

ROBERT L. ODEGARD, D.D.S.

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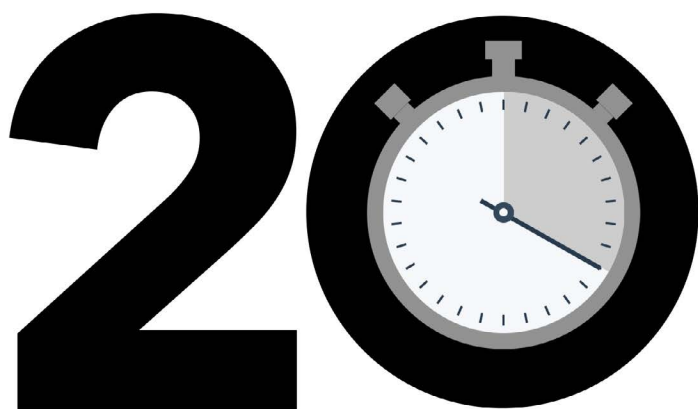
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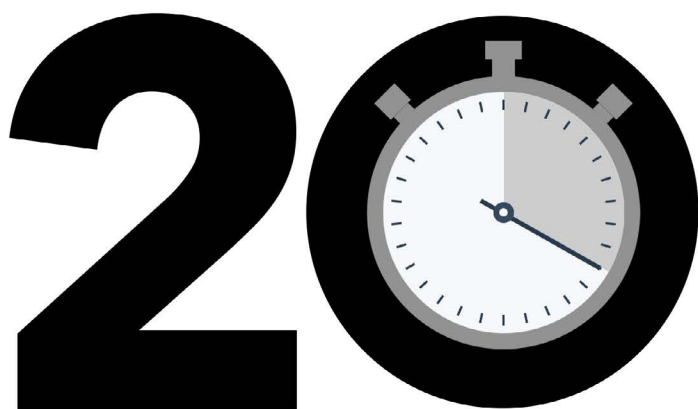
A PROVEN METHOD AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES
FOR GROWTH, HAPPINESS, AND FULFILLMENT

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**MINUTE
LIFE**

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MINUTE LIFE

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**A PROVEN METHOD FOR
GROWTH, HAPPINESS, AND FULFILLMENT**

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ROBERT L. ODEGARD, D.D.S.

The 20-Minute Life:
A Proven Method and Practical Strategies for Growth, Happiness, and Fulfillment

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I dedicate this book to my wife, Liz. We met before dental school, and she has been my support and inspiration throughout my entire life and career. We've always been a team on every dream, goal, and endeavor.

*Life is not about what we get,
but what we become.*



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PREFACE

As I was reflecting on my life one day, I thought about all the activities that I enjoy participating in. I realized that I'm most happy when I'm involved in learning something—and that could be anything. I love to learn, try new things, and involve myself in new interests.

Then I asked myself, *How does a person expand and improve themselves throughout their life? Why haven't more people developed competencies or skill sets that they enjoy and are proud of?*

While reflecting on the process I've used to stick with and develop new talents, I contemplated, *Why not share some of the methods and mental techniques I have used to apply myself toward activities and skills that require discipline, assiduity, and consistency?* I decided to create a formula that people could use to develop new aptitudes and capabilities—because I believe that people are happier when they're participating. This is how I came up with the 20-Minute Life model.

This book, *The 20-Minute Life*, was written by applying the principles of the 20-Minute Life model. I wanted to demonstrate the value of spending 20 minutes per day working toward a worthy goal. As a result, I've written this book to share my findings. I hope you'll find value in it as you seek to expand your life.

Initially, I doubted that I would be able to write a book of any value, since I had never written a book before. Then I thought, *If I can do it by applying the 20-Minute Life model, so can others*. That includes you! I set out to create this book by applying many of the principles I describe in this book. I dedicated 20 minutes every day (sometimes more) to this goal. So you're holding the 20-Minute Life in its original form, created in just 20 minutes (per day)!



PART 1
THE 20-MINUTE
LIFE MODEL



INTRODUCTION

Have you ever witnessed a musician or friend playing beautiful piano music or jamming on an electric guitar, or watched a martial artist do a fabulous kata? Can you imagine the enjoyment, pride, and satisfaction from mastering activities like these? Don't you have a little admiration or respect for them?

Do you ever say to yourself, *I wish I could do that*, or worse, *I am such a loser—I can't do anything!*? Perhaps after thinking this, you start to beat yourself up because you believe you have no hobbies, skills, or talents that anyone would admire you for.

Seeing others excel at some activity or hobby may make you feel inadequate, like you do nothing with your life. But this is likely not the case. Since you're reading this book, I would bet that you're a very successful person.

You may be focused on your college education, your career, or your family, with big goals set for your life. Finding time to invest in personal competencies is often not a first priority for most successful people like yourself. However, I am here to encourage you to start investing 20 minutes a day in an activity, skill, or hobby of your choice that you would love to be very good at. I call this concept the 20-Minute Life. It's about spending 20 minutes of personal time or practice time (PT), every day

working on developing a skill or hobby that you can enjoy well into your retirement years.

I created this **20-Minute Life** model with a simple idea in mind: People live more fulfilled lives when they develop personal skills, grow new competencies, and accomplish things they may never have thought possible.¹ I have found that seemingly difficult pursuits like learning a new language, playing a musical instrument, or knitting a sweater can be achieved through consistent, small efforts over time. Yes, you can become fluent in a second language, play beautiful piano music for your family, or become an expert photographer by applying the 20-Minute Life model.

Twenty minutes per day will not rob you of any valuable time, because I can almost guarantee you have pockets of time hiding in places you don't recognize. I will show you how most people waste hours each day. Even if that doesn't apply to you, I'll show you where there are opportunities to carve out 20 minutes of daily skill-building time.

This book has two parts:

1. Part one will help you choose a meaningful activity and stay motivated with your PT (Personal Time or Practice Time). You will also learn about the power of compounding time, as demonstrated through examples and principles. My goal is to help you accomplish more with each day, developing skills that create joy and maybe even earn you admiration from others.
2. Part two is filled with success-achieving methods and mental concepts that will help you stay on track with

your 20-Minute Life activity. You'll discover winning formulas you can apply to accomplish anything you aspire to. This includes learning how to handle personal challenges, diagnose when your life is out of balance, and even manifest the best circumstances or outcomes. By the end, you'll not only have the tools—you'll have the momentum to create a life full of purpose, pride, and lasting satisfaction.

If you desire to *create your best life* and develop yourself into a dynamic, effective, and successful person, this is the book for you.



CHAPTER 1

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR LIFE?

When you're green, you're growing.

When you're ripe, you rot.

RAY KROC

What are you doing with your life? How are you spending the bulk of your free time? Have you ever sat back and looked at your life on a grand scale? Where are you going? What are you accomplishing?

If you're like most people, you're simply surviving to the best of your ability. Maybe you went to trade school or college, developed a job or career, and are providing for your family. You may have a mortgage payment, a car payment, many bills, and possibly some credit card debt. After 30 to 40 years, you retire, you have little money saved, and you start to become very conservative with your spending. Most of your friends have moved away or are doing their own things, and you and your spouse spend the bulk of your time on social media or asking yourselves, "When are the kids going to call?" So, to answer the question, "What are you doing?" you might just be *existing* and sustaining

without a plan or without flourishing. You may not be working on any personal skill sets and growing but rather “reeling in the years”—a reference to the song by Steely Dan. You’re working hard to pay for your living expenses, yet you are not necessarily living your life for you. Is this all there is to life?

Maybe you’re a young person in high school or college, or in your early twenties or thirties. This is an exciting time. You have your entire life ahead, and I believe that the ideas in this book will be best suited for you. They may change how you see yourself and your life mission. They may make you rethink how you want to spend your time. Since you are highly influenced by social media, devices, and screen time, this book will introduce you to a more valuable and productive way to spend your discretionary time. My intent is to set you on a course of lifelong fulfilment and happiness.

Or maybe you’re retired and discovering that retirement isn’t as exciting or fulfilling as you expected. Perhaps you’re close to retirement and quietly worried you’ll be bored out of your mind, so you keep putting it off. The fact that you’re reading this book suggests you’re searching for something more. The good news is this: It’s never too late to develop hobbies or skills that bring enjoyment, peace of mind, and a deeper sense of happiness into your retirement.

One of the biggest myths about aging is that slowing down is inevitable—or even necessary. The research says otherwise. Study after study shows that people over the age of 60 who stay engaged in hobbies, interests, and meaningful activities are not only happier, but they often live longer. A large interna-

tional study published in *Nature Medicine* found that older adults with hobbies reported higher life satisfaction, better health, and fewer symptoms of depression.² Staying engaged in this way challenges the brain, strengthens the body, builds social connection, and reinforces a sense of purpose. Retirement isn't the end of growth; it's an opportunity to redirect your energy into the interests that make you feel alive.

I love to hear about people who have achieved phenomenal things later in their lives because it motivates me to keep striving. History is full of people who didn't achieve their greatest success until midlife.

For example, you may have heard the story of Colonel Sanders, the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken. Colonel Harland Sanders was in his 60s when this business finally took off. After decades of failure, rejection, and odd jobs, his recipe and persistence turned into a global brand. Some people say his chicken recipe was rejected more than 1,000 times before someone gave him a chance. I'm pretty sure I would have given up after maybe 25 rejections!

Or consider Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald's. He was 52 years old and selling milkshake machines when he discovered a small burger stand run by the McDonald brothers. He didn't invent fast food; he mastered the system and built McDonald's into an empire. Those of you who like to read motivational autobiographies (like I do) may want to check out the fascinating and very motivating book on Ray Kroc called *Grinding It Out*.

There are more stories like this. Arianna Huffington started *Huffington Post* at age 54. Bernie Marcus founded Home

Depot after being fired at 50, and Kris Jenner helped launch the Kardashian media empire in her early 50s. Experience, persistence, and accumulated knowledge often become the real fuel for success.

The point in these examples is to not let your age discourage you from embarking on new activities, developing new skill sets, or seeking dreams you may have not yet pursued. You never know what can happen. You might surprise yourself!

Let me ask you something: How much time are you spending on social media? How is posting pictures of your adventures, getting more “likes,” or paying attention to what others are doing helping to improve your life in any way? Or how much time are you spending on politics or reading the world news? How is that benefiting your life? How do you feel when you’re wrapped up in the world’s events? I have found that paying constant attention to the news is a complete downer. The news outlets and social media apps seem to be designed to get us emotionally upset and angry, and then we go about our day mad at people and in an ugly mood.

I’m not suggesting complete ignorance to what’s going on in our ever-changing world, since for many, especially anyone who values activism, awareness is also important. But most of the time, being overly wrapped up in politics or the daily news will cause you to waste so much of your life worrying about events that you can do nothing about.

Regardless of which stage you are in, why not spend more time developing yourself as you go through your life—learning something of value or becoming proficient at a specific skill?

Whether it's brewing quality beer, playing the saxophone, or making a beautiful quilt for a loved one, developing new competencies boosts self-esteem. This also can make you more interesting and connect you with like-minded people, which can naturally expand your social circles and enrich your life.

But there is more to it. We all are constantly evaluating and comparing ourselves to others we see or meet. It's a natural psychological thing to do, tied to our competitive drive to survive (and thrive). It is a known fact that when we are pleased with or proud of ourselves, we are happier, and we engage with the world through a better attitude.

Your attitude determines what you expect from the world, and in turn, it is the most responsible for what you get back. Think of it this way: People who like themselves smile more, are generally more positive, and meet more happy people. They tend to attract more positive things into their lives. People who are not happy with themselves or have a feeling of inadequacy tend to go out into the world with a bad attitude. As a result, they experience more conflicts, problems, and bad luck, I believe. They see the world negatively and draw bad energy to themselves.

In order to be proud of ourselves, we need to obtain skills, talents, or competencies that take work, effort, and practice. Essentially, we need to accomplish things that surprise us—skills we never thought we could master. When we are surprised by what we have achieved, whether it's becoming an expert fly fisherman, cooking an exceptional meal, or speaking a foreign language, we gain confidence and a deeper appreciation for ourselves.

In contrast, lacking skills or accomplishments can leave us feeling inadequate, especially when we see others excelling. A lack of interests, hobbies, or skills can also lead to boredom or even depression late in life. Many people retire and find that they are unhappy, confused, or overwhelmed. This is often because they have never invested in worthwhile activities that could occupy and expand their minds. I believe this is possibly what leads to people passing away shortly after they retire.

When I was in high school, we did not have cell phones, computers, Netflix, or cable TV. We never knew what our high school friends were doing or where they were. However, we had similar problems, concerns, and desires as kids today. I remember wanting to be popular, have my own car, be a good athlete, and have a girlfriend. Pretty much what all kids today wish for, right? The problem was I was a late developer. I was very short. I did not hit my growth spurt until my late college years, and I still only became 5-foot, 6-inches tall.

Being short is kind of a curse in high school. Girls are not interested in you, sports are difficult, and you get teased a lot and often picked on. I had my share of big kids pushing me around, messing up my hair when I got to school, or stuffing me in garbage cans. You learn to just stay out of the way in hopes the big kids will leave you alone.

Looking back, this was a blessing for me. It burned a desire or drive inside of me to make something of myself. I wanted to find my place in the world, gain respect, and be successful. I realized my achievements weren't going to come from sports, but possibly from developing skills or talents that I would

be proud of. I set out to learn everything I could about what makes people successful and what I could do to improve my own circumstances.

I turned within and became kind of a loner as I worked on my life. To my surprise, I discovered that working on skill sets brought me the most happiness. Many of my teenage concerns seemed to vanish when I was immersed in learning, practicing a skill, or participating in an activity.

This has served me well over the years, and I have found that happiness comes from participating, learning, and growing. Now that I am partly retired and working only two days a month, I often find myself wondering how I ever had time for a full-time job! My days are filled with activities and projects I genuinely enjoy, leaving little room for television, idle time, naps, or boredom. In addition, every morning I spring out of bed, motivated and excited for the day.

It is true that my passion for learning and taking on activities goes back to when I was a teenager, but I learned something valuable along the way: In order to grow as a person, no matter what age you are, you must be humble. Taking on a new activity or skill requires you to start from the bottom as a beginner. I've found that most adults don't want to take that risk—the risk of *embarrassment*. They tend to fear failure. Kids, on the other hand, don't seem to have any fear. They just jump in on anything that looks fun.

Because I had very challenging teen years, I started out from rock bottom in terms of my popularity or self-image, and that has helped me throughout my life. I learned not to care

what people thought of me and focused on the fun or reward of learning something new. No matter what age I was, I never felt embarrassment about failing at something. For instance, I can recall a time when I was about 50. My wife's best friend, Therese, and her 18-year-old son, Robbie, were visiting our house. Robbie was a phenomenal drummer who had been taking drum lessons since he was a young boy.

Therese said, "Robbie, you need to get a summer job."

Robbie quipped back, "Mom, I already have a summer job."

"C'mon Robbie. What job do you have?" implored Therese.

Robbie responded in a sarcastic tone, "I'm a drum instructor."

"Oh, right, Robbie," Therese said cynically. "You don't have any students, do you?"

"Well," rebounded Robbie, "I can get some students and start teaching."

Hearing this and wanting to help Robbie out, I chimed in. "Hey Robbie," I said, "I'll take lessons from you. I've always wanted to learn to play the drums." I really wasn't sure if I had extra time for learning the drums, but I had passion to learn new things, and I knew Robbie would be thrilled to have his first student.

Robbie perked up at this idea. After going home, he brought back a pair of drumsticks, a practice pad, and some drum sheet music for beginners. He began to give me my first lesson on that drum pad. Robbie was very passionate about playing the drums, and his energy radiated to me. I felt his excitement and

had the most enjoyable time, even though I was not adept at all with the sticks.

Long story short, I continued to take drum lessons from Robbie for the entire summer and ended up buying my own drum set. When Robbie went off to college in the fall, I sought out another drum instructor and continued my lessons—all because I found playing the drums to be so fun. Playing drums (which I liken to dancing with your hands and feet to music of your choosing) has become one of my favorite activities—and I started at age 50. Although I am not a great drummer, I have played in a few bands and played some gigs at places like the Hard Rock Café in Seattle. I found the drumming community to be tight, and I connected with many new people and developed close, enduring friendships. Most importantly, I added an activity later in my life that has proven to be one of my most favorite pastimes. It has brought so much joy and happiness into my life and is a great outlet for my stress. I would never have discovered the drums if I were reserved or afraid of failure.

I tell this story because it emphasizes three important truths:

1. You're never too old to learn new skills.
2. You never know how what you embark on will impact your life.
3. Learning something new requires you to be humble.

Incidentally, Robbie became a professional drummer and now lives in Los Angeles. You can look him up if you are interested. His website is www.bobbyy.music.

What I am challenging you to do in this book is to *start now* investing 20 minutes a day practicing or working on an activity or skill that you would love to be good at. I call this **The 20-Minute Life**. Do not concern yourself with how hard you think it will be or how bad you feel you will perform. Try to let go of any fear of failure and just jump in. For example, let's say you always dreamed of playing the piano proficiently. Maybe you took lessons as a kid but never followed through. Now is the time to go for it! If you practice playing for 20 minutes a day, every day, you could very shortly be performing songs that both you and your family would enjoy. In my opinion, nothing sounds better in a home than someone playing a piano—and learning to play music is much easier today with YouTube and websites that teach you to start playing songs immediately. You could be the person making that music! You could get an adult beginner piano book and start reading the first chapter. You could invest in a digital piano—there are hundreds of types, and they're reasonable in cost—and you could play for 20 minutes late at night or in the morning before you leave for work.

By investing just 20 minutes of your day, each day, learning something, you will improve and develop a talent that can enhance your self-esteem and serve you with fun and enjoyment well into your retirement years.

Or maybe you want to manage your savings better, and you've always wanted to learn about investing in the stock market. You might be intimidated and not know where to start. In that case, try applying the 20-Minute Life model toward mastering investing in the stock market. Go on Amazon and find an introductory

book or audible book and start reading or listening to it for 20 minutes per day. (The key here is 20 minutes per day, without compromise—your day is not complete until you put in your 20 minutes.) Then, maybe search YouTube or Audible and see if you can find programs on basic stock market investing. Soon, you will learn all about the S&P 500 stocks, index funds, and more. Maybe check out BetterInvesting.org. This is a great site for new stock investors. After a few months, you might start researching companies and selecting stocks based upon facts and strategies you've assimilated. If you put just 20 minutes each morning into studying stocks, the market, and reading about companies, you will be quite knowledgeable—and possibly an expert—in just five years. If your enthusiasm is high, you might even find yourself spending an hour each day learning.

Or let's say you want to learn Spanish. Maybe it's because you know a lot of Hispanic people, you want to travel to Spain or South America, you want to volunteer with Spanish-speaking people, or you feel that it would add to your resume. Get an introductory book on Spanish, download a language learning app, or buy the Rosetta Stone series, and start working on this language for 20 minutes each day.

Time will accumulate no matter how you choose to spend it. Ask anyone in their 60s or 70s, and they'll tell you that the years just seem to fly by. They may even wonder where it all went or say, "Time just slipped away." However, by dedicating just 20 minutes each day toward learning a hobby or skill, you can harness a bit of that time and accomplish a valuable feat.

If you do not make a plan—and a commitment to it—you are less likely to accomplish anything of value with your free time. That sounds a bit blunt, right? But it's actually inspiring—and it's simple. The best part is that all you need to do is *start!*

Some people feel guilty about focusing on themselves. They espouse it's selfish or indulgent, especially in a world that reveres self-sacrifice. Young adults, for instance, often aspire for world-changing impact before they've had time to build a strong personal foundation. I'm not dispraising their enthusiasm, and in fact, that spirit is something our country needs. But the truth is that improving yourself is one of the most generous things you can do. When you feel fulfilled and confident in yourself, you're far more capable of helping others. As the sayings go, "You cannot give what you don't first possess for yourself," or "You can't pour from an empty vessel." Ayn Rand once said: "Selfless charity is an act which is not possible in self-abasement—only in self-exaltation."

Fulfillment, purpose, and joy are not just personal rewards; they're the foundation of a life of service and impact. By developing talents, pursuing meaningful interests, and learning to stay committed, we build confidence and self-respect. We become stronger, more capable individuals, which empowers us to influence and help others.

That is the core, underlying message of this book. If we want a better world, we need stronger and more confident and fulfilled people. That begins from within. The 20-Minute Life model is designed to do exactly that—help people discover ful-

fillment through daily personal growth, one focused 20-minute effort at a time.

By adopting the 20-Minute Life model, including the recommended exercises, you will be creating something. You may not think of yourself as a creative person, but you'll be venturing on a journey to form new aptitudes, proficiencies, and skills that you selected and designed. Those capabilities aren't something you can buy. They take time and a little effort to develop. But they become a part of you that no person or circumstance can take away. In the process, you'll increase your self-pride and self-confidence, setting into motion meaningful changes that can profoundly and positively impact your life for many years.

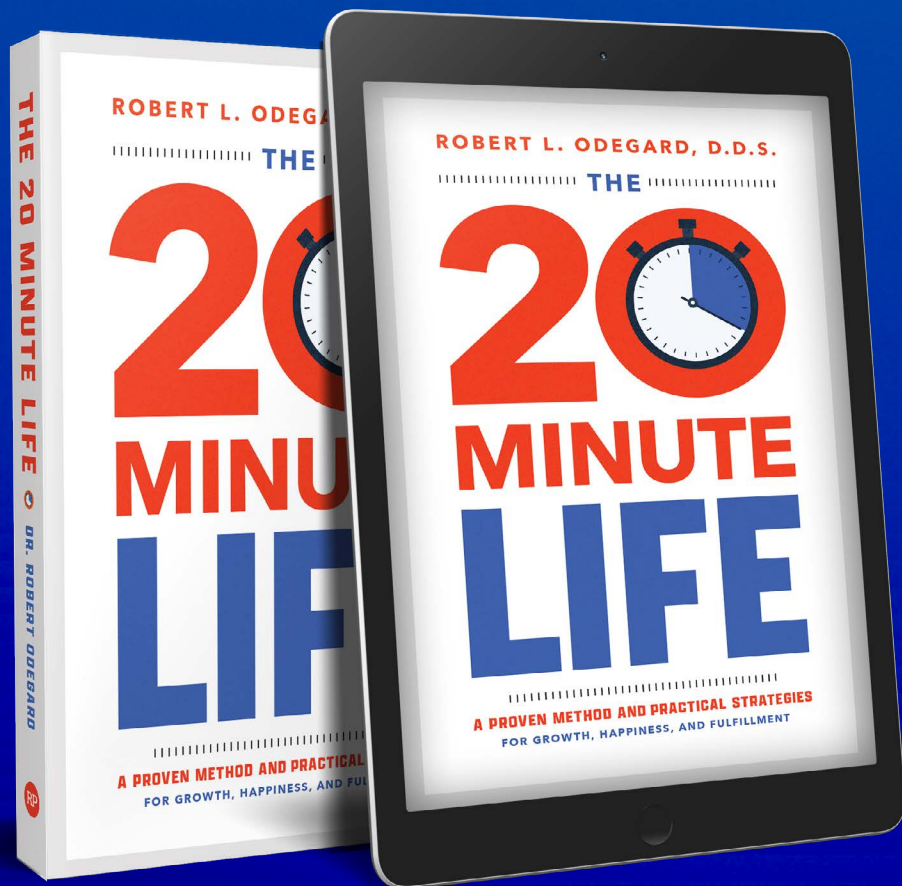
Moreover, adventuring on new skill sets rids fear, squashes a sedentary lifestyle, expands your abilities, and strengthens your capacity to grow. Once you discover the process of accomplishing goals and harness the discipline to stick with a pursuit, nothing becomes unachievable. Soon, you will be applying your newly acquired skills and your momentum to other areas of your life. With the 20-Minute Life model in place, your life may begin to take new shape.

As you embark on this 20-minute-per-day journey, I invite you to read this book's manifold success principles and tips so you can stay consistent in your pursuit. After ingesting the progress methods I describe, you'll become armed with multitudinous weapons to dismantle any obstacle that impedes your dreams.

CHAPTER 1 REVIEW

- ➔ What are you doing with your life? You might just be existing.
- ➔ Having personal talents or skills that you enjoy develops self-pride and inner happiness. Happy people achieve more success.
- ➔ People live longer with more fulfilled lives when they develop personal skills, grow new competencies, and accomplish things they may never have thought possible.
- ➔ When retirement comes, or you simply have more time for yourself, you'll have acquired some skills, mastered a hobby, or found an activity that is fun and meaningful to engage in—something that brings you pride, joy, and purpose.
- ➔ Try to get over the fear of embarrassment and be more humble about starting from the bottom.
- ➔ By engaging in the 20-Minute Life model, you will gain self-appreciation. The more fulfilled and confident you are, the more you can help others.

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