lunches. It makes it easy for lunches and if one evening you are in a pinch or just don't feel like making dinner, you can use the leftovers from Sunday, add a baguette and a side salad and there you go. Dinner. Yum.

Now on to restaurants. The portions are large, you don't know if the gluten-free meal is actually gluten free, and it is hard to know exactly how they are cooking the food. Have a few "go-to" options in your back pocket that are typically

pretty safe. A few examples would be to order the salad with protein and with the dressing on the side, order the sandwich or burger minus the bun and ask for a side salad or even sweet potato fries instead of regular fries. Even go as far as to say “no” when they ask if you want a refill on chips and salsa. If you ever want to know where your self-control lies, go to a Mexican restaurant and see if you can NOT eat the chips and salsa.

You can enjoy a meal out without feeling like you are limiting yourself and you can eat food that isn't going to leave you feeling crappy. It is important to read the menu and make extremely intentional choices because what you order and consume at a restaurant are in your complete control. Remember, the staff is trained to ask you if you want extra or to add a shot of tequila for only a dollar. It is not being mean to them if you say, “No, thank you.” They are still getting paid and will still get a tip and you will fit into your jeans in the morning. Win-win.

Finally, figure out what works for you, your body type, and your genetics. Some people swear by the Paleo diet or the Keto diet and those are usually the people that will tell you about it in the first ten minutes of your first interaction. They will post pictures of every meal explaining why the avocado and egg are so important to stay aligned with Keto. Or why processed foods are the devil and will lead to your demise. Others may follow a low calorie, high protein, low fat diet. There are cleanses that work for some, although that is what your liver is for. Others are vegan or vegetarian or only eat meat occasionally because thinking of baby chickens makes them sad. You choose what

works for you and what you can sustain based on your chosen lifestyle, financial situation and circumstance. Then stick to it to the best of your ability.

Also, as you age, your body changes and may react differently to certain types of foods. Pay attention to what your body and your digestive system are telling you. Lactose may have not been an issue in your 20s but now in your 40s your body is saying, “No, thank you.” So, change that creamer to almond milk. Little changes can go a long way and limit your time on the toilet.

### **Physical Activity**

Move your body in any way that is possible and in as many fascinating ways as possible. Go tightrope walking. Play golf. Go for a walk. Train for a half-marathon. Bike along the ocean. Go rock climbing. Join an adult kickball league. Go to CrossFit. Go to yoga class. Do yoga in the privacy of your own home. Go paraskiing. Do somersaults or jump rope down the street. Go for a run even if you run like Phoebe from *Friends*. Play wheelchair basketball. Do the Hokey Pokey. Just do something every day to move your body. Do it while you still can.

Movement is essential for your health. You can eat all the salads, grilled chicken and chickpeas that you want, but if you don't complement your healthy eating habits with some sort of exercise and movement regimen, you will not see and feel the long-term health benefits of pairing these two together. On the



other side, if you work out like crazy and eat poorly, you will not see the benefit of your workouts. My CrossFit coach always said, “You cannot outwork a bad diet.” I have found this to be very valuable advice. A crappy eating pattern will not provide the right energy to kick ass in the gym or on your training run. Your workouts will suffer, your dog walks will suffer, and you will always be trying to play catch-up instead of getting ahead. And I don’t know about you, but I am really competitive. If I am always trying to catch up with myself I get frustrated, because then I never get ahead of myself.

Be smart and reasonable with your workouts or movement goals and have an intention and plan for them. Define what you want to get from your physical activity. Do you want to win an Ironman, have six-pack abs, feel more energy throughout the day, like how your butt looks in the mirror, be able to walk your daughter down the aisle next summer, be in less pain or simply be able to breathe more easily? All of these are valid reasons to move and should be the guiding principle as you decide how you will incorporate exercise and movement into your life.

Get a Fitbit or an activity tracker or something to track your movement so you can monitor your progress. There is nothing better than that hit of dopamine you get when it buzzes because you hit your steps goal for the day. Okay, there are a few things that are better, such as winning the lottery or running into an ex and realizing you won the who-came-out-better contest.

A Fitbit, an Apple watch or an expensive phone might not be feasible for everyone. If you can't imagine paying for or don't want a fancy watch or tracker, get creative. Create a spreadsheet and track your miles or track your workouts, adding weights or reps as you go. For a couple years in a row, I made a New Year's goal to run 365 miles in the upcoming year. My dad made me an Excel spreadsheet that I printed out and kept on my fridge, and I tracked every mile that I ran this way. Super old school, but it was fun to keep track and see it every time I walked by the fridge. It also helped me make healthier food choices because before opening the fridge I saw it and reminded myself to try to match my food choices to the running plan. The chocolate bars were usually in the cupboard though, so that was not a fool-proof plan because sometimes chocolate is the answer.

Get a dog and walk that dog a lot, but don't underestimate the responsibility that comes with said dog. You will hit your steps goal so much easier this way. It will also help you to make friends, because everyone wants to talk to you when you have a dog. If you are single, it's a serious way to get a date. And you will be happier, because a dog will love you no matter what. For example, you lock your dog and your significant other in the closet for two hours. When you open the door, which one is pumped to see you and which one wants to bite your head off? Not only will you get exercise, you will also get unconditional love.

You will get injured. You may pull a back muscle, herniate a disc or three, dislocate a finger or fall off a wooden box doing box jumps at CrossFit and take a chunk of skin out of your shin—true stories. You might drop a 105-pound bar on your head, or tweak your knee running a half-marathon or just have some aches and pains from bike rides, walks and other movement—also true stories. You may ask the question, “Is that shit worth it?”

Yes. Yes, it is. I believe it is better to have a few injuries throughout your life because you worked hard and pushed yourself than to be undisciplined and unhealthy, and likely unhappy with yourself. This is solely my opinion, so if you disagree, I have left a comment box in the middle of the lake near the 17<sup>th</sup> green at TPC Sawgrass. You can leave your thoughts there. And see? You just got some exercise from the swim. Feels good, doesn't it?

Consider the unintended and fringe benefits of working out. You may develop friendships from your badminton league or the pitcher on your softball or kickball team might be the best man in your wedding. Or you might find the love of your life in the dumbbell area of the gym when you drop in while traveling to Phoenix.

When it comes down to it, having a consistent and fun workout routine will help you to have more energy, more endorphins and can give you a more positive outlook on yourself and your life. So, why not do it?

## Go to the Doctor

There are many doctors who you should go to annually or bi-annually, and it is important to make that a priority. When you leave that doctor's appointment, set up your next one before it turns into years later and you realize you haven't had your annual physical. I cannot stress this one enough. Go to the doctor. I will speak to this later in Lesson 6 but I feel like I need to state this eighteen times. I will try to do that throughout the rest of the book. So far, I have said it three times.

## The Wrap up

There is no "end" to taking care of yourself. That is one of the toughest concepts for me. I reach a fitness goal and then celebrate with a mimosa. Add eggs, bacon and home fries well done, please.

Slowly, the old habits crept back in.

### **Common Sara Doell Health Scenario:**

**Me on Sunday to my dining companion:** "Can I have a few of your fries?"

**Me on Wednesday:** "Fries instead of salad, please."

**Me the following Saturday:** "I'll have the burger with fries and please add bacon, mayo and extra cheese. Would I like something to drink with that? But of course, I will drink 3 beers. Save yourself some time walking back and forth to the bar and just bring them all at once."

**Me three weeks later:** “Ugh. I’m tired and don’t have energy. I’m going to take a nap instead of going to the gym. I’ll work out tomorrow.”

*Sound familiar to you? The yoyo of habits and choices?*

My experience with health is likely not very unique. We all have some genetics that we may be fighting, cravings that get the best of us, comfy sheets that win over going to the gym and a third margarita we could have done without. What is important is to figure out your *why* in taking care of your body. If you don’t know yours, take the time to explore this. You can find a health and wellness coach that can support you. Or discuss it with your best friend. Or journal about it until it becomes clear.

Defining your *why* can keep you motivated, strong and committed to your long-term health.

Be real with yourself, define your expectations and know your areas of weakness. Live an awesome and happy life and give yourself a fighting chance to live longer and more fully by the habits you create and the daily choices that you make.

Your 100-year-old self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

Define your health *why*. Why does your health matter to you? If it doesn't matter, then why not? Dig deep to get to a *why* that you believe in and can get behind.

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What habits do you need to keep in order to align with your *why*?

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What should you be doing differently in your health journey?

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Choose one change you are going to make for the next month.

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Choose one change you are going to make for the next six months.

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Set a calendar reminder to report back to yourself in 30 days and in 180 days.





## LESSON #2

*Having regrets is as useful as  
non-alcoholic beer or decaf coffee.*

### **True Meaning**

We all make mistakes. And if you think you don't make mistakes, then you likely made three more because of that thought process. Look at your mistake, define what you could have done differently, learn from it, and move on. Nothing that I just stated is groundbreaking news to you, I am sure. So why do we often spend so much time ruminating over mistakes we made in the past? It is a complete waste of time, as are the calories from a non-alcoholic beer without the benefit of the buzz, or the decaf coffee without the benefit of the caffeine.

### **How I Learned This**

I am a huge *Rent* fan. Not a fan of paying rent, that sucks because you are just helping someone else pay their mortgage. I am referring to the Broadway musical by Jonathan Larson

called *Rent*. A major theme throughout the story of *Rent* is “forget regret or life is yours to miss.” Such a simple yet true statement that I often sing at the top of my lungs while doing the dishes or dancing around the house like a maniac wearing my headphones. Wouldn’t you like to see that video? Very surprised that Mr. Larson did not cast me.

I have seen *Rent* in New York City, Charlotte, State College, some random town in New Jersey, New Haven, San Jose, and San Francisco three times. I have “*no day but today*” which is the tagline from the musical, tattooed on my foot. When you live in the today, you don’t let regret from the past take up space in your head. And honestly, this moment is the only thing that is real. The past and the future are constructs in our mind.

I once left a job in a really difficult and ultimately negative way by complaining about my experience to upper management as I was on my way out the door. It was very messy and took me years to get perspective on how and why the end to that situation happened. I did not feel supported, felt like I wasn’t treated well and my skills were not being used. I thought I signed up for a job where I would grow, hone my skills and walk away better. Instead, I was overworked, underpaid and was more of a paper pusher than anything else. I lost some friends, a mentor, and was angry about how that job and the management I worked for treated me.

For years, I regretted not standing up for myself when I did work there because I felt taken advantage of. I wished that I had been stronger to state how I felt and what I thought could

be better in the moment and not to wimp out and complain about things on the way out the door. And I lied to myself for years saying that I handled it the right way and the organization and management were wrong. Then I started regretting it and wished I had just walked away quietly. Then I shifted to wishing I had stated what I needed when I was an employee. I finally realized that by regretting it, I was doing nothing but taking the current moments out of play. I worked to reclaim my present by putting the past exactly where it belonged, in the past. Now when I think of that bridge burning, it does not bring those feelings of regret and shame to the top. I just recognize it and am proud that I have made better decisions in similar situations since then. Pat on the back. Move on.

## **The How To**

Perspective is extremely important when it comes to feelings of guilt or shame that may lead to regrets. Think about whatever situation you might be struggling with from your past. Does this still need your attention? In two weeks or months or years, is this still going to matter? If the answer is no, then it is a self-signed permission slip to focus on more important things. If the answer is yes, then call your therapist or coach to talk about getting a better perspective on it before it defines more moments in your life. Difficult past situations do not deserve your attention as they will add a toxic thought pattern that will take away moments that you could have had if you had your mind in the now. Seriously, regretting the way your last relationship ended (yeah, you cheated and may not

have deserved that relationship) should not stand in the way of finding the next Mr. or Ms. Right. Learn that cheating may not be the best course of action and do better next time.

Spend time journaling. If you write it out, you can get it from the loop in your head onto the paper and maybe, just maybe, have the chance to move past it. You may have to write about it a hundred times to get to the other side and that is okay. Write about how you feel, what happened, what you wish could have happened differently and what you have learned from it. Write how you will handle a similar situation in the future. Be prepared to identify this potential happening, create some coping strategies or tools to be better and then go about your day so that the thought of a past situation will not affect your three-hour binge watch of HGTV. That would be horrible. A fun game: watch any episode of any show on HGTV and take a sip every time they say “open concept.” Just that one phrase. Have fun and remember to take ibuprofen before you go to sleep! (Healthier version of this—do ten burpees every time they say, “open concept.” You also may need to take ibuprofen for the soreness!)

## **The Wrap Up**

Remember that you are a human being who is perfectly imperfect. You have emotions, thoughts and flaws that will sometimes lead to a poor choice or statement. Sometimes the filter in your brain will forget to work or may be temporarily out of order when you tell someone you love that you hate

them and never want to speak to them again. Or when you have road rage because that jerk cut you off in traffic and who do they think they are? Or when you make an error at work that cost you a raise or promotion or your job.

These things are going to happen. It is important to gain perspective on your mistakes, learn from what you did wrong and do better or make different choices next time. Don't let a past situation take away from the chance to see that episode of *Orange is the New Black* which has been cued up for two weeks on your Netflix account. Get in there and see what mistake Piper made this time instead of sulking over the fact your bike got stolen because you forgot to lock it up to the bike rack. Besides, when you file the police report, a hot cop might come to take down the details so it could turn out okay in the end.

Your future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

What situation, decision or past event has held you back from moving forward?

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If you could relive the entire situation, what would you have done differently?

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What did you learn from this situation?

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What will you replace regret with when it comes back to the front of your mind?

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# LESSON #3

*Don't be late to your own funeral.*

## **True Meaning**

There are only 24 hours in a day. That's 1,440 minutes. If I only have 1,440 minutes in a day, I am sleeping for about 480 of those minutes. I will spend 120 of those minutes at a meal, 45 of those minutes getting ready for the day, five minutes making the bed, twelve minutes going to the bathroom (IBS sucks) and 45 minutes commuting back and forth to my job. If I have an eight-hour workday, that takes away another 480 minutes. That means that I am left with a grand total of 253 minutes. That is not a lot of time. I have just over four hours for me and if we have a plan to meet at 6 p.m. and you show up at 6:23, you have wasted 9% of my free minutes. Not cool, friend.

Time is one of the most valuable things that we are given every single day. We wake up with a finite amount of time to

spend in our day, so make it a priority to respect your time and the time of others.

### **How I Learned This**

My sister and I were raised by the same two human beings yet somehow, she is late about 87% of the time. She is a single mom and a teacher with a wide range of friends in Rochester, New York. She always has a lot on the agenda and balancing them is not always easy. She finds time for her son's tennis lessons, baseball games or after school musicals, as well as her girls' nights out, friend dinners and time with our dad. She has boot camp workouts and the gym. She has parent-teacher meetings, lesson plan-making sessions, tests to grade and report cards to fill out. I understand that she has a lot on her plate, and add all of that to the fact that she is usually walking out the door not knowing where car keys are (they are in her hand), or realizing she has four minutes to get to a place that is nineteen minutes away, she is often in a rush to get places. And admittedly, for someone who thinks on time is late, this drives me crazy. When I told her that I had a chapter about being on time, she asked if that chapter was about her. It actually wasn't, but I want her to feel special knowing that her tardiness stresses me out, which I often think is a goal of hers. Mission accomplished, Char. I'll be waiting for you at the restaurant reading and rereading the menu the waitress handed to me fifteen minutes ago.

I also played and coached a sport where time is extremely important. If you are late to the first tee at a golf tournament,

it leads to a two-stroke penalty *if* you manage to make it within five minutes of your scheduled time. If you are five minutes and one second late, you are disqualified and your coach is pissed and so are your teammates. You also have a limit of time that you are allotted per shot and per hole. If you take too long, you can be penalized. Also, if you are the slow golfer in the group, others will talk badly about you behind your back and will wish your ball out of bounds. It's all just bad karma, so hurry up and hit, already. I am too competitive to lose a tournament because of a mistake in time management in getting to the first tee or executing a shot.

Penn Staters live by a mantra that we refer to as “Joepa Time” in honor of the late Joe Paterno, who was a stickler for what the second hand on the clock said. Joepa Time stated simply, “If you are on time, you are late.” That is what was ingrained into me when I was a student-athlete at Penn State and I truly saw the value in it. For one thing, when you are rushing to get somewhere it can add a lot of stress. Then you arrive at your destination all sweaty and disheveled—not a good look! Being late can also add stress to your day and I don't know about you, but I don't need any more stress. If you have a meeting or a date or an appointment and you show up twelve minutes late, it sets the wrong tone right away. It states to whomever you are meeting, “Your time is not valuable to me and it doesn't matter.” Well, people, your time matters to me so let's move on to the how, shall we?

## The How To

Showing up on time is a skill and often demands organization and strengths in managing a schedule. I don't want to twist my arm while patting myself on the back, but I am excellent at time management. I think it is a mix of natural ability to navigate time and having a father who schedules everything down to the minute. I am extremely organized and thoughtful with time as it relates to both myself and to others. I use a calendar and reminders and have a 95% on-time average—wouldn't you be happy if 95% of your United flights were on time? They aren't? Maybe try Delta. Or Alaska. Or Southwest. Or really any other airline.

Managing a schedule can be difficult if you don't have a system to keep it organized. Figure out what strategy works for you and utilize it. You can use a large desk calendar, a wall-hanging calendar that you made on Shutterfly with pictures of your dogs or your kids or sloths. You can use the calendar on your phone that syncs to your email and can have reminders that go off fifteen minutes prior to a meeting or an event. Whatever you do, have a place where you keep your schedule organized that suits your style. Maybe you don't need to write it down and you have a photographic memory. Good for you. Use that skill to your advantage.

Adopt a strategy for being on time, if it doesn't work, do something else. Get a different calendar, try bullet journaling or hire a drill sergeant to move in with you and follow you

around to get you places on time. Be open to different ways of raising your on-time percentage to above 64%. Before you know it, you will be more efficient than the Newark Airport.

Now that you have adopted a system that works for you, let's talk about planning. When putting your schedule together, put things in the calendar at the day and time they happen, allowing enough time for the event to occur. If it is a meeting with a boss that is extra chatty, make sure to schedule an hour, not fifteen minutes. Also, in my opinion, no meeting should ever last more than an hour. You lose most people's attention about the 21-minute mark. Add in all work, family, friend, and personal events and responsibilities so you don't schedule a date during a time you were supposed to take your mom to get her eyes checked. Include your workouts so that you will have a fighting chance of actually doing them. It is easy if you joined that adult kickball league which has games every Tuesday and every other Thursday. The games are already scheduled and all you have to do is put them into the calendar. If you are in a work-out-by-yourself phase, pick the days and times that you want to do your workouts so you make them a priority. Schedule in your morning weekday walks. Hey, while you are at it, put all of those doctor's appointments into that handy calendar of yours, because as we have established, you should go to the doctor. Schedule in friend dates, Tinder dates, volunteer work, yoga class and all of the other things that make you happy. Then when you look at your upcoming schedule, you will have that

painting party to look forward to on Friday night amongst the meetings you may not be particularly excited about.

I have asked a few people in my life who struggle to be on time why that is the case. They told me four things tend to keep them from being on time.

- 1) They schedule too many things into their schedule with not enough time to do it.
- 2) They do not plan for the unforeseen.
- 3) They underestimate the time it will take to get things done.
- 4) They have trouble prioritizing their thoughts and actions and get overwhelmed.

Here are some strategies to combat these things. On Sunday evening, look at your schedule for the week and make sure that everything looks doable. If not, shift things around to make the week work for you. Have things planned such as what is for lunch, who is going to pick up Kevin from piano lessons on Wednesday, and who is dropping Kate off at Karate on Friday afternoon. And don't forget about Randall and his SAT prep class!

Have you over-planned? If so, decide what you can remove from your schedule, like Thursday bowling with your co-workers who you aren't really close to or the piano recital of your second cousin's son who you haven't seen in five years. Make room for the things that matter—Marie Kondo the shit out

of your schedule until all of the things bring you joy. There is power in saying no to others that can result in a yes to yourself.

As for the unforeseen, allow for things like traffic or running into the chatty and annoying co-worker or the super-dependable train schedule of the SFMTA or the NYC subway. (Is there a sarcastic font? I would have used it there.) Planning in those three-to-eight extra minutes for those disruptions is vital.

As for knowing how long it takes you to do things, be realistic. You cannot take a shower, dry your hair, get dressed, do your make-up (or not), drink your coffee and have breakfast in 27 minutes. That is more like a 58-minute situation, so plan for an hour and eight minutes.

Lay out your outfit the night before, iron it if that is required, and then there will be no need to try to figure out what you are wearing when your first dose of caffeine has not hit yet.

Set the coffee so that it is ready when you wake up, have your breakfast planned and your lunch packed and ready to go. This will make getting out the door easier when Rebecca has to be at school by 7:15 and she has forgotten where her homework is and it is 6:49 and you have to be out the door by 6:55. You can spend those six minutes looking for her full-scale model of the solar system that she was supposed to build (but you built) and she forgot she put it under her bed last night so it could dry.

One strategy that I have found works for me is to think backwards in chunks of time in relation to my responsibilities. Start with the end and work back to when you need to open your eyes in the morning.

**Working Backwards in Action via Sara Doell's Brain:**

**9:30 a.m.** first meeting, five minutes from my office

**9:15 a.m.** walk to meeting, arrive early or just on time if running into a coworker who wants to chat occurs in route

**9:00 a.m.** arrive at office, check emails, get organized for the day

**8:30 a.m.** drive to work with a fifteen-minute cushion for possible traffic

**7:30 a.m.** get ready for work (basically shit, shower and shave)

**6:45-7:30 a.m.** drink coffee, have breakfast, watch the news, meditate 'cause the news pissed me off

**6:45 a.m.** arrive home from the gym

**5:30-6:30 a.m.** work out

**5:30 a.m.** get to the gym

**5:20 a.m.** leave for the gym

**5:00 a.m.** alarm

This is a way to have a less stressful morning, get to work feeling good because you worked out, had coffee and mediated



and included a plan for those unforeseen forces like traffic or random interactions. It's not a fool-proof plan but it certainly will give you a better chance of getting places on time and being productive than flying by the seat of your pants and checking your schedule when you walk into the office at 9:22 to see you have a 9:30 meeting. AND you have to go to the bathroom so you will have to rush to do that on the way, arriving in the conference room sweaty, taking the seat not at the table because table space was taken by the early birds. No one wants to sit next to that person at a meeting. Don't be that person.

## **The Wrap Up**

Time is valuable. You get to spend all of it but do not get to save any aside for a rainy day. Spend it wisely and effectively by setting up a daily, weekly and monthly schedule that will help you get the most out of your days.

And when that occasional misstep happens and you are going to end up being late to something, let the other party know that you are running late. And BE HONEST about your actual arrival time. If I am meeting someone and they are running late, they will text me that they will be there in five minutes and nine times out of ten, they aren't walking into the restaurant until thirteen minutes later. I start out irritated giving them that half-assed hug and the insincere, "How are you?" greeting when I really want to ask for them to donate thirteen of their 1,440 minutes to me since they wasted thirteen of mine. And I looked like the dummy sitting at the table

alone scrolling through Instagram. Give me back those thirteen minutes, Char!

Having a schedule with meetings, appointments, and events planned into your day does not mean that you should be always thinking about what is next. When you are on that first date or in that important board meeting or in your sports marketing class, be present. Be where you are and then when it is time for the next situation, get there on time and then just be in that place. I promise you that when you are organized with your time and arrive places early, you will enjoy events much more.

Your more relaxed future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

What is your on-time percentage?

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How do you feel when you are late to something important?

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How do you feel when you are on time or, dare I ask, early to something?

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What ideas do you have to better organize yourself to be the first to the party?

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# LESSON #4

*It's not me, it's you.*

## **True Meaning**

Relationships are very complicated and can change in an instant (you slept with my best friend?) or slowly over time (I've outgrown this job and feel like it has taken me ten years to lose myself and I need to go find myself on a beach in the Bahamas. Ciao.)

Be aware of where your friendships and relationships stand and be willing to grow with, redefine or walk away from them as they shift. Too often people stay in a relationship that has run its course. Someone doesn't want to quit on it or one partner can't stand the thought of being alone. So, they stay in a bad, negative or abusive relationship for far too long doing emotional damage that then has to be undone with months or even years of therapy. Sounds nice, doesn't it?

Wouldn't it be great if we could all be adults and identify that a relationship has run its course and we shook hands, gave back the mixed tapes that we made for each other and walked away before it got ugly?

Relationships change and we must be willing to understand that and either grow with or away from them. This is not just applicable to romantic relationships. It can apply to friendships, mentor/mentee situations, family members or your dry cleaner who jacked up the prices on sweaters. Really? \$12 for a sweater? Come on, Jack!

It takes a lot of strength to realize that something or someone in your life that was once passionate, powerful, useful or significant has changed and is no longer serving that original purpose. And it takes even more strength to either redefine it (partner to friend, mentor to colleague, cousin to, well, cousin, but you just see each other at mandatory family things) or walk away from it all together.

On the other side, someone who you first thought would be not a fit for your life surprises you and actually could be good for you. Take the chain off the door, open it and let them in, already—they brought a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand to celebrate this new friendship! Get the cheese board out and let's do this.

You never know when the trainer at the gym who you thought was a jerk actually is a great guy and becomes your boyfriend. Or a neighbor who you first thought was psychotic

is actually a super cool person with a fun story to tell. AND she has a grill in the backyard that she lets you use. Fire it up, throw the salmon on and let's share war stories!

### **How I Learned This**

I spent the majority of my adult life in some sort of a relationship because I was insecure and felt like I was a better person if I had a girlfriend, or at least someone who would always respond positively to the “You up?” text.

To be totally respectful to those from my past, I will state kindly that I do not regret any of my relationships. However, in hindsight, I realize that I stayed in several of those partnerships a bit too long. I dated a woman because she was a really good cook, made a lot of money and always had really good wine at her place. She was super sweet, smart, and kind but we were not a fit from day one and I stayed in that relationship for over six months. I dated a recent college grad when I was in my early 30s because I was lonely and when she went away to join the military, I tried to do the long-distance thing for a bit too long. I was in a great relationship in my 20s that started to change, and as I got a new job and moved to a new city, the relationship probably should have ended. Instead she moved with me and we maintained the relationship for another year before I had my eye on someone else and I walked away. I was a jerk. I got cheated on by a woman who I was smitten with. She cheated twice but I still stayed like a little puppy waiting for a treat hoping that it would get better. It didn't.

It took me a long time to realize that staying in a bad relationship or one that has run its course is a lot worse than being single. When you are single, you can do what you want, when you want and how you want. Everything is where you put it. In a relationship, they might put the toilet paper under instead of over which is NOT RIGHT! Also, you are responsible for communicating with, respecting and staying keenly aware of another person's experience, not just your own. And that is a great responsibility that I screwed up a few times.

This realization has also helped me navigate friendships and fade away from a few people who were not good for me. My friend Maribeth said to me once that, "Some friendships have a shelf life," and that rang so true to me. You wouldn't eat expired food, why would you stay in a friendship that has soured?

I had a friend who was a serious opportunist and would change or cancel plans with me when something more intriguing or a higher-status person came along. After years of this, I never really said goodbye to her, I just did the "fade-away" and moved on to the people who mattered. Not only have I moved away from bad friendships, I have gravitated towards and put way more effort into the people that I saw as extremely valuable and positive in my life. I have surrounded myself with people I trust and who will be there for me at the drop of a dime, if needed.



## The How To

Think about the last lesson we discussed about showing up on time for things and cherishing those 253 extra minutes you have once your other tasks and responsibilities are completed. Now consider what people you want to spend those minutes with. Examine who those people currently are and if they are adding to your life and bringing joy or are they sucking the life out of you and make you feel anxious, angry or annoyed. From there, start making decisions about the people in your life and what role they are serving.

Often a relationship will change slowly and before you even realize, it has turned into something that does not bring joy, happiness or positivity to your life. You can't always guess how something will pan out, but once you get to a place that you realize something needs to change, don't drag your feet. Act on it. You don't have that much time, people!

I believe you are a culmination of the five people that you spend the most time and energy on. It is not a perfect science, but the people you spend the most time with are going to have an effect on you, your happiness (or not), and your overall life experience. You should take that list of five people very seriously. If you spend a lot of time with someone who is always complaining about things or drinks way too much and gets belligerent or just isn't a good person, it is time to walk away before you get into a bar fight. Allow yourself to open up to a new friendship to fill that spot and bring more joy to your life.

Hello, responsible friend, and sophisticated non-chair thrower! If you have a boss who is degrading and belittling to you, find a new job or go to HR and ask for a new supervisor. If you have an employee who is not filling their responsibilities and brings negative energy to the workplace, give them the opportunity to find new work elsewhere.

If you have a person in your life who you really care about and they bring positive energy and fun times into your day, ask them to go to dinner more often. Or ask them to go skydiving, hiking or to see that movie in the dine-in movie theatre. Nurture those types of relationships. Those people will have your back when you need it.

## **The Wrap Up**

When it comes down to it, you have to put value on your time and energy and believe that you deserve to have people in your life that add value to your experience. You will be a happier person with a more fulfilling life once you let the right people into your life at the right time.

Your future best friend will thank you.

## Future You Defined

What five people do you spend the most time with?

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What do each of them bring to your relationship/ friendship and how do they celebrate your strengths?

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Is there someone you think you should spend less time with? Why?

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Is there someone you think you should spend more time with?  
Why?

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After considering this, make changes to any friendships or relationships that you deem necessary.

# LESSON #5

*Make it home.*

## **True Meaning**

Create a safe and comfortable living space for yourself, whether it is a college dorm, an apartment with six roommates, or your first home. The space that you call home is where you spend a majority of your time and you should feel safe and calm there. This is making sure that the access to your home is safe while creating a space that you can relax in. How you decorate, the furniture and the flow of the home can make a big difference in your comfort and happiness. To complement the healthy life you are working towards, a great living space can help lower your stress and help you sleep better.

## **How I Learned This AND How You Can Live It**

### **Location**

In an apartment complex, live on the second floor or higher as it is easier for someone to break into a ground floor

apartment. I'm not trying to be an alarmist—it's just a fact to be aware of. If possible, get that top floor apartment even if it means three extra sets of stairs on a fourth-floor walk-up. Two advantages—extra heart-healthy steps, and more importantly, there is no one living above you so you won't hear footsteps, human, feline or canine.

I once had an upstairs neighbor who I am pretty sure moved her furniture around every night from midnight until 2 a.m. During the evening, she either had a bowling lane set up in the living room or had a youth basketball team practicing their man-to-man defense. It could possibly have been that she was a square-dancing teacher. I'm not sure what it was, but it was distressing at times. Prior to that, I lived in a fourth-floor walkup with no one above me, and it was quiet and blissful.

For urban life, get the apartment on the back of the building. I have lived on both the front and back of a building in the city and there is a significant difference in street noise. Unless you like hearing the screeches of the bus brakes, the honking from belligerent drivers or the screams from elementary school kids, then by all means get that front apartment. You are a more patient human than me.

If it is an apartment that sits on the front and back of the building, seek a back-of-the-building bedroom. Our San Francisco apartment is wonderful and on a quiet street. However, the bedroom is on the front of the building and the Monday morning 4:45 a.m. trash and recycling pick-up is a

tough way to start the week. Trade-off for the washer, dryer, dishwasher and balcony.

When picking a neighborhood, know some of the important key factors in the vicinity. Know the location of the essential things, the grocery store, the gas station, the fire department, the gym, your church and/or synagogue, pharmacy, yoga studio, your office, best friend's house or other places that are meaningful and important in your daily or weekly life. You can have the most beautiful home located in an inconvenient location and will be irritated about how long it takes you to get anywhere. And then you might have to eat leftover two-week-old questionable chili because you didn't want to make the 45-minute drive to the grocery store. Also, if you go to the store and forget to get one ingredient in your meal, there is no chance that you are going back to get the cumin you forgot, making that chili way less satisfying.

If you commute to work or drive the kids to school daily, another important thing to consider is your commute. Know the traffic patterns from where you live to where you work or to the school. If you can have a reverse commute, you and your lower back will be grateful for those extra minutes not sitting in your car. If you don't know what the traffic is, then go to that location in the morning and actually do your commute before signing that lease or buying that house. See if it is something that you can handle. Also, any chance you can get a place where you can walk to work or walk the kids to school? It will

add steps to your day and chances to run into friendly neighbors instead of mad, road-raging people.

When I lived in Brooklyn, I had a 45-minute to an hour commute one way to work and that was against traffic—as I was leaving the city, all the traffic was coming in. It was still unbearable at times, especially compared to the 20-minute walk to work that I inherited when I moved to the West Coast. I would get exercise on the way to work and loved it. I also noticed that my lower back pain was way more manageable once I stopped sitting in a car for two-plus hours a day. Now I often have to dodge human feces, trash, and the occasional raccoon on the way to work, but at least I get to walk and jam to *Rent* songs. Trade-offs.

### **Make your Home Safe**

Make sure that your locks are sturdy and you have a chain on the door. For your sake, I hope that you never need to have this extra layer of security, but peace of mind is important and priceless. Well, not priceless, 'cause that extra lock cost \$13.99, but you get the point.

I once had a very intrusive and boundary-crossing neighbor who did not understand personal space. She knocked on our back door to ask to borrow something that most people just go to the store for. She stopped us in the hallway to have awkward and uncomfortable conversations about her childhood trauma. My response; “Um, I am just trying to get my mail, thanks.” Then she would “borrow” our personal items that were in the



common area without asking. After blocking her email and phone number, we put extra security on our door because I felt that she was very unstable and wouldn't be surprised to come home to see her sitting on our couch, drinking our wine and petting our dog. I can just imagine the response, "Oh, hi! I broke in because I wanted you to see how easy it would be to do that. I want your place to be more secure. I know a guy that can fix the door for only \$100, though. You're welcome." Don't be that neighbor and don't engage with that neighbor. A courtesy, "Hi, how are you?" followed by a "Great, thanks!" is all the relationship that you need to have with neighbors with whom you share a wall, floor or ceiling.

Give a key to your home to someone that you trust. For two reasons—the lock-out happens. It happened to my wife and me in our apartment in Brooklyn on a rainy Saturday morning when we heard a dog barking in our hallway and wanted to check on it. We both realized at the same moment that our door automatically locked and we had walked out without keys. We simultaneously dove to try to catch the door. We missed. I wasn't wearing shoes or a bra and hadn't brushed my teeth yet so you can guess who went to the landlord's office to get the key. Had it been Sunday, we would have been waiting in the hallway until Monday morning at 9 a.m., because there was no way we were going to break down the door *Law & Order*-style.

Next reason—you might get snowed in on your trip home to see family, making it back three days later than expected.

You will need someone to pick up your mail or feed the cat or walk your dog or water your plants until you return. If your best friend doesn't have a key, they can't do that and Rufus will be thirsty and crap on the rug and the plant will wilt and the mailman will leave your mail outside of the mailbox because it doesn't all fit and then that guy you see on all the security cameras will steal your mail. Hopefully, he will pay the electric bill he stole, but not likely. So, avoid all of that and give a trusted confidant a key or the garage code.

Have a fire extinguisher and a fire ladder. You never think about needing an item like these unless you are staring down your beautiful flowy curtains that were lit on fire by your stupid roommate who left a candle burning with the window open on a breezy day.

Also, don't have THAT roommate. Know who you are living with, and if it is a friend, be aware that some friends are more live-with-able than others and that friendships can sometimes be damaged from sharing a roof, a bathroom and kitchen utensils. If you have random roommates, do a Google search or background check on them. It might not come up immediately that they are a serial killer, but a deep search can possibly bring up that domestic violence charge or that arson attempt on their mother's home that can disqualify them from being your bunk mate.

Get renters insurance. You will likely never need it but when you do need it, you will regret it terribly if you don't

have it. One of our friends had an unfortunate fire occur at her apartment, lost most of her things and unfortunately, didn't have renters insurance. She moved into a new place and the first thing she did was get the insurance she needed. Fast forward a few years to her third apartment. She had left a stack of tips on her table and went out to the vet with her cat. While she was gone, there was an electrical fire in the apartment and most of her stuff burned, including that stack of money. Being that she had just moved in, she had not yet transferred the renters insurance to the new place. It was the second time she lost a lot of her stuff, but she was glad she had the cat with her. So yeah, get renters insurance unless you want to start over twice. Fifteen dollars a month is worth it even though insurance is something you never need. Until you do.

Get furniture that is clean and new, if possible. Ikea is amazing for the first time you need to furnish a home or apartment. You will be fighting with Allen wrenches and having to follow pictures of little men putting it together that surely seem confused themselves. You just may end up with a random piece that you never used and one part of a bedside stand that is supposed to be black but was put on backwards so it's brown instead. It is totally worth it and a black sharpie can fix that last mistake. Be careful about what furniture you take off the street. You don't know what is growing in it or on it and what rodent or cockroach you might bring into your home. And that is just gross.

## Feng Shui and Ambience

Get good lighting throughout your home, especially in the bedroom and the kitchen. I once had a kitchen that had one overhead light that was super dim and I had trouble telling the cucumber from the zucchini. Zucchini is not good in cucumber sandwiches. I would open the refrigerator door to see better, letting all the cool air out, which I am sure did not help the electric bill situation.

As for the bedroom, you want softer light so reading before sleep will be relaxing. This will also make turning on the light in the morning less abrasive. There is nothing worse than a super bright light to wake up to feeling like you are in an interrogation room on *Law & Order*. I mean, if Benson was there, I would be okay with it but that doesn't seem likely, so 25-watt bulbs it is.

Know where the sun rises and sets so you can plan things accordingly. Put the houseplant in front of the window that gets direct sunlight. Do not put the head of your bed in front of that sunlight-filled window unless you want an early morning wake-up from Mother Nature every day.

Put down area rugs if you have hardwood floors. While the floor may look nice, it can get cold and dirty and walking around barefoot is not very pleasant when you get hair and lint stuck to the bottom of your feet when walking from the shower to the bedroom. Even with the rug, maybe shower shoes or slippers is a good idea.

Don't put a TV in your bedroom. The bedroom is for two things. Sleeping is the first one. If you haven't gotten to the second one yet, get that Tinder up and active and get to swiping right already!

## **The Wrap Up**

Create a space that you get to come home to every night that feels warm and inviting and safe. It is okay to sacrifice a larger apartment for something smaller, in a better spot with better amenities and great proximity to your favorite coffee shop. You might have to start out with four awesome roommates in a sixth-floor walk-up to get your own bedroom and pay the affordable rent if you live in an expensive city. It will be worth the calories burned and the view of the city and the ability to sleep with both eyes closed.

Your well-rested future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

Do you have a fire extinguisher? If not, get one

Do you have renters' or homeowners' insurance? If not, get it.

Is the lighting good in your house? If not, change it.

Describe your ideal home.

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Compare that to your current home. Is there something you can add to your home to make it more like the ideal one?

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Now that you have added things to your current home to make it better, what is your plan to get that ideal home? Come up with three action steps to get you closer to it.

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## LESSON #6

*Make it a priority to put your feet in stirrups and have awkward conversations with your gynecologist.*

### **True Meaning**

To tie into Lesson #1 for a second, you are only given one body to live in and it is your responsibility to take care of it. You will not always have symptoms if you are sick or have a virus or the beginning stages of disease. Being proactive about your healthcare can help you to stay ahead of illness, allergies, STIs, poison ivy, measles, sun damage to your eyes or bouts of depression. You owe it to yourself and the people who love you and to your children (I mean, they love you, but you are also the worst person ever sometimes) to make sure that you take the best care of yourself by seeking the help of medical professionals.

Medical professionals mean actual living, in-person doctors, not the writers of WebMD. Whatever you do and whatever

symptoms you have, DO NOT look it up on WebMD or the internet. Because by the end of that 45-minute internet browsing rabbit hole, you will be totally convinced that your headache is definitely a brain tumor and you are dying of cancer.

## How I Learned This

We have already discussed my mother's genetic makeup and the amount of physical and mental health problems she suffered from as I was growing up. That alone could have been enough for me to realize that I am set up with questionable genes and need to go to the doctor for annual checkups.

However, I have seen other people in my life deal with sickness or personal tragedy because of health problems that have kept me on a good healthcare path. I had an ex-girlfriend who was diagnosed with stage four cancer at the age of 28 and given less than five years to live. She passed away less than a year later. After she died, I looked at her Myspace account. Let me back up for those people who are under the age of 40, Myspace was the Facebook before Facebook existed. You could add songs and rate your top five friends. Doing surveys was the coolest part of your page because people could find out that one of your friend's first concerts were MC Hammer and Vanilla Ice, they preferred Diet Coke to regular Coke and they were a *Friends*, not a *Seinfeld*, person. They also chose mornings over evenings, coffee over tea and Colgate over Crest. All of the important things.

Anyway, back to looking at her Myspace page. She had filled out one of those surveys and one of the questions asked what you wish you had done better. She responded, “Go to the doctor.” That always stuck with me because once they had found the cancer, it was everywhere and it was incurable. I wondered if she could have caught it earlier and had a fighting chance to beat it. Although, I wonder about my mom as well and she was constantly at the doctor. I’ll take my chances and go to the doctor.

What I have learned is that when it comes down to it, we cannot prevent all bad or painful things from happening to us. What we can do is have the medical professionals examine us and help us define our course of action and preventive measures we should take to stay as healthy as possible for as long as possible.

## **The How To**

Hopefully by the time I finish writing this book, we will have universal healthcare like our friendly neighbors in Canada and no one has to worry about medical bills piling up on their journey of health. We can also hope that all the ice caps have stopped melting and we have reversed climate change so that we won’t all fall into the ocean. And cancer was cured. And I won the lottery and have a yacht. Fingers crossed.

So now that we have established that you hopefully have some type of health insurance or access to health care, it is important to utilize the resources you have. Understand your

health insurance plan and what doctors are in-network. You may pay less in copay and your insurance will typically cover more with an in-network doctor. Then establish all of your doctors and go in for a first visit to create a medical history. If you don't know the history of your family's medical situation, just ask. Ask your parents or an aunt or grandfather or great uncle or sister or anyone else in your bloodline to tell you what they know about your family's genes. Get a medical record and footprint started and keep up with it. After those initial visits, establish with each doctor how often you should be having check-ups and what changes in your health to keep an eye out for. By paying attention to what your body is telling you, you can help your doctor decide what medical treatments or preventative care you may need.

Do not ignore symptoms that may be caused by some underlying situation. I'm not trying to turn you into a hypochondriac who believes that everything is wrong with you and if you stub your toe, you should get it amputated. But if you have chronic back pain and can't lean down to tie your shoes, a trip to your back specialist or chiropractor might not be a bad idea.

As I give advice on doctors, let me make sure that you understand that I do not have any medical training and have never studied medicine (I think that covers me legally, right?). I just want to share what doctors I have found useful to establish a habit of visiting. The doctors that I visit annually or bi-annually are the general practitioner, gynecologist, dentist,

dermatologist and optometrist. In recent years, due to a wicked bout with an intestinal infection, an anal tear and a flare up of IBS, I have also become great friends with my gastroenterologist. She is the coolest, and also performed a colonoscopy on me and has spoken at length with me about my bowel movements, so I feel very close to her. Also, yes, you read that correctly—anal tear. Probably one of the worst things I have ever gone through. Well, besides that six-month span when Panera got rid of the Asian Sesame Chicken Salad.

When leaving the doctor's office and before even thinking about walking out the door to the elevator and trying to figure out where you parked your car or when the next bus arrives, make your next appointment. Yes, it might be six months or a year from now, but you can always change it if the day and time you picked coincides with your son's dance recital or the women's World Cup Finals. And remember your sloth wall calendar? You can put the appointments on there as a reminder—and you thought we weren't going to discuss sloths anymore.

## **The Wrap Up**

Go to the doctor. That is it.

For the 11<sup>th</sup> time, go to the doctor.

Your 90-year-old healthy future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

What is the name of your primary care doctor? Your dermatologist? Your dentist? Your therapist? Your OBGYN or proctologist? Your optometrist?

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When was the last time you saw each of these doctors?

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When is your next appointment for each doctor?

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Is there any health issue you have that has been nagging you that you have not gotten checked out? If so, what doctor should you make an appointment with?

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## LESSON #7

*You can't be a jackass to the waiter, the barista or the flight attendant and still be a good sibling, spouse, parent, co-worker or friend.*

### **True Meaning**

I am a strong believer that to an extent, the way you do one thing is the way you do everything. If you cheat on the golf course, I think you are more likely to cheat on your taxes or your spouse or your diet. Didn't think I could link kicking a golf ball out from under the trees to having an affair but I managed to. I guess morals are morals, whether it has to do with how you compete in a game or how you navigate the complexities of marriage.

The opposite is true, as well. If you are a really wonderful spouse who helps take out the garbage, shares the cooking and dishwashing responsibility, fills up the tank when it gets low and always sends your father a card on Father's Day, you are likely a stand-up person in other areas of your life. I'm guessing

you would be someone who is admired by their co-workers and people like sitting next to on a plane. You pick up a piece of trash when you see it on the ground and you recycle and compost because, again, Mother Nature.

If you are a person who shows up to work excited and ready to kick ass, you are likely going to be the one who works hard in the gym and is kind to the cashier at the grocery store. And on the other side, if you are typically more cranky and negative while driving to the office, you are probably more likely to yell at other drivers and be rude to the waiter if he forgets to add avocado to your sandwich.

Now, there are exceptions to every rule and some people are able to act in different ways in different situations that don't seem to match. I am not a sociologist and I haven't done the research. I just believe that most people tend to be the same way in all areas of their life, whether it be high energy or low energy, positive or negative or someone who cuts corners or who does the work and hits every detail.

### **How I Learned This**

My mom was someone who always lived life from a place of doubt and uncertainty. She was a worrier and always assumed the worst would happen. She focused on what was bad, saw the negative characteristics of other people and played out the worst-case scenario all the time. Very rarely did she approach a situation from a place of positivity and certainty. She believed that things would go wrong and they often did.

That is what I grew up with and it could be exhausting. Seriously, she would get ready to go on a family camping trip and assume that it was going to rain the whole time, that a bear was going to come into our site and eat our marshmallows or that the macaroni salad left in the cooler outside overnight would get eaten by some crafty raccoons without opposable thumbs. Okay, in fairness, all of those things did happen on camping trips, but she always thought the worst was going to happen every time even when we had perfectly dry weeks with no bear confrontations and the raccoons bothered our neighboring campers instead of us.

My mom did not hold her negative assumptions for family camping-related situations only, she did it in most affairs. She would assume that friends would cancel plans, people would let her down, nice people were fake, money was unattainable and that cancer was imminent.

In turn, I tried to come from a different place. I approached situations from positivity, excitement and wonder. I hoped for the best—not blindly as I knew things could go wrong, but I truly worked to have a positive mindset going into most situations. I work to be happy, enjoy the moments, be kind to others and empathetic to what people are going through. I try to always say please and thank you to people in service industries. I show appreciation for my wife when she cooks dinner, just as she is doing at this moment so I can sit on the couch and write this. I am kind to co-workers and thoughtful towards players that I coach and the situations they are in, both on the

golf course when I find them behind a tree, and in life when they get dumped and are crying hysterically the day before the Conference Championship—that one happened twice. Cool thing is both of those players almost won Conference. Break ups all around, everyone! I want to always strive to be the same kind, caring and positive person no matter what situation I'm in.

I learned this by watching golf and a lot of it. I've observed people that I competed against in college, country club members in the member guest, businessmen and women on Monday outings, junior golfers in tournaments and college golfers as a coach.

I have learned the valuable lesson that if you want to know who someone is, play a round of golf with them. They will show you exactly who they are and they will show you quickly. The character of who you are, how you would handle situations and how you treat others comes out in the crazy sport that almost anyone can play.

The guy who is a slacker in his job and hasn't exactly earned the Husband of the Year award is likely to take several muligans and gimmies throughout the round and will turn in a score of 78 when he actually hit the ball 85 times and didn't actually putt the ball out four times resulting in a likely score of 89.

The super-competitive businesswoman who stays in the office until 10 p.m. every night and makes it to the gym by 5 a.m. to get to the office by 7 a.m. is the one who will show

up two hours before the tee time. She needs time to warm up, stretch, hit balls, practice her short game and get her shoes shined in the locker room. She is the one that wants to keep score and asks everyone what they got at the end of each hole and will remind you of the punch out that you had to give you a six, not a five as you reported.

It may sound oversimplified, but I really feel that if you want to hire Kathy, or date Simon or start a business with Henry, you need to play golf with them first. You will know within that four hours if you want to forge that relationship.

## **The How To**

Identify what your core values are. Then live them. Live them all of the time. If you value inner strength, love, and compassion, then make sure that you are always looking to be kind to others, living from your heart, and keeping your head above ground when things are hard.

If you value hard work, the power of the dollar, and the democratic system, then you better be working your ass off, putting your extra money in savings, and voting in every freakin' election. I mean, all of them. The primaries, the districts, the PTA meeting and for the captain of your adult soccer league team.

If you value family, friendships, and building relationships, make sure to keep in touch with your best friend from high school—not just by liking their Instagram posts but by inviting

them over for dinner once a month. Call your dad every Sunday night to check in or send birthday cards to all of your family members with a handwritten note. Create traditions around family time such as Thanksgiving dinners or reading *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* to your kids every Christmas Eve.

If you value physical, mental, and spiritual health, have a workout plan that you stick to. Schedule in your yoga classes, kickboxing classes or tennis matches. Go to church or synagogue or any other place of worship every week. Eat healthy. Meditate. Breathe deeply.

Whatever your values, make sure that your actions line up with them and don't cut corners. Be true and honest to yourself about what matters to you and line up your actions with those beliefs.

## **The Wrap Up**

Know what matters to you and live it. Live it all the time. No excuses. No buts. No other option. Do the work. Be the best you. Because if you aren't the best you all of the time, then you are cheating yourself and others out of something true and special. And at the end of the day, if you were on videotape all day, would you be proud of the playback?

The best version of your future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

What are your top five core values?

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How are you living your life to align with those values?

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What can you do differently or better in order to be aligned with your values?

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Who supports you as you work to align with your values?

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Call them and ask them to have dinner.



## LESSON #8

*There is no magic redo for your childhood.*

### **True Meaning**

I am not a parent and never will be, so I do not want to act like I know how to raise a child from womb to eighteen and beyond. I have seen many special people in my life raise children and it honestly looks like one of the single most difficult things to do. I value my sleep too much to even consider that.

That being said, I know many people that grew up with difficult childhoods and parents who may not have been cut out for the job. You may have had parents who fought all the time and got divorced when you were young or had a parent with a substance abuse problem. Maybe you had a dad who was very hard on you or a mom who was never emotionally available. Maybe you had a parent killed by a drunk driver or who took their own life. Maybe you were raised by your grandparents because your parents abandoned you at birth.

When it comes down to it, everyone has something from their younger years that at best wasn't great, and at worst was traumatic and damaging. Your job is to realize that your childhood doesn't define you. How you react to and grow from it does. Whatever your upbringing, it is your experience to own and understand. No one has ever had a perfect childhood and every person has flaws.

Don't paint your childhood with a shit brush when it was only half shitty—even the shitty parts can give you strength. Take some time to evaluate your childhood; the good and the bad, the ups and the downs and everything in between. Your early years laid the groundwork for who you are today and if you are not happy with it, then figure out how to change the path to find a more joyful and satisfying life.

The scaffolding of our life is complex and built up from childhood into adulthood. The base of our lives may be sturdy and strong or may be a bit wobbly and needs a few extra screws. You cannot change your upbringing, you can't change who your parents are and you can't change the past. You can, however, control whether you let your past define your future.

### **How I Learned This**

I have some flashes of time from my childhood that are both pleasant and not so pleasant. When I think of my adolescence, I fondly recall camping trips to Hamlin Beach State Park, being the goalie for the red team in the local soccer league, travelling all over the nation to play in golf tournaments, playing

basketball with my dad in the driveway, and playing two-hand touch football with the boys from the neighborhood.

I can picture myself hitting golf balls in the backyard to a target and using a shag bag to pick them up. I have recollections of mowing the lawn, helping my dad with the vegetable garden and pool parties with all of the neighbors.

Sleepovers at my grandparent's house and having grapefruit in the morning that grandma would cut into little slices and add sugar for us is one of my favorite memories. My sister and I stayed at my other grandma's house on New Year's Eve and would watch the ball drop, although I hardly ever stayed awake for that.

I am able to look back and envision the happy times in my childhood. The problem for me is that there were some very tough, significant times that often overshadowed the good, and in time I became angry about those experiences.

Having a mother with bipolar disorder and not knowing what it was until my teens made it difficult for me to navigate my early years. Often, I was the adult and my mom was the child. My mom was cruel, spent hours and days crying, didn't get out of bed for long stretches of time and obsessed over what was wrong.

At her low times, she spewed anger and hate at me, my sister, my dad, my uncle, and anyone that she saw as flawed. She would have a breakdown and get in the car, driving away to go see her mother, and I would wish she wouldn't come back.

The next day, she was back and sometimes had little to no recollection of the fight from the night before. And we never fully talked about it as a family. It just became the norm, and I often lived in a state of bracing for impact.

Growing up, I was mad at her and sometimes hated her for the way she treated me. She pried into my life and when I opened up about things, she would use it against me later. She said things to me throughout my life that made me feel that I was never good enough. At one golf tournament, I had not played well and she said to me, “It kills me to see how much money your dad and I are spending on your golf and then watch you miss so many short putts.” Sit on that one for a minute. I was fourteen years old and trying to compete to get to college and earn a scholarship. My confidence was shattered and I am *still* rebuilding it.

She often asked me what I weighed and critiqued my looks. I was a tomboy and would rather wear athletic clothes and pull my hair back into a ponytail (yeah, still do). My mom asked me why I wouldn't wear my hair down and then when I did, she noted that I wasn't wearing make-up or lipstick. She was always so judgmental of me for not being who she thought I should be. I always felt that I was never good enough, no matter what I did.

For a long time, I was mad at her. Every time that I drove home to Rochester, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach because I knew that Mom could be mean and go off the rails at

any time. I feared that hateful look that she gave when she was disappointed in me or in a fit of rage. I didn't go home as often as I could have and failed to develop my relationship with my dad and my sister as I would have liked to because dealing with my mom came along with that.

I often felt like a victim to an emotionally-abusive parent who had a major mental health disorder. I felt shitty about myself and often believed that I was not good enough. I felt sorry for myself because my mom was "crazy" and thought it wasn't fair that this happened to me. I yearned for a female role model that I did not have in my mom. I was jealous of friends and girlfriends who had close relationships with their mothers. I was mad at myself for not being strong enough emotionally and for feeling bad about myself. I was angry because I cared so much about what my mom thought and I engaged with her crazy tirades at times. I don't say this to sound too dramatic, but it was pretty fucking dramatic.

It took me until I was about 35 years old to realize that my mom was tortured inside because of a chemical imbalance and a lifetime of unhealthy decisions and coping mechanisms. She didn't necessarily want to be that way. She didn't want to stay in bed for two weeks at a time or be on a cocktail of anti-depressant medicine. She didn't want to do electric shock treatment or have a stay in a mental hospital. She didn't want the daily pain that she endured because of her bipolar disorder.

Once I understood that, I decided to change my mindset, went to Cognitive Behavior Therapy, identified my schema and

did the work. I went to four different therapists before finding one that was perfect for me. She was candid with me and let me talk, but also would redirect me to help me get to the core. She supported me in facing my feelings in a way that helped me get to a place of relative peace with my relationship with my mom. I appreciated her so much and worked with her for five years before moving to the other side of the country. After a few failed attempts at finding a West Coast therapist, I continued working with her, paying out of pocket to have monthly or bi-monthly calls. She really helped me get to a much better perspective about my childhood, my mom, and my responsibility in taking control of my life.

I started stepping into a place of acceptance with who my mom was and love for myself. I learned that I am good enough. That my mom's mental health was not about me. I learned that my mom was really proud of me despite her way of showing it. And that was so freeing. I learned that the amazing mom that she was on my wedding weekend was the mom that she always wanted to be. She just couldn't or maybe didn't know how.

I am a survivor of some tough childhood situations steeped in my mom's mental health and have excelled because of the difficulties. I have learned to be empathetic to people and to try to understand where others are coming from. Because you never know what they are struggling with.

I have realized my childhood was not entirely painted with a shit brush. There were some awesome times and now I define those younger years by a mix of the shit and the glitter.

## **The How To**

Shifting your perspective and mindset in situations is the best advice that I can give anyone who is disappointed in things from their childhood that may be affecting them 23 years later.

Find a way to understand if there are situations from your past that have had a negative impact on you. Get help in understanding why and how it affects you from a professional. Is there something or someone from your early years who hurt you? If so, how can you let it go so that you can move past it? Really explore the why. Why is this something that keeps coming up for you as something that still hurts you? What is this affecting in your current life? How can you change it? It is your responsibility to do the work on this. If you want to have the best life you can and live the awesome moments that you deserve, get perspective. You owe it to your future self.

## **The Wrap Up**

If you wanted to be a doctor when you were eight years old because your family made you believe that was the only option, and you wound up being a freelance artist living in a loft in New York City working as a waitress, that is awesome. If you had an abusive parent that you have found a way to forgive and move on to be the parent to your kids that you wish you had grown up with, good for you. If you had a parent who drank themselves to death and you have decided to be alcohol-free, be proud of yourself. Whatever you grew up with,

have perspective on what you want to bring forward to your future and what you want to leave in the past.

I have not been able to make this chapter light because this is a serious part of my life that I have struggled with for a very long time. I hope you understand that and will keep reading. You have made it this far, so let's move forward together, shall we?

I thank you.



## Future You Defined

What shitty hand were you dealt in your childhood or adolescence?

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How is it affecting your life now?

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What is your plan to change your perspective on this?

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How is this challenge forcing you to grow or change?

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What has been better in your life because you experienced this?

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List five self-care activities you can do to help you get through whatever lasting effect this situation may have on you.

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## LESSON #9

*If you want to win a conference championship,  
come out of the closet.*

### **True Meaning**

Be your true and authentic self. When you can live your life honestly and be the honest, authentic and genuine *you*, life can be so rewarding and fulfilling. People know when you are being real and will appreciate you for it. Inauthenticity is unattractive and exhausting to be around. You know that person from the office who is fake nice to your face? The one who has the high-pitched annoying voice and gives you a hug on Monday morning when they haven't seen you since Friday because they "missed you?" Then they turn around and you can hear them talking about how they hate your shoes when they think you are out of ear shot? Yeah, they suck and are fake. Don't be like them. In fact, take it a bit farther and call them out on their bullshit so you don't have to endure fakeness in your workplace.

## How I Learned This

As I grew up and realized that boys were not who I wanted to date, I was scared. Realizing that I was gay made me uncomfortable in my own skin because I felt alone and ashamed. Why was I different? Why did I feel that way about some of my friends who were girls? I didn't want to feel that way and I didn't understand it. I pretended to like boys and tried to hook up with a few in high school, but it wasn't right and I wasn't happy not being myself.

There was no Ellen, Queer Eye or Abby Wambach to look to for representation. I didn't have positive images of gay people to understand what being gay was and what it could look like. Post millennials who were born with an iPhone in their hand and a Facebook account already set up since they were a fetus may not be able to comprehend life before legalized gay marriage, fabulous pride parades or Queer Eye makeovers.

Being closeted is a scary place to be. Once I had my first girlfriend and was able to come out to a few close friends, I started getting more and more comfortable with who I was. College helped, for sure. I was away from home and was able to grow as an individual and be so much more comfortable with the true me.

Coming out to my parents happened my freshman year, and it was, in a word, awful. My mother and her judgmental thought process certainly did not disappoint in her response to finding out her little daughter wasn't going to be marrying

a man and delivering grandbabies. She fell apart emotionally, cried her eyes out, moved out of the house into a hotel and told me to leave.

It was Christmas break and I was only home for a few weeks from Penn State. I spent most of that time living at my girlfriend's house. Her mother had a much different reaction than my mom's when she found out. She said, "Oh, I tried that in college once, but it didn't work out. You can stay here, but you have to sleep on the couch because I don't want any hanky-panky happening in the room next to me." That gave me a small sense of normalcy as her family's reaction helped soften the hit from my mom's disappointment and feeling of embarrassment about me. And yes, there had been hanky-panky going on before that, we had to be more creative after her mom found out.

As I moved through life, I was able to not only be okay with being gay, but I was proud of it. I was proud of being able to live as my genuine self. I found the support that I needed from friends and mentors to grow into my own. I came out to all of my teammates and friends in college and was able to open up people's minds about what "gay" was. Mind you, there was no Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter at this point. Email was just becoming a thing and imagine this—I didn't have a cell phone until I was 25 years old. There wasn't the fear of a picture being taken of me kissing a girl at a party and being put online for all to see because people didn't have cell phones in our hands or pockets at all times. The horror, I know.

After college, I moved to North Carolina, which wasn't exactly the most liberal place to be, and so I turned around and walked right back into that closet. It was stifling. I worked at a private country club and while it was a younger membership, I still did not feel comfortable or safe speaking about my personal life, so I skirted around it and lied, at times. I heard many homophobic comments from co-workers, members and others reminding me that this was no longer a liberal Northeast college campus. It was tough to live there, and I never felt that I could truly be my best because I was always one slip-up away from being dragged out of the closet by my Birkenstocks, wearing my cargo shorts...so many pockets and so many places to put my stuff!

I opened the closet door and left the great (largely) red state of North Carolina and moved back up north to start my college coaching career in Happy Valley. As an assistant coach at my alma mater, I was out of the closet, because when I was in school I was out and had stayed connected to the program after I graduated. There wasn't really a way to say, "just kidding" and pretend that wasn't who I was. I lived more openly and I settled back into feeling more authentic with the ability to live as me. Because I was out, I was trusted by a few gay student-athletes to be their mentor and that made me a better coach. I also felt like the players trusted me and felt a sense of authenticity from me.

That didn't last long as my next move put me right through that revolving door into the closet. I was hired to start the women's golf program at Seton Hall University from scratch. It

is a Catholic University in New Jersey, and not being a religious person, let alone a gay non-religious person, I feared rejection from those who did grow up in the church. Because, you know, Jesus.

In the first year of starting that program, I met my now wife, Caitlin, so the team never knew me without knowing about my “friend” Cat. For the first three years of the program, I didn’t speak openly or honestly about my relationship with Cat. I was a good coach and was building a Division I golf program that was starting to see success.

During that third year, Cat and I got engaged and then I was really living two separate lives as I kept that happiness a secret. I wasn’t truthful and I felt like a fraud who was hiding something so important to me. It was weighing on Cat, too, as she was tired of being the secret that she didn’t sign up to be, interacting with the current and future team members and their families, always introduced as my “friend.” At the end of that school year in our final team meeting, I decided to tell the team my truth. I shared with them that Cat and I were getting married that next year and their reactions were amazing. A member of the team came up with tears in her eyes and hugged me, and by the time I got back to my office, I already had an email from a parent of a player with a huge message of congratulations. There was a member of the team who was very strong in her Catholic faith and I was unsure of how she would react to me coming out. The day after I told the team, she came into my office and there was a different connection with her

right away. I had the sense from her that she was honored that I shared my truth with the team and she was proud of me. We still keep in touch to this day.

After coming out to the team, I felt a weight lifted off my shoulders and truly felt a shift in who I was. I shifted from being a good coach to a great coach because I was living my truth and was free to live as my genuine self. I was able to share with my co-workers and the team details of the wedding planning and felt proud of it. When Cat was around, I didn't have to act like she was "just a friend" and that actually strengthened our relationship.

The next fall was my first opportunity to live honestly and authentically and I was a better person, coach, mentor and partner that year. Cat and I got married in December and the next spring, we capped off that season by winning our first conference championship in just the fourth year of the team's existence.

So, there you go; we won Big East because  
I came out of the closet. [Direct link.](#)

## **The How To**

To be able to live your true, authentic self, you first have to identify who that person is. Identify what matters to you and what your true values and morals are. Define yourself by digging into your soul and figuring out who you are and don't ever apologize for being you.



Present yourself with humility, confidence and honesty. If you walk through the world, presenting yourself genuinely, it creates a space others may be able to step into, too. You will make more genuine human connections when you are who you are meant to be, not who you think others want you to be.

### **The Wrap Up**

Be yourself truthfully, honestly and authentically. There is only one of you and you only get one chance at this potential 100-year journey on this earth. Your life is a gift, and you can share that gift with the ones that you love by living to your fullest potential and being the best version of yourself every single day. You will find greater joy, have more success, be healthier and surround yourself with greatness when you live your life genuinely.

Your more authentic future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

What are your core values?

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Define each of them and what they mean to you.

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How are you living your truth through those values?

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What can you be doing differently to align with your values?

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Name five people in your life who help you live to your potential and be the best version of you.

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# LESSON #10

*If examining people's colons is what makes you happy,  
then do it.\**

## **True Meaning**

If you are working a full-time job outside the home, you may spend anywhere from 40-60 hours a week doing that job. If it is high stress, beats you down, makes you miserable, your coworkers are awful, and you don't believe in the mission/product, is it worth it? If you come home late at night, missed Becky's lacrosse game again, ate delivery for the third night in a row and haven't worked out in two weeks because of your meeting schedule and unreasonable work demands, is that what you want? Maybe that job gives you a six-figure salary and affords you the opportunity to do things that you wouldn't be able to do if you were working a job that you love which pays minimum wage. Yes, money or status or title can be important, but at what cost?

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\* Please only do this action if you are a certified medical professional. Thank you.

There is a balancing act between having a job that you enjoy, making enough money to pay your monthly bills and being able to do the things you want to do. I know many people who go to work in a job that at worst they hate and at best are just not passionate about. They go to an office every day to do mundane work that they don't truly enjoy just to collect a paycheck.

This lesson may be a tough one because seeing a path of doing what you love and collecting a paycheck doing it may not seem feasible. No occupation or job is perfect all of the time but there is something to be said for going to a job that you truly enjoy. It may be because of the actual work, your co-workers, the environment in which you work, the satisfaction you get from daily accomplishments or all of the above that helps you love your job. Whatever motivates your work, find a career that you find both rewarding and allows you to live your desired life.

### **How I Learned This**

I am very fortunate to have had the path that led me to writing this sentence as I am creating my second career as a life coach while still sitting happily in a profession as a college golf coach. I knew from an early age that I wanted a career in golf, whether it be playing professionally, teaching at a country club or collegiate coaching. Despite the fact that I had a fairly clear career path in a sport that I love, there were certainly some bumps along the way.

When I completed my competitive collegiate career, I was planning to turn professional and take a shot at the LPGA tour. I set a summer schedule playing in women's amateur golf events to get my game ready for the fall when the LPGA Qualifying was held. I took a trip that started in New York and went to Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Chicago to play in three separate events, spending almost 50 hours in the car. 50 hours to play in less than 36 hours of competitive golf. Not only did I put 1,500 miles on the car, I sat in a car for 150% of the time that I actually competed in the sport I loved. I played decently in all three events, and had they been LPGA events, likely would have made the cut at least once and maybe would have made \$3,000. I would have spent at least \$5,000 on these three events including entry fee, travel, food, paying a caddy and any other incidentals. No health insurance, no cell phone (well, to be honest, we didn't have cell phones then), no 401K and no guarantee of where dinner was coming from. Yeah, three tournaments and \$2,000 in the red. I might have signed a few autographs along the way, but that isn't going to pay the bills.

In the last event of that trip, I ate some undercooked shrimp at the tournament dinner and got horrible food poisoning. (Hot Tip: Shrimp should not be gray when you eat them.) I found a way to play the next day, swinging halfway and barely made the cut by one stroke. I lost my first match in the match play bracket and went out to dinner that night. While I was at dinner, my wallet was stolen. I was in Chicago

with no credit cards, no money and no form of identification. I borrowed \$200 in cash from a friend and drove back home in a twelve-hour drive while still recovering from food poisoning.

That trip changed my career path immediately. I altered my mindset about playing the tour and decided to earn my LPGA certification. I moved to North Carolina to be an assistant golf professional at a country club in Charlotte. It was a great first real job as I was able to get my LPGA certification, develop my skills as a teacher and tournament director and learned the ropes of the golf business while starting a 401K. After five years, I was over it. Answering the pro shop phones, doing the crossword and refolding the same shirts over and over again got old real fast. I felt no satisfaction in my day-to-day routine and didn't feel the skills I had were being used.

**Example of a typical lesson situation at the Country Club:**

**Me to country club member:** "Sure, we can set up a lesson for three p.m. What part of your game do you want to work on?"

**Country club member:** "I am playing golf with my husband tomorrow so I just need a few tips."

**Me:** "Are you going to have time to practice after our lesson?"

**Member:** "No, I have a wine tasting to go to and then I have to go to Billy's soccer game"

Give a 30-minute lesson adjusting grip and giving one-swing thought with an accompanying drill.



## Collects \$40

**Same member to me four weeks later:** “Can I have a lesson this afternoon? I am playing golf with my husband again tomorrow.”

**Me:** “Have you worked on changing your grip and that swing drill from our last lesson?”

**Member:** “No. Just thought I could get a quick tune-up.”

**Me in my head:** “Lady, this isn’t a car repair shop, for God’s sake. I’ll take your \$40 again but I am going to tell you exactly the same thing as I did a month ago and you are wasting my time.”

**Me out loud:** “Ok, let’s see what we can do. I’ll meet you at the range at 3:00.”

I was really starting to get burnt out on that job when my college coach brought her current team to play golf at the club that I worked at on spring break. I had an opportunity to be surrounded by elite athletes who really cared about the game and loved competing. It made me dream of changing the path of my golf career again and luckily the next year, I had the opportunity to get into college coaching. I took a pay cut and moved back up north with a bit of uncertainty as to where I was headed. I took the leap and moved up to State College, Pennsylvania to be an assistant golf coach and quickly found that *I was born to be a coach*. I was making significantly less money but was twice as happy in this career path.

Hard work has led me to where I am today and one of the guiding principles I have had in my professional life is that I remain passionate about my work. My job is not something that I do as a means to an end, as hours put in to get a paycheck. Being a coach is my passion project. I get to help other people strive to reach their potential and it pays the bills.

## The How To

Identify what you are passionate about. Do you love animals, nature or the ocean? Look into a career in zoology or get a job working for the wildlife foundation or as a hiking tour guide. Do you love numbers and are obsessed with math? Then being an accountant or working on Wall Street could be extremely satisfying. Do you love adrenaline and excitement and pushing yourself to the limit? Look into being a skydiving instructor or a race car driver or a stay-at-home mom.

You don't necessarily need to fall into a career that is easy or complements skills that you had when you were eighteen or 21 and just graduated high school or college. After working up the ranks to a management position that took six years, starting on a new path can seem daunting and uncomfortable. Isn't that where they say life begins? (They. Hmmm. Who are they? I always wonder, when we refer to *them*. *They* are very hard working and busy people. I wonder where they live.) Get uncomfortable and push yourself into a career that you will jump out of bed to get to, will stay after work completing a

project because you want to and that gives you a feeling of accomplishment and purpose.

Maybe that job won't quite pay the bills, and if you didn't inherit a nest egg from your grandparents or marry rich, you may have to think outside the box to make ends meet. Pick up a few shifts at a local store stocking shelves if you are into manual labor. Get a weekend gig at a coffee shop or craft store. Bartend twice a week. Babysit. Walk dogs. Find something that will increase your income while not decreasing your happiness.

Finally, take a look at your lifestyle and what matters to you as far as experience or material wealth. Is having a great apartment or house the most important factor, or are you cool to set up your space in a loft to save money and use it for experiences like surfing or sailing or rock climbing or yoga? Can you cut out cable and just use your sister's Netflix password instead? Positive benefit to that approach: you won't ever need to watch the awful newscasts that sensationalize current events, making you scared to walk down the street. What about that cell phone? Can work pay for it or can you cut back to the cheaper plan? It's better to spend less time on the phone anyway. Where are you buying your groceries and can you buy the off-brand to save? Can you clip coupons or find online deals? Every penny you save in these areas can be invested in the things you love, like going on that trip to Mexico or Costa Rica or having a kick-ass staycation where you investigate new things in your hometown.

## **The Wrap Up**

There are many ways to change your lifestyle to match what your income affords you to do while having a job that you truly love. It may take some creative thinking and planning but you can get to the place where you wake up before your alarm because you are really excited about the client that you are meeting that morning. Go find it.

Your more fulfilled future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

If money were not a factor, what job would you love to do?

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Envision yourself working in that job and what your daily life would look like. Picture it completely and fully. Imagine the experience of working in that job or trade.

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How are you going to get there? What steps need to happen for you to make that dream job a reality?

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# LESSON # 11

*Your friends are usually going to tell you what you want to hear. Sometimes you will need to pay a complete stranger to help you find the truth.*

## **True Meaning**

Everyone can benefit from talking to a professional about what they are going through and what struggles they may be having. Going to therapy, counseling, group coaching sessions, AA meetings or any other form of help is a sign of strength, not weakness. We all have problems, worries, fears, insecurities, issues, inner critics and uncertainties that we cannot tackle by ourselves. Talking to friends or family members can be helpful, except for the fact that they may be invested emotionally and may not give the best advice for you. In fact, they may give advice that is counterproductive, “Yeah, quit your job and live in your car if that is what you think will empower you!”

An outsider who is invested in the best possible outcome for you can provide a clearer picture of what is going on and how you may be able to navigate your situation. Whether it is “Dump him, already!” or “Yes, you should go to grad school for your career” or a simple, “No, you should not consider punching your sister in the face,” it will often be better received from a professional. Go to therapy or have sessions with your life coach when things are bad and when things are good and when things are somewhere in the middle.

### **How I Learned This**

I know I have already mentioned my mom’s bipolar disorder, but I want to add that she had some pretty crazy treatments along the way. Besides her cocktail of drugs, she also spent time in a mental health facility, and experienced electric shock treatments to relieve depression.

For me as her child, I never saw any of those extreme measures make a difference in her happiness or motivation and my ignorant mind saw her as weak. I grew up as an athlete and I was strong and tough. I thought I could do it all on my own and I didn’t need any help. Until I did.

In my adulthood, I went through a few bouts of what I would classify as “situational depression” in my mid to late 20s. I will not bore you with the details, but I will say that I was a bit of a disaster at times. I would get really down and sad and frustrated and see a small part of my mom in my behavior and that made it worse, because the goal was to always be better



than or at least different from her. I drank too much, made bad decisions and cried a lot.

I finally got to a point where I was really struggling, depressed and was considering quitting my job to do something else. I had a friend who was a counselor and I went over to her house, opened the sliding glass door, walked in and started crying. I looked up and said, "I need help." That moment changed my life forever and I will never forget the wave of relief that washed over me when I realized I didn't have to do it by myself.

I had my first therapy session later that week and the first thing I said to my therapist was, "I am just going through a hard time. I will never go on medicine. My mom is on medicine and she is crazy and I am not. I don't need that." Super mature and responsible way to approach it, I know. Fast forward three years later after a LOT of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, my counselor looked at me and said, "We have done some great work in here and I think it is time to move on to medicine." Later that month, I took my first pill of the generic version of Wellbutrin while sitting in the parking lot of the Wegmans in State College, Pennsylvania with tears in my eyes. Tears for being sad that I couldn't do it on my own mixed with tears that I was proud to have done the work to get better.

The stigma around taking medicine didn't end because I was proud of myself for taking that step. I had a coworker who I spoke to about deciding to take medicine and I will paraphrase their cruel and harsh response. It was something along

the lines of “I was speaking to my spouse about that and they said that you don’t need medicine, that is ridiculous. You are just going through a hard time and it hasn’t been that long. No need to jump to pills.” It was like a punch in the gut because this was someone that I really respected and I shot back angrily with, “You have no idea what I have been going through and it has been years that I have been depressed, I just haven’t talked about it.”

I truly believe that being on anti-depression medicine has changed me, made me more rational and happier. Three major events happened at the same time: I started taking medicine, we came out of a horrible winter and I got a new job. Within two weeks, I was feeling more joy, had higher energy and was arguably a healthier person with many factors contributing to that transformation. I realized that creating positive mental health for me is a mix of talk therapy, medicine, exercise, strong relationships, over seven hours of sleep per night and a healthy diet. And having a dog. And a hot wife.

### **The How To**

Find a therapist or coach. Make an appointment. Go to that appointment. Speak openly and honestly. Listen. Do the work. Repeat.

### **The Wrap Up**

Mental health is a complicated issue and people’s moods, happiness and emotions are affected by many, many factors.

The goal is to find a solid balance of physical health, sleep, nutrition, activity, therapy, medicine (or not) and relationships that will help you to balance it all.

Just as we discussed your physical health earlier, it is your responsibility to take care of your mental health. It is for you, and you first; however, your family, your friends and those around you will also be affected by your mental health, negatively or positively. You can change your relationships through therapy or coaching. You can change your life through therapy or coaching.

Treat your therapist or coach like a relationship. The first one may not be the right one. As in going on three dates to see if you want to continue into a more serious courtship, go to three sessions to see if they are a fit. If not, politely break up with them and move on to the next one.

Your future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

How can you benefit from therapy or coaching?

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What issues, uncertainties, insecurities, problems or concerns do you have that someone else may be able to advise you on?

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What kind of support system do you think you would benefit from? What characteristics do you want them to have? What style? Once you identify this, go find them!

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## LESSON #12

*Google Maps gives you many routes  
to get to the same place.  
The fastest one isn't always the best one.*

### True Meaning

The path that has been proven to work for others may not be the right path for you. Often the less travelled path will yield the greatest results because it is the tougher path that only certain people can handle. And if I sound too much like Robert Frost, I will admit that his poem was on my refrigerator for years.

I believe that when you always walk the easier and mediocre path—the one without brush or trees or dog poop that an inconsiderate dog owner didn't pick up—you will yield mediocre results. Walking the straight, narrow, easy path may get you to where you need to go but you may not have learned any lessons or gained any skills in the journey to get there. You

didn't get your heart rate up, push yourself out of your comfort zone or get stronger during that trip. You arrived at the destination the same as when you started. And yes, you got to the end point, but what are you bringing to that place to make it a better place for yourself and others?

Try the other path, the one through the steep hills with uneven terrain that pushes your mental focus and strength. Strap on those hiking boots, get your Nalgene, apply sunscreen and bug spray and get hiking already! When you get there, your legs will be stronger and you will feel better and more accomplished because you carved a path for someone else to take. You will arrive with skills and an attitude that may have a positive effect on someone else.

### **How I Learned This**

My path to where I am now has taken a lot of detours. Starting as a young, scared and closeted kid living in Rochester, New York to residing in San Francisco with my wife and our dog named Harvey Milk, I have taken some unique and windy paths, but they have always led to where I believe I was supposed to go.

Being gay is hard and it was even more difficult in the late '90s when I was coming into my own and realizing that there was not a husband, kids and white picket fence in my future. I was scared of it, but I didn't shy away from it because I wanted to be true to who I was. I flirted with my high school basketball teammate and eventually she made out with me. And then

I walked that road through the fear, shame and uncertainty until it became easier. I was so afraid of who I was and that I would be judged, shunned or discriminated against because of it. I was afraid that people would not accept me and I would lose opportunities because of my sexuality. I never imagined a future that included marriage. Until I did. Thank you, Edie Windsor.

My new scary path involved dating in my mid-30s. After a long list of relationships had ended, I spent some time being single which totaled nine whole months! Impressive for former codependent me. After some coaxing from a friend who convinced me to, I made the choice to sign up for online dating and put myself out there into the OkCupid Universe to look for someone to share my life with. It worked. I put up the picture that an ex-girlfriend took of me in the long, plaid shorts looking at the ocean and hoped someone would want to know what my face looked like, since you couldn't actually see it in that picture. I found that woman sitting on the curb with a beautiful smile and blue eyes that were looking right at me. And I took the leap and typed the words "Holy Guacamole" which led to a response the next day. And my future path was forever altered.

It could have been easier to just keep doing the same thing, hanging out with people I knew and hoping that I would meet someone at the gym or at work or at the salad bar in the grocery store. But I took control of the path and went searching for her and found her right there on the other side of the Brooklyn

Bridge. We started a long-distance relationship which led to an amazing relationship, a future of adventure, marriage and a move to the West Coast. Yes, I said long distance because have you tried to get from New Jersey to Brooklyn? It is faster to take a flight from Newark to Chicago.

A few years after being married, I made another life choice to take a difficult road in hopes of yielding a better result. I had a great job working as a golf coach in New Jersey. It was comfortable, secure and my retirement and benefits were awesome. I had friends and family close by that I got to see often. There was no reason to leave, except I was bored and over the commute, the weather and trying to recruit golfers to the Northeast. I applied for a job 3,000 miles away on the other coast in San Francisco, getting a job offer that landed me in my dream city. It required me to pick up my entire life and move across the country, leaving my wife in New York until she found a job. We went back to a long distance relationship (this time for real) with no end in sight. But we took the chance, and six months later I was unwrapping our toaster oven in our new apartment in San Francisco as Cat was preparing to start her new job on the West Coast.

It may have been easier to just keep that office in the corner suite in the basement of the rec center without a window, making decent money and winning championships without feeling a sense of satisfaction. For some it may not have made sense to take virtually the same job at the same type of school



on the West Coast. But for me, it was a risk I wanted to take to experience the amazing diversity and culture of San Francisco.

A year and a half later, Cat decided to take a job back on the East Coast, literally fifteen minutes from where I used to work. She flew back and forth two to three times a month and our time together in the same place was limited. But we made it work because we are both very career-oriented and we have a great marriage where we communicate very well. This was certainly not the easy path, by any means, but it actually made us stronger. We appreciated our time together and we had the opportunity to have our own careers and time to ourselves focusing on them. My job gave me stretches of time where I could go back and work from the East Coast to be with her and have a summer home with a pool in New Jersey. Bicoastal living was fun, and the miles were amazing, because then we earned free trips to go to fun and exotic places on vacation.

I have made difficult choices and have taken some risks both professionally and personally with the end in mind, and often-times these risks have paid off. Others may not have yielded the great results that I was hoping for. But in the end, I found that the off-road path can often lead to the best destination.

## **The How To**

Take a look at the road you are walking and identify if you feel fulfilled.

You are? Great! Then move on to Lesson 13.

If you aren't, then stay here with me for a second. What choices can you make that may be difficult but worth walking the harder path to get to where you want to go? Can you choose to train for a marathon even though you have a bad back and arthritis in your right knee? Can you adopt that dog that you wanted to even though it will be weeks and months of house training and picking up shit off your great grandmother's oriental rug that you inherited? Can you put your application in for that promotion that will be a great challenge, but will leave you more fulfilled with more money in your rainy-day fund? Or maybe it is as simple as making the choice to turn to the stranger on the bus and start up a conversation because you are an introvert and the thought of talking to him makes you sweat profusely. You never know, he might end up being your husband.

## **The Wrap Up**

In life, you will be given many moments that you can make Choice A or Choice B and there may even be a Choice C. At that moment, use your intuition and the knowledge that you have at the time to make the best choice that you can. Don't let potential roadblocks scare you. Anything worth getting to is not always going to be easy. Go after it. You got this.

Your kick-ass future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

What areas of your life are you taking the easy road? Be honest.

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How can you challenge yourself to take a different path that may yield better results?

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What decisions do you need to make to do that?

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What people will help support you?

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What does the end of that path look like?

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## LESSON #13

*It is hard to walk a mile in someone else's shoes; they may be too tight, don't match your outfit and you may get blisters.  
Do it anyway.*

### **True Meaning**

Empathy is hard. I googled it and found this definition: "The ability to understand and share the feelings of another." But how can you understand the feelings of someone who has had a completely different experience than you? The answer: hard freaking work.

It is very easy to get self-centered and only see the world through your own lens. You might get wrapped up in your own experiences, emotions and thoughts and will often forget to see things from another perspective.

Your way is not always the best way. Taking the time to understand someone else's experience is the generous, kind,

and responsible thing to do. Having the ability to feel and understand other people's ways can make you a happier and less judgmental person.

### **How I Learned This**

I used to be a bit of a closed-minded asshole, but I kept that assholery only for certain people—a few examples include feelings or assumptions about those experiencing homelessness and “overweight” people. I felt that they were both people that were lazy, unmotivated and not disciplined. I was so incredibly wrong and it took me some time to realize that.

I wish I could say that I spent time volunteering at a homeless shelter and made friends with a woman experiencing homelessness who made me realize that homelessness is not that far away for any of us. Or that I worked for a company that helped people build healthy habits and I found that some people are not given great genetics or education on how to take care of themselves. Those things did not happen.

I have, however, lived in New York City and San Francisco—both cities that have a very large population of people experiencing homelessness—where I started to realize that homelessness is not always a self-made situation. I began working on and understanding what others are going through, and that the man with the cardboard sign asking for money just might be a veteran who had PTSD, became addicted to pain pills after having lost a leg in combat, lost his wife to a car accident, became depressed, lost his home and ended up on a

bench in Central Park, or a million other less and more complicated scenarios and combination of events and circumstances. I started seeing how hard some people tried to get out of their situation even if all I witnessed was a person playing drums at the subway station, doing street art or stand-up comedy on the corner, anything to find a way to make a few dollars for lunch. And I started to feel for them and strive to understand their situations as well as learning and understanding that homelessness is most often not a choice.

I also became more aware of my own fortune and began trying to do small things to help. I kept a bag of granola bars and other foods in the back seat of my car that I could give to the person on the street asking for help. I have given clothes, food, water and blankets to a man I saw sleeping on the street in an effort to help him get to the next day. I do not tell you this to get some sort of gold star for being a kind citizen or to say that these small gestures are a cure of any kind. I tell you because I used to be that asshole that thought to myself, “get a freaking job,” when I came across someone panhandling for money. I am proud of myself for opening my mind to trying to understand another’s experience and I truly do not know where my discrimination toward people experiencing homelessness came from. Maybe my mom’s obsession with wealth? I don’t know—I’ll plan to unpack this in my next therapy session and will report back.

I do know that my judgment of what is often referred to as “overweight” people came from my mother and her incessant

and obsessive thoughts about her weight, my weight and the physical appearance of others. She would always ask me what I weighed or comment on how good I looked if I was in a “fit” stage. On the other side, if I wasn’t in the healthiest spot, I would get no words but a look of disapproval that cut deep. And that made me start judging myself, feeling shame and guilt when I gained weight or didn’t fit into my pants. That filtered over to other people and when I saw a large person, I would immediately judge them, assume they were lazy and not strong. I am not proud of this point of view that I had, but I understand it.

I think that you are often judgmental of others who hold characteristics that you do not like about yourself. Open any health guide book and I am most often considered clinically overweight or possibly obese. And my weight and health are something that I have struggled with for years, both being healthy, and feeling bad or guilty if I wasn’t at my best.

I am not always great at this one. I have a “go to” assumption in my head when I see certain types of people. Maybe it is a low-key form of judgment, racism, ageism, over-weightism or some deep-rooted insecurity but it is never something I have been proud of. And I will continue to work on this and to look to understand someone else’s experiences, thoughts and paths.



## The How To

Take a step back and look at other people understanding that their path was likely way different from yours. What you see on the outside may have nothing to do with what is happening inside.

A strong, handsome, and athletic former college quarterback may have intense depression and anxiety because he had a near-death experience and was molested as a child. He may be going to therapy, on antidepressant medicine and have very low self-esteem despite his beautiful brown eyes, perfect jawline and ability to throw fifteen of eighteen and 378 yards in a game.

A woman on the street begging for food for herself and her dog may have once been a wealthy and powerful person who subsequently lost everything because of a series of unfortunate and out-of-control events. She has a plan to get back on her feet, write a book and get back to the workplace; she just hasn't gotten there yet.

Without sitting down and discussing a person's life path, thoughts and feelings, you may not have any idea what they are going through.

If you want to be a kind person who can see things from another's point of view, take the time to understand that every person's path is very unique and that it is your responsibility to not judge someone else as you would hope you would not be judged.

## **The Wrap Up**

Other people's lives are really none of your business, but when you want to get to know a coworker, a neighbor, a family member or anyone else you come across, do the work to be kind to their experiences. Understand that everyone is in a different stage of this crazy thing we call life and everyone was dealt extremely different cards. Respect others.

Your more compassionate future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

Do you think you are empathetic? How?

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Is there a person, group of people or situation that you struggle to have empathy for?

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Why do you think you struggle with that? Is there something you can do to have more empathy?

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What does empathy look like for you?

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# LESSON #14

*Don't be a keyboard warrior.*

## **True Meaning**

What you post online matters and directly represents who you are to the world. The social media world is not just composed of your friends and followers, it is also that potential employer, the college coach who is recruiting you, the possible love interest, and your bitter ex-boyfriend. They all can make assumptions, judgments or create narratives about who you are by how you represent yourself online. Who do you want to be, the one who posts positive, uplifting, and awesome quotes along with the occasional cat video? Or do you want to be the one who gets in fights about politics and airs out their dirty laundry on their Facebook page? I hope that you want to be the first. Let's be honest, nobody cares about your political views and you are not going to change anyone's mind by reposting how stupid you think their belief system is. So, stop that now.

Not only what you post on social media matters, but what you consume from social media can affect your view of the world, your mood and your thoughts. If you spend hours each day scrolling through the news headlines that talk about the tragic, devastating, horrible and awful events in the world, you'll be in the fetal position more often than not. The news cycle is exhausting and if your Twitter feed only consists of NBC, CBS, FOX and CNN, all you are going to see are the headlines that are there for clickbait so you will read the article about the active shooter at that campus. Or the car crash. Or the assault on the runner in the park. The news is not set to tell you the good things in life.

Consider following life coaches, motivational speakers, cat video enthusiasts or Brené Brown on social media. Your feed may send positive and entertaining vibes in your direction and you may see jumping baby goats, quotes about how you can be the best version of yourself and just anything Brené Brown is gold. Follow her. And Comments by Celebs and Uber facts. Also, look for the Bizkit the sleepwalking dog video. Social media should be treated as entertainment, not a reliable source of news or information.

### **How I Learned This**

As a college coach, we receive a lot of education on how to monitor our student-athletes and their social media accounts. We have a “red-cup rule” on our teams, meaning do not post pictures of you drinking out of a solo cup at a college party

because there is no way that you are drinking apple juice. When I was in college, there was so much less to worry about because social media was not a thing. Now you hear and see the articles about college teams who put up pictures of hazing practices involving alcohol and stupidity causing a lot of suspensions, loss of scholarships and embarrassment. And those things are not temporary. A short Google search can yield results of a college scandal or a sexual assault charge that is accompanied with a questionable picture. It can affect your job opportunities, your career and the trajectory of your life.

As a coach, I also take a look at the social media of the student-athletes that I am recruiting, because 15- to 18-year-olds will tell you who they are quickly. You will see if they are being guided by their parents or teachers or coaches or whoever influences them as to how to behave online or if they have no structure or guidelines. I have one player who sticks out in my mind as someone whose social media took them off my recruiting list. She had come for a visit to the campus and I had enjoyed the time with her, but I wasn't totally sold. I then took a look at her social media and right away, I knew she was not a player that I wanted to coach. Her entire feed was an avenue for complaining about everything on the planet—her chemistry homework, her teachers, her dad, the weather, her headache accompanied by several fucks and shits and other inappropriate and negative language. She was a talented golfer but not worth that headache I would have had. I never told her why I stopped recruiting her and wish that I had. Maybe she is reading this

book, and if you are I hope you decided to change your online presence.

Not only is it the obvious social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat where you should not be putting up pictures of you doing keg stands, but there are the other online sources where you need to remember to be smart. If you have Venmo and it is set to public, any person who is a contact in your phone, email or phone number, can see what you are being paid for or paying for. My wife was sending money to someone on Venmo and the feed came up. She happened to see that a player on the team I coached at the time sent money to someone for “anal beads.” Obviously a joke, but not something to put out into the world for any of your contacts to see. Especially a potential boss. Or your mom. Or your coach’s spouse. That was an awkward conversation.

In 2016, when Donald Trump was elected President and again in 2021 as he was leaving office and inciting violence, I was officially addicted to watching the news, reading Twitter and being sucked into the feed of constant fear on my social media. I was obsessed with the comments and horrified that not everyone was liberal and kind and empathetic like me. (Well, except for the whole overweight and homeless thing, but I was working on it!) I saw the racism, sexism, misogyny and xenophobia right there in the little screen on my phone that I carried around in my pocket and kept on my bedside stand. It was like a cancer to me that gave me anxiety and depression



and a small bout of functional alcoholism. It was a cycle that I was addicted to.

I would wake up with a small hangover and check the news to see if there was a mass shooting or if he had gotten us into a trade war with China or a physical war with...well, any country. Then I would scroll and read the comments and get pissed off. Good morning, world! What a great way to start my day! My feed was all news outlets and it infiltrated my day. I would watch the late-night hosts' monologues on YouTube while lying in bed before going to sleep and even though they put some humor into it, I still fell asleep thinking of all the shit. That was after staring at the little screen ten inches from my face, which made it harder to fall asleep after all of that blue light and anxiety. Recipe for awesome, huh?

In December of 2018, I decided to stop watching the news and limit the amount of social media scrolling and stopped having my phone next to the bed at night. I often read for the half hour before sleeping and noticed how much better I felt emotionally and physically because I was sleeping better. My Fitbit sleep app was proof, but also, waking up and not going through that insanity was a much better way to start my day. I started following authors, motivational speakers, athletes, coaches, teams, funny celebrities and Glennon Doyle. My thought patterns were so much better, I started sleeping better and I was just damn happier. It is still a process that I go through, often noticing that my mental health takes a hit due to my twitter-scrolling sessions or hearing the news

on MSNBC. And even though Rachel Maddow is brilliant, I remind myself to turn it off.

## **The How To**

As for what to post, think about how you want to represent yourself. How do you want others to see you? Who are you? Figure that out first and then represent yourself in that manner online. Don't try to be something that you're not—that's fake and annoying.

If you are pissed about something, don't air it out online. Don't be that person who puts up that cryptic status saying, "I am so mad right now. I can't believe this happened." You are fishing for sympathy and attention and you look rather foolish. When you have stuff to work out, call a friend, or your dad or your therapist or your coach.

Don't hit send on that rant about how the pizza place added pepperoni when you are a vegetarian. They just made a mistake. Take it back, get a refund and ask for a pizza on the house. You are more likely to get that free pizza or a BOGO coupon in a kind face-to-face interaction rather than in a scathing Yelp review.

When things are difficult in your life, you can use social media to seek support from your online community. Ask for recommendations or suggestions. Post thoughtfully. It is okay

to talk about the difficult, sad or tragic things, but do it in a way that is genuine to you.

If you wouldn't want to sit down by the fire with your grandmother and show her your social media content, then don't post it. Also, don't post adrenal-, alcohol- or anxiety-fueled fodder. A quick screenshot grab and it will make that picture or post forever.

### THINK BEFORE YOU HIT SEND!

Social media can also be an avenue to show pictures of what you are doing, where you are travelling, the awesome meal you just cooked or to share posts that resonate with you. It can be a way to stay connected to friends and family who live across the nation or even right down the street. It can be a vehicle to share news about a new job, a baby or clear bill of health.

Imagine if we all posted intentionally. If we all used our platforms to carry our real life into our social media life instead of creating a fake parallel universe. I think the real world would be a better place.

As for what you consume on social media, it is important to follow the things that will bring the energy you want into your life. It is imperative to know what is happening in the world both globally and locally and there is a more neutral and effective way to understand that than scrolling through quick headlines on twitter. Use social media for entertainment and meaningful connection.

## The Wrap Up

Social media addiction and constant consumption of shitty news stories can change your life, and not in the way you want. Put some rules, guidelines and boundaries around your social media. Limit screen time, don't read the comments, keep all accounts private and only follow or friend people you know. Consider adopting a policy where you only connect with people on social media who you would be comfortable hosting for dinner. While you may not want to be that restrictive, consider the emotional impact of inviting perfect strangers into your world through a small screen you keep in your pocket. These small steps can make a positive impact on your life. Also, go find that YouTube video of Bizkit the sleepwalking dog. Seriously. Do it. You won't regret that. I promise.

Your calmer future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

Do you have an iPhone? If so, go get it. Go to your main screen and then swipe right and scroll down to see your screen time. Shocking isn't it?

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Which one of those numbers do you want to change? Amount of social media time? Game? Pickups per hour? Internet usage? Pick one or two and set a goal to reduce the minutes you spend in that area.

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Go to your Instagram or Twitter or Facebook and scroll down to see the last 100 posts. Would you be proud to show them to your grandparents? Or your kids? Or your boss? Why or why not?

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What are the main three things you post about on social media? Is that representative of who you are? Is it how you want to represent yourself?

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Consider what you can change about your social media consumption and then make actions steps to do it.

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# LESSON # 15

*If you think you deserve the worst, congratulations;  
that is what you will get.*

## **True Meaning**

The way you think about things has a profound effect on your mood, your actions and the way in which you experience the world. Your thoughts are what guide your actions and the things that you do create your experiences. Those experiences shape your view of the world and determine how you will spend your time, money and energy.

Some examples, you ask?

Imagine you are the person who believes that everyone is out to get you, that you always get the unlucky bounce and that you see no way that you will ever amount to anything. You will likely live your life in a state of fear and always be bracing for impact as if a meteor is about to fall on your head. You may not have a job that has much of an upward track because

you just don't see it. You stroll through life missing the beautiful sunset, the opportunity for that promotion or maybe even an encounter with someone who could be your future spouse because you are too busy noticing the bad stuff. Your focus is on the bad political state of our nation, the potholes, the rain and the person who looked at you the wrong way (you really just had a piece of lettuce in your teeth).

On the other side, maybe you are the one who wakes up seeing the possibility and wonder in the world and tackles each day excited about what you imagine could be. You see that there is an opportunity in each situation and give things and people the benefit of the doubt. You walk through the world with an intention and vision of what you want and will likely have a career track or life track that has amazing potential. This is because you see it, you dream on it and you act on it. People like sitting next to you on the bus because you have a positive energy and stature that is contagious.

### **How I Learned This**

I will guess that you know how I learned this and yes, you are correct. Good old Jude was a prime example of always seeing what was wrong, what was bad and focusing on that all day long. She had moments when she could see the good and she had some laughs as well. But overall, she struggled so much to see the good in anything, and it showed in her life, her health and her relationships. She had a good job and after she passed away, I was able to hear (to my relief) that she had a lot



of fun and good times at work and in her younger years, things that I didn't get to see much. And yes, I know that her mental health problems are a large part of why she struggled to see that there was much good, and that profoundly affected her view of the world and what she experienced. I am aware that some of this she couldn't help because of a chemical imbalance in her brain. But I grew up seeing a link between her focusing on the bad stuff and her unhappiness.

I have always tried to see the world from a place of good and of possibility. I look at tough and unfair situations and try to understand what the lesson is and where there is opportunity for growth. I am fortunate that I did not inherit a lot of my mom's mental health problems and I presumably have a lot more of my father's genetics, if not his behaviors. I have worked really hard to get to where I am today and that has meant focusing on what I want, making decisions that will help me get to that place and opening up my life for those things to come to fruition.

You know those Facebook notifications that you get of your memories? Sometime last year, I was walking home along Golden Gate Park from my job at the University of San Francisco to my quaint little apartment in Cole Valley and I got the notification from Facebook. Ten years prior to that day, I had written, "I want to live here, I love this place" and I tagged San Francisco. I always had a dream to get there, visited several times, took two vacations with two separate ex-girlfriends there, watched that movie with Cameron Diaz that was set in

San Francisco about ten times and read James Patterson's twenty-book series where four women helped solve crimes in San Francisco. I met and married a woman who told me early on in our relationship that we could not get serious because she was planning to move to San Francisco sometime soon. She and I went to the City by the Bay about six times together in our first six years. In our seventh year, I searched and applied for a college golf job, got it and moved to San Francisco. I focused on what I wanted, made a series of big and small decisions and actions in my life that created that possibility. Pair that with some good fortune and timing and it was my recipe for West Coast living.

I have been saying for years that I wanted to write a book. I turned it over in my mind, started journaling and then woke up on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, very hungover (best way to start my annual no-drink January) and called my friend Jocelyn who has a doctorate in Education and is a principal of a middle school. I told her I wanted to write a book and even saying it out loud scared the shit out of me. But that was the first step, and Jocelyn made me see that it was possible. She took me seriously, told me that I had to decide what made me a different voice, who my target audience was, and to come up with my elevator pitch. In fairness, if Joce had called me and said she wanted to be a professional golfer, I probably would have laughed. She is better than me. Fast forward to however long it took for your eyes to get to these words. I wrote and published a book, and I

did it because I set my mind to it, put myself out there and did the work. I believed that I could and I did.

## **The How To**

Do the work to get a mindset that will benefit you, your loved ones, your career and your future.

I truly believe in the law of attraction: what you focus on expands. Focus on what you want. Do you want a red, shiny sports car? Start dreaming about it, drawing pictures of it, take it for a test drive, do the research on how much it will cost and what monthly payments will be. If you truly, deeply want that sports car, you will find a way to make the decisions and create the space for that sports car to become a reality.

The more you think about what you want, the more likely it is that you are going to make those small and large decisions that help you get there. You will surround yourself with the people and things that will guide you to that space. You will make daily decisions that will lead to creating the future you want.

If you don't know what you want in your future, take some time to explore it. Journal to see what matters to you, what makes you happy and what makes you feel fulfilled. Start envisioning a future you that you want to be. Draw it. Write about it. Dream about it. Envision it. Do the work and go get it.

## **The Wrap Up**

Your thoughts create your actions. Those actions create your experiences. A culmination of those experiences is what creates your life. You have control over what thoughts you allow in. We all have bad thoughts, negative thoughts, uncertainties, fears, inner critics and doubts. It is what you do with those things that matters. How do you interact with those negative voices? How do you focus your energy on what you want? Find out what works for you and how to get perspective that is beneficial to your cause.

Your positive thinking future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

How would you describe your view of the world?

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List five things that you are proud of.

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List three goals for this year.

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List three goals for where you want to be, what you want to have, or what you want to have accomplished in the next five years.

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List these for the next ten years.

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Close your eyes and imagine a life where you are fulfilled, have the things you want, are surrounded by the people you want and are where you want to be. Now write down what that looks like.

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# LESSON #16

*You are the only YOU that you have.*

## **True Meaning**

There is only one you. Each of us has our own individual and unique talents, attitudes, characteristics, personalities, weaknesses, and flaws. There is no one else that is the same as you and there will be no one ever again to come along that is exactly like you. There is one unique opportunity to create the best you possible and to be proud of yourself in the process. You have 100 years or less to be you. So, what are you waiting for? Let's do this.

## **How I Learned This**

Growing up, I tried to be like everyone else. I grew up wanting to be anyone but me. Despite some pretty unique talents, I had low self-esteem, felt ugly and fat and feared rejection from my peers, my teachers, my coaches, my sister, my mom

and anyone else that had an impact on my life. It took me a long time to understand that being like everyone else is boring.

As I spoke about earlier, when I became my true authentic self, I was better. But being your true self and being kind to yourself are different things. I was not nice to myself for a long time.

My inner critic taunted me with words of “You can’t do that,” and “Who do you think you are?” and “You are not cool enough, pretty enough, smart enough or *fill in the blank* enough.”

I made that save as the goalie that helped us win the game, but it didn’t matter because the goalie on the other team was better than me—better looking and more athletic. I won the 1<sup>st</sup> flight of the NYS junior girls championships, but who cares? It wasn’t the championship flight, it was just a consolation prize. I made the boys high school golf team as a 7<sup>th</sup> grader, but that was not cool and I was embarrassed to be leaving 8<sup>th</sup> period to go across the street for practice. I wasn’t special, and I was asking for special treatment for golf which felt selfish. I played four years on the varsity basketball team, but it’s only ‘cause I was good at passing to the better players. I set all the assist records at the time, but those didn’t matter because I wasn’t the one scoring. And we all know the only ones who count are the ones making the points. I went to Penn State on a golf scholarship, but I didn’t get in myself with my grades, golf got me in and I didn’t really belong there. I won the LPGA National



Coach of the Year award but constantly qualified it, explaining that only like 25% of all college coaches are in the LPGA so I wasn't the best. Just the best of 25% of coaches.

It took me until late into my 30s to begin to really love who I was, be proud of what I have accomplished and to take serious care of myself, mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially and intellectually. I reflected on all that I had accomplished and stopped making excuses for why those things weren't really good. Instead I gave myself permission to be proud of my own unique successes.

I know that I was good all along but it took finding the person that I married to realize the truth about myself. Cat pointed out what an extraordinary person I was and that the experiences that I have had, the effect I have on people and that my ability to find the good in anything is unique and incredible. (The first time that I typed that it said I found the goof in anything, which is, in fact, also true.) She loves me for all of the things that I doubt in myself. She loves that I became a strong, healthy, independent, loving and caring person despite my mom and her constant negativity. She tells me I look cute in skinny jeans when I think I can't pull them off. She has helped give me the space to do what I know I was capable of doing all along: loving who I am, flaws and all. I am perfectly imperfect. She didn't change who I am, she helped me create space to love who I am.

Now when I look in the mirror, it is only 28% of the time that I am judgmental and hard on myself. I am becoming more aware of the abilities and strengths that I have and how hard I have worked to carve a path. And I deserve to enjoy it and be proud of myself. That doesn't mean that I think that I have arrived, because I haven't. There is so much more that I want to do—meet P!nk, be on the *Ellen* show, learn to play the guitar, buy a yacht, write a second book, do a pull up and buy a sloth.

Although I haven't reached all of my goals, I still have a lot of life to live and I want to do so by being kind to myself, taking care of myself and loving the me that I am.

## **The How To**

Take some time to get to know yourself. Take the DiSC profile, the Enneagram assessment, the Myers-Briggs Personality Test, the Via Survey of Character Strengths or any other of the litany of tests you can find. These tests, while not perfect, can help you understand yourself and what makes you tick. Use the information to celebrate your strengths and understand your weaknesses. Learn your communication style and why being an “I” on the DiSC may make it hard to align with an “S.” Then figure out how to communicate with that person that is on the opposite side of the circle from you. And understand how to be the best damn “I” possible.

Journal, meditate, eat healthy, exercise, get restful sleep, surround yourself with good people, do the things you love, be proud of who you are and love yourself for it.

Have perspective. We all have flaws. Don't let yourself off the hook if your flaw is being an asshole to other people. Be nicer. Do let yourself off the hook if your flaw is biting your nails and spitting them out onto the floor of the subway. Maybe just realize that the act of doing that is gross, unsanitary and rude. Stop doing it and be nicer to you and that guy manspreading next to you. He is working through his own stuff.

Every single day that you wake up, it is in your control to make choices and decisions that will help you be the best version of yourself. The key is living your life daily with intention. So often do we walk around in a haze, looking at our phones and almost walking into things doing the same actions over and over again. We create habits that may not be serving us positively anymore. We eat the same things, drink the same drinks, do the same routines each day not pushing ourselves to be better, do better and represent ourselves each day as the best version that we have that day. It is, simply stated, easier to be mediocre. But if you make the choice to do just mediocre things, that is the life you will have. No one ever got better, changed the world or made an impact from mediocrity.

Start thinking about what makes you the best you and what choices you can make to be that person. Maybe it is getting up 30 minutes earlier to journal or meditate or walk the dog a little longer. Maybe it is going to bed earlier to get more sleep so you can be better rested. It could be changing one or two small things in your diet such as cutting out gluten or fried foods or cheese. Maybe it is adding a fruit or a vegetable to every meal

so you can take in more nutrients and eat cleaner. Maybe it is stopping at the second glass of wine instead of drinking the bottle. Or choosing to volunteer every Saturday morning at the homeless shelter. It could be calling your grandmother every Sunday night to see how she is doing and get some words of wisdom while you still can.

Whatever it is, make a choice to do it. Add things to your calendar, make a list of things on your fridge, tie a string around your finger, hire a life coach, get an accountability buddy or set an alarm to help you stay accountable to be the best *you* possible, flaws and all.

## **The Wrap Up**

When it comes down to it, you are the only *you* that you have. If you aren't kind to yourself and treating yourself well, then who will? You owe it to yourself, because you are a fabulous wonderful human being that has a lot to give this world to make it a better place. Find a starting point and get going.

Your future self will thank you.

## Future You Defined

Describe the best version of yourself.

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What choices are you currently making that are prohibiting you from being that person?

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What choices can you be making to be the best version of you?

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How will you implement these new choices into your daily, weekly or monthly routine?

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# LESSON #17

*None of us are getting out of here alive,  
so what will you leave behind?*

## **True Meaning**

Death is unavoidable. No one has ever lived forever and no one ever will. While modern science, medicine and lifestyle changes have made it more likely to reach triple digits, it is likely that you will die, on average, by the age of 79. If you reach the coveted age of 100, you will have lived 36,500 days which is 52,560,000 minutes. Seems like a lot of minutes, doesn't it? It's not. Life can pass you by so quickly that as you walk out of your sweet sixteen birthday party, you turn around and you are 40. And then you blink, and you are 65 and retiring. Next thing you know, people in your life start to get old, sick or pass away and then shit gets real. Then it gets to be your turn. So, before that day in the hospital, hospice or in the comfort of your own home while people are gathering to say their goodbyes or that day of the horrible accident that takes your

life, you should consider doing everything you can to make this moment right here the best one yet that can leave a lasting impression. Think about what you want to be remembered for and what legacy you want to leave behind. Because right now is the time in which you cultivate that. Do the work. Bring your best self. Leave it all out on the dance floor. It's your only shot at this crazy thing we call life.

### **How I Learned This**

Now, I am not a believer in God or heaven or an afterlife or reincarnation. I really wish that I was because it would make the thought of dying less scary. Also, I would then do everything I could to be reincarnated as a sloth. Seriously, they have the best life—eat, sleep, cuddle, poop, repeat. Sign me up.

I don't believe that my mom can see me right now. Maybe this is because of a lack of faith and maybe it is because I don't want to think of her disapproving of 78% of my decisions and actions from up above, as I experienced that enough in my first 40 years of life. She is also telling me to put on make-up and to not drink that second glass of wine. Thanks, Mom. I'll have a third. I don't think my grandparents are looking down with a mild curiosity as to why I am sleeping next to a woman. I certainly hope that my ex-girlfriend who passed away isn't looking down to see all the gay fun she is missing since we have rights and marriage and Lady Gaga.

The thought of dying has always been very scary to me and I believe part of it is that I was not raised in a family or



organization to believe in some higher power or God or Buddha or whatever else people believe in that might help to cushion themselves from the fear of death. I think everything we do is just a safety net to keep us from falling until we actually die. And that mindset has really helped me to stay here in the now working to make the five feet around me a better place, which I hope radiates and reaches to a larger circumference.

Being a coach is one of my greatest responsibilities and I think about what I want to leave behind after I am gone. What lessons have I taught the young women that I have been fortunate enough to coach? What difference have I made? What lives have I changed? What will I be remembered by?

When it is my last day, I hope that I see myself as a strong, funny, caring, kind, confident and energetic person who also had flaws and insecurities yet persevered through tough times. I want others to remember me as a solid role model by the way that I lived my life, the decisions I made and how I handled adversity. I hope that my nephew grows up to remember how I cared for him when he was younger, gave him the nickname Chaz (which went from, “Aunt Sara, don’t call me that” to “Only Aunt Sara can call me Chaz”), taught him to see things in a different way and encouraged him to be competitive but respectful in baseball. I hope that my mom died knowing that I was trying to do my best, live life to the fullest and make her proud. I hope that my dad knows how much I appreciated his repeated stories that usually started out with, “Did I tell you . . .” Yes Dad, you already told me that story three times

last week. I hope that someday, people from my life will gather at my funeral with an open bar of top shelf liquor, expensive wine and Pamplemousse La Croix and laugh about the things I did. I want the women I coached to reminisce about how I made them run for being late, do burpees for saying fuck and refused to stand with my arms across my chest while coaching because it is not an open and accepting body language. I want my sister to remember the brandy fight and that it occurred solely because I cared for her and her well-being. I want my wife to remember that I adored her and loved her and tried to give her everything that I could and that I trusted her enough to let her see me at my best, my worst and everything in between.

My main focus in life has been to be a positive and strong glass-half-full kind of person. That is my passion—to live a life that others will admire, want to be a part of and will make them smile.

## **The How To**

First answer this: What matters to you? What truly matters to you? Think about it.

Maybe you have a passion for taking care of the environment. I suggest that you recycle, compost, shame people who use plastic single use straws, and spend time volunteering to help clean up the beaches. Attend protests and rallies aimed at getting our lawmakers to put reversing climate change at the

top of the “what matters” list. Be part of a lasting impact of those that helped to improve our air quality and cleaned up or at least stopped the damage to our oceans.

Or maybe you have a passion for helping to resolve the homeless crisis that hits many of our major cities in the United States. If so, volunteer at homeless shelters, write letters to your local leaders with ideas and suggestions to help educate, house and feed individuals experiencing homelessness with the goal to get them back on their feet.

You might be really passionate about string theory and advancing science, so do the extra schooling and land yourself in a career that will help move our world forward with the help of molecules.

Whatever it is that you are passionate about, sports, education, politics, bringing back the Dewey Decimal System, the outdoors, people, space exploration, helping impoverished and undereducated children learn to read, tending to the elderly, planting trees, writing, saving the rhinos, LGBTQIA equality, saving the bees, equal pay, or any of litany of things that one can find important, *make that thing a priority*. You may not be able to solve all the world’s issues, but you can make your corner of the world a better place by leaving a legacy behind. The people who make the biggest difference in the world are the ones who give their heart and soul to what mattered most to them.

## The Wrap Up

Being in a leadership position is a huge responsibility and one that I take very seriously as a college coach. I recently spoke at a former student-athlete's wedding, which meant the world to me. Especially because at times, this former player and I sometimes were at odds when I coached her. Ultimately, I knew that I affected her in a positive way when she trusted in me to be a part of that day.

It got me thinking about all of the people I have coached and how I am building a legacy through them. I am proud of and impressed by all of the golfers I have been fortunate to coach and what they are adding to the world. Two former student-athletes have gone on to law school. One is a vice president in global banking while another young woman is already winning awards for the impressive job she has done in real estate. A former player is now a police officer who earned a Medal of Valor. One is pursuing her dream of playing professional golf while another recently entered the military. Several have gone on to get married and are balancing careers, marriage and kids. All of them have made a mark on the world already. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to support them through their collegiate careers and beyond.

I reached out to several of these young women and asked them to share what they internalized through our relationship and how they implement it in their own lives.

### **Statements from Former Student-Athletes**

“Coach taught me the value of character over definition by golf score, family and culture over individualism, patience and understanding of the individual over blanket treatment of all.”

—EL

“I learned to gather the traits of positivity and optimism 100% from Coach. I often get complimented on my positive outlook and I always say, ‘You should thank my college golf coach.’ From her I have learned the benefits of looking for the best in any situation or person and to have respect for not only those around me, but also myself.”

—AK

“When I think of what Coach has taught me, many life lessons come to mind. The most important thing Coach Sara has taught me was not from something she had verbalized, but actually the way in which she leads her life.

“She was very passionate about her beliefs. She created an environment where we could all speak freely, often making for memorable conversations in the van rides. It was a safe space to not only express ourselves but also to develop our minds. I would do anything for another van ride

“It didn’t matter if it was a 6:30 a.m. workout or a late dinner, she always brought the same energy. When she was in the room you could almost feel the dynamic shift; we all lifted

each other up. It's very easy to get frustrated in golf, and she continuously kept my passion alive.

"I have the deepest respect for her leadership. She had this ability to win people over and make them believe in something bigger than themselves. I wanted to win not only for my team, but also for her. She always believed in me and I will remember that for the rest of my life."

—MF

"Sara Doell is all about legacy, leaving it, living it and pursuing it. I learned so many things from her as a coach and a mentor. I have learned that everything should have a purpose and should align with your greater goals. I learned that the details matter and shape who you are.

"I also learned how to handle adversity and it is ok to just shut up sometimes. You don't always get to pick the cards that you are dealt and your actions can leave your legacy much better than words.

"Coach helped me to get through one of the most challenging years of my life, as her ability to connect with and help others is insurmountable and her passion for coaching is unparalleled."

—CP

"My friends and family often joke that I tend to not be the most open-minded or go-with-the-flow-type of person. In fact,

my mother always said that I could never just roll with things because I had square wheels.

“I arrived at college with a lot of goals and priorities; some were healthy and mature, while others were ignorant and immature. I would often make comments I know that the coach did not appreciate that were inappropriate and close-minded. Coach knew that I was set in my ways and wasn’t the easiest at adapting to change and we differed in many ways, whether it be political beliefs, childhood upbringing or just life views.

“I am not sure that I know the exact moment that my mind opened, but I know that it did. The greatest lesson that I have learned from her is the value of being open-minded and the skill of putting yourself in someone else’s shoes.”

—MT

“A few lessons that I have learned from Coach have stayed with me. Every season Coach would post quotes in our golf room. One in particular; I always remember that she said and posted, “If it is important to you, you will find a way, if not you will find an excuse.” This is something she made me truly live by beyond my college years, because you will make time to put in the effort or have the willingness to get it done.”

—EM

“Coach valued me not just as an athlete, but as a person, and she fostered all of my strengths while encouraging me to grow in my weaknesses. She inspired all of us to be the best

versions of ourselves, but never held it against us when we didn't quite get there. As a person, she consistently demonstrated confidence and kindness—a killer combination I still work to emulate in my daily life because of her. Coach's authenticity, fierceness, and lightheartedness taught me skills that have both expressly and subconsciously informed who I am now.”

—HB

“I learned so much from Coach, and most of the lessons that stuck with me were life-related. There were little lessons I took away—how it's unnecessary to say “sorry” all the time, how to meal prep, eat healthy and how to check the air pressure in my tires. You know, little things. Now that I'm working in a corporate job, I lead by the same example as Coach did. I welcome new members onto the team with open arms. I ask for other's opinions and make sure they feel heard. I hold everyone accountable for their actions (including myself), and I always practice transparent communication. I try bringing the best version of myself to the table every day and spread as much positive energy as possible. And most of all, I care about the work, the process, and the people. I do all this knowing that these actions can make a difference in the team and the lives of others.”

—KL

Although it helps to hear it, I don't share these statements as bragging or to inflate my ego. I share them to show you how one person and their vision for excellence, love, empathy,



strength, and having strong morals can affect countless others through educating, supporting, interacting, and modeling behavior. This is my vision of that five-foot circle reaching farther, and I am proud that this vision is coming to fruition.

Think about what impact you want your five-foot circle to have. Create it. Live it. Do it.

The people you left behind will thank you.

## Future You Defined

What do you want said about you at your funeral? Write your eulogy below. Seriously. Do it.

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List ten words that you want to describe the legacy that you will leave behind.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

For each word, give three things you will do to create that legacy.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_



# LESSON #18

## *Other random lessons and life hacks.*

- If you go a whole day without checking anything off your to-do list, write down everything you did do and then check those off. Immediate dopamine hit.
- Always pet a dog that is walking towards you with its tail wagging.
- If you give someone \$20 and never see them again, it was worth it.
- Don't drink and drive. Ever. Period.
- Don't spend money that you don't have. You don't need that \$2,500 purse if you can't afford rent or groceries.
- Other people cannot drive you crazy unless you give them the keys.
- Have a will and make sure it includes what you want to happen after you pass away.

- Don't have more than two drinks on a first date, office party or important function unless you want to possibly be embarrassed to walk into the office on Monday morning. Then by all means, shots all around!
- Don't buy a new car. Get a certified pre-owned car or a well-vetted used car. The new car loses value as soon as it is driven off the lot.
- Vote—it is your damn civic responsibility. And don't just vote for who your parents or friends vote for. Do the research on the candidates and make your own informed decision. Then wear that “I voted today” sticker around all day and shame others into voting, as well. Vote in the small, local elections, not just for president. Like it or not, they have more direct impact on policy and your life.
- Look up once in a while and enjoy the scenery. Notice the sun, the clouds, the birds, and the random gargoyle on the front of your next-door neighbor's house that you never noticed before.
- The world would be a better place if people left more room between them and the car in front of them. Give people the space they need.
- Don't stop sleeping with your teddy bear because you reached a certain age. I believe that adults who sleep with a teddy bear sleep better and deeper than those who don't. (I read that somewhere on the internet so it must be true.)

- Every day that you go to work is a job interview, either to keep the job you have, get that promotion or move to the job you really want.
- The simplest explanation is usually the correct explanation. Creating complex narratives might be entertaining, but remember you are the author of them and possibly the only reader.
- Figure out who you are and do it on purpose. Every damn day. And it's ok for that *you* to change, evolve, and grow.
- Wear sunscreen when headed out in the sun or clouds. Then reapply every hour.
- Cell phones at the dinner table are rude, so stop it. Keep the phone in your pocket so that when it lights up, you won't be tempted.
- When driving a rental car and going to get gas, you can look at the gas tank symbol and see which side the arrow is pointed at—that tells you where the gas cap is. You're welcome.
- Stay loyal to a brand of hotels and airlines so you can collect miles and points and use them for future travel and experiences.
- Nothing good ever happens after midnight. Go home and get a good night's sleep.

- Feel from the inside out, not the outside in. Improve your environment instead of letting your environment discourage you.
- Don't stand or sit with your arms crossed. It makes you look closed off, unwilling to participate or mad. Stand with a more open stance, arms at sides, hands on hips, arms behind your back or any other slew of ways to posture. You will be more approachable and will feel more open.
- *Can't* lives on *won't* street. If you believe you can't do something, it is likely because you won't do the work or take the leap to do it.
- When you end up getting wet shoes for whatever reason, whether it be a rainstorm or being pushed in the pool by a loved one, the fool-proof way to dry them: get a few pieces of newspapers and crinkle them up, put them in your shoes. The next morning, your shoes will be bone dry and the newspapers will be soaked.
- Your posture has a direct effect on the way you view the world. If you walk around with your head down and your shoulders slouched, you are likely going to miss things from not looking up. This posture also gives off a "don't approach me" vibe. Walk around with your shoulders back, your chest up and looking up at the horizon. You will see way more things, your aura changes to a sense of strength and positivity and people are more likely to say hello. You



never know when that person might be your future best friend.

- When loading the dishwasher, the knives and fork go sharp end down so you don't stab yourself when unloading them. The spoons, however, go handle down. This way the water will not pool in the head of the spoon.
- If you forget to pay your credit card or a bill, call the company and ask for forgiveness on the late payment fee. They will sometimes forgive the late fee on the first offense.
- Don't leave a message on your voicemail that says, "Hi! You have reached Sara" because they did not reach you, Sara! They reached your voicemail. If they had reached Sara they would be talking to Sara. (Also, if your name is not Sara, that would just be a weird outgoing message.)
- Be aware of the stories and narratives you put on things without all the information. Assumptions about what other people are feeling or what they mean with their words can be a slippery slope.
- Replace 'but' with 'and' whenever possible. "I love you BUT..." has a much different tone than "I love you AND..." Try it in any circumstance. It usually lands the way that you intended.
- It is NEVER too late to try something new, start a different path or redefine your life.



# LOOKING FORWARD

Dear 80-year-old Sara,

I sit here halfway to where you are and wonder where I will be by the time I get to that swinging front porch chair in the sleepy beach town home that you settled in.

I imagine a future in which I look back on my past and am proud of all that I have accomplished. I have made a life for myself that is admirable, and I had a hell of a lot of fun creating it. I affected change through my coaching, my relationships, and the way that I lived my life.

I envision a life where I played golf, I hiked, made some bad decisions and picked fights with Cat that were unnecessary. I cooked great food, drank delicious wine and travelled to all 50 states before I turned 50. I went ziplining, ice skating, parasailing and jumped out of an airplane. Thank goodness the parachute worked. I never fully kicked the “I am not good enough syndrome,” but I was kind to myself more times than not.

I hope I was a great aunt to Charlie, a strong sister to Char and took care of my dad until his death. I loved my wife fully and completely and we supported each other in all of our different endeavors. I am guessing none of this was always a walk in the park. Charlie likely went through stages of difficulty, but eventually became a great human. I am sure my sister drove me crazy at times and still can't find her cell phone. That is why she is late, and I love her. My dad obviously told the same stories over and over again which drove me nuts, but I miss it every day. I hope I am mostly at peace with the relationship I had with my mom and know that I am better because of it.

I imagine all of the student-athletes that I coached grew up to be amazing young women who have made their five-foot circles a place that most would want to be in.

Most importantly, I truly hope that I made a difference and lived the life I dreamed of when I was thirteen years old.

So, future me, hold that seat next to you. Tell Cat to grab an extra glass and pour me some of that special lemonade. I'll be there soon.

Love,  
Your Past Self

P.S. Go to the doctor.

# EPILOGUE

As a college golf coach, I have often felt that we do not prepare our student-athletes well enough for life after college. We prepare them for the next game, tournament, match or meet. We teach them how to manage their schedule as a student-athlete. We explain how many carbs to eat versus protein and fat. We teach them the perfect form for a squat, burpee and clean and jerk. We explain how to pack for the next trip and give them an itinerary for it.

Here is the thing: we do not necessarily give them some of the more practical life tips, like how to balance a budget, meet friends as an adult and to set boundaries in relationships. We don't explain to them the benefits of setting up a 401K or 403B and that maybe they don't need life insurance until they are older, but it is a good idea to get renters insurance.

When I became a head coach, I decided to create a program for the seniors on the golf team that addressed these types of things. It was a four-session program called "Real Life 101," starting with a meeting with a professor that taught a personal finance course. We sat down and discussed how to balance a

budget, what insurances are important, ways to invest in your future and how to build your credit. The second meeting was “Life Lessons with Coach,” where I shared 25 lessons I learned. We talked about these lessons while eating bagels and cream cheese in my office. When our competitive season was over, a panel of former student-athletes came to talk to them about what to expect now that they were no longer a student-athlete. We rounded out the program with them coming to my house for dinner after they graduated.

At some point in my time on the East Coast when I was still at Seton Hall, I told my therapist about this and she loved it. The suggestion to write a book based on the life lessons portion of Real life 101 came from her and planted a seed in my head that grew slowly over time.

The more I thought about it, the more I knew that I wanted to write a book. And the more I thought about it, I realized that a large part of my story would be rooted in having a mother with severe mental health issues. In my mind, there was no way that I could write or publish this book.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, I woke up extremely hungover, as I typically do to start no-drink January. My wife, Cat, who was in Seattle, texted me and told me to Google Adam Rippon, *Note to Self*. It was a short video on CBS, where figure skater Adam Rippon read a letter to his thirteen-year-old self as pictures and videos of him played. I watched it alone on my couch and cried my eyes out. I blew my nose, wiped the tears and I

started furiously writing. I wrote a letter to my thirteen-year-old self and then I kept going. I wanted to share all of the life lessons with that thirteen-year-old girl that I had shared with numerous student athletes in Real life 101.

Later that week, as I flew up to Seattle to join Cat, I spent time writing on the plane, the light rail, and the ferry out to Bainbridge Island. It flowed out of me. It was so easy to write about my mom, about my childhood, about my life and all the things that I wanted to share. I kept writing, and as I kept going, I realized that this book was going to have to wait. No chance that I wanted my mom to read this. She wouldn't understand.

Three weeks later, I was sitting in my office in San Francisco and my mom called with my dad on speakerphone. She had cancer. I took a deep breath and all sorts of emotions flowed over me. "How could this happen now? I was just starting to get to a point of understanding. Mom was trying hard to not be so intrusive anymore and I was starting to like her." Those thoughts flowed to, "Maybe she will finally be out of pain and she can't hurt me anymore." Then it flowed to, "Sara, what an awful thing to think about your own mother."

A month later, the stage four incurable diagnosis came. I flew home at the end of March and sat by my mom's bedside for over a week, watching her deteriorate physically and mentally. During those hours and hours in the hospital, I spent time writing. I told her I was writing a book and explained some of the essence of the book, leaving out the things about

her and how her mental health had fucked with me. But I did tell her that I was writing a book and that was good enough for me.

I had a flight at 7 a.m. to fly back to San Francisco on April 4<sup>th</sup>. I said goodbye to her the night before as she lay there connected to tubes, non-responsive with her eyes closed. I told her I loved her and I am sorry that her life had been so difficult. I couldn't believe that it was just a few months earlier that the C-word wasn't even in the conversation. I closed her hospital door and walked away in tears. On April 4<sup>th</sup>, at 2:15 a.m. EST, my mom passed away alone in her hospital bed just hours after I said goodbye to her.

I did fly back to San Francisco for a few days to get my shit together and send the golf team off to our next event without me. Cat and I flew back to New York for the funeral where I spoke openly and honestly at the service. I spoke about her life, her career as a nurse, our family traditions and her struggles with mental health.

I told the story of how my mom would say, "Tell the pilot to fly safely" whenever I would get on a plane. "Why?" I would ask, and she would respond, "Because there is a special bundle on board." It was a tradition that started on my first flight alone when I was in my early teens and I never missed the "pilot" phone call since.

The last thing I said at the funeral through tears was, "Tell the pilot to get you there safely, Mom."



It was then that I felt full permission from the Universe that I could write and publish this book. So here it is, the book that sat in my head for years, then on my hard drive for two years and finally worked its way to a shared Google Drive document and then onto these pages.

I hope that you can benefit from these lessons and pass them on to someone else. I hope that you live an authentic life. I hope that you create an awesome living space for yourself. I hope you go to the doctor. I hope that you surround yourself with awesome people. I hope that you love your career. I hope that you live on the back of the building. I hope that you are on time. And, seriously, go to the doctor.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It takes a village to raise a child. And it takes a larger village to support a “I have to do all the things all of the time” perfectionist who goes at 100 miles per hour while they write and publish a book. I would like to thank the members of my village for keeping me on track and true to myself in this process, as well as those that gave me the content for this book.

Without the support, guidance, and delicious dinners provided by my wonderful wife, Cat, I am not sure I could have completed this book. Instead of being alone, hungry, and sad, I feel loved, full, and am officially an author. You call me out on my shit in (mostly) a loving way. You recognize my strengths and continually remind me that I am good enough. You deal with my crazy and have finally given up on trying to make me clean the bathroom. I also appreciate you pretending to listen all the times I read lines to you from the book and responding with, “Yup, sounds good!” even though you were actually watching TikTok videos or scrolling Instagram. You deserve extra magic re-dos.

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Mom. It’s complicated. Without you, I wouldn’t be here and certainly wouldn’t be as strong as I am. Yes, there were difficult times growing up, watching you struggle with the monsters of depression, anxiety, diabetes and a whole host of other things. I know you tried. I know you wanted it to be different. Because of you, I have more empathy for others. I am grateful for the family traditions you created and the passion that you put into making them stick. You made sure that Santa Claus brought an equal amount of presents for Char and me and that the Easter Bunny knew where to bring my basket even after I moved away. The tape recording of us saying “the pilot” exchange on Christmas of 2018 is one of the best gifts you have ever given me. I will forever play that message before every flight, and yes, if there is a layover, I will play it twice because there are, in fact, two pilots. Even though you are gone, I’m still out here trying to make you proud and I think perhaps you are.

My older, but not wiser sister, Charlene, thank you for not being on time, not knowing where your phone is and for constantly losing your keys. Without you I would not have had enough content for Lesson 3. I will forever remind you about the brandy fight and will tell it fully to your son when he is older. On a serious note, we have experienced a lot of awesome times together, including camping trips, wine tasting, sister weekends and my kick-ass 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. I appreciate you and your unconditional support and care and for dealing with me when I try to be all holier-than-thou about everything. Also, thank you for the way in which you parent my nephew. You are an extraordinary mother.

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My in-laws filled a void in my life that I didn't realize was there. When I first met Cat, she told me that she had a small, close family that lives by their own family rules, and boy, was she right. Thank you for opening up the door for me to come

in and be a part of the family and the opportunity to break those Tramel family rules. I promise to organize your spice drawer annually.

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I am forever grateful that I typed “life coach certification San Francisco” into Google in August 2019 and stumbled across the Courageous Living Coach Certification and Kate Swoboda. I looked through the curriculum, the calendar of lesson calls, watched the video, and was sold. I applied immediately, got in, had a conversation with Kate, found out she was a Crossfitter and decided to pay the tuition and get started on a journey towards becoming a life coach. It was one of the best decisions that I have ever made. (“Can you hear me? No? Oh, I must have been double-muted.”) The organizational leadership, the lesson curriculum, the connections made, the skills learned in this program were unparalleled. I have found some of my closest friends in CLCC and I am forever grateful.

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nine of the Princeton Golf Course in the pouring rain because you had a teammate who had not seen the course before. Or when I required you to carry your golf bag all the way back to the tee. Or that time you almost threw up during my “40<sup>th</sup> Birthday Sally up-Sally down workout.” Thanks for not transferring. I hope that I had half the impact that you all had on me.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sara Doell is a CLCC certified life coach, Division 1 college golf coach, Class A LPGA member, co-creator of the Best Parts Podcast and is now a freaking published author.

She is a three-time Big East Coach of the Year, 2015 LPGA National Coach of the Year and was inducted into the Gates Chili High School Hall of Fame in Rochester, New York in 2016.

She believes in the law of attraction, that the toilet paper goes over and not under and that Charleston Chews should only be eaten straight out of the freezer. She has an irrational

fear of frogs, is a loyal fan of the musical *Rent* and thinks olives taste like feet smell. You will never convince her otherwise.

She lives in San Francisco with her wife, Caitlin, and their rescue dog named Mr. Harvey Milk, who spends his time barking at the toaster oven, peeing on every third tree on dog walks and defending his moms fiercely from squirrels and the mailman.

Her future dreams include owning a home in a sleepy beach town that is within an hour of a major metropolitan airport, visiting all 50 states before the Big 5-0, petting a sloth and learning how to play the guitar.

Interested in working with or connecting with Sara? Find her at [www.saradoellcoaching.com](http://www.saradoellcoaching.com).