

## The Gap and The Gain

Dan Sullivan, Dr. Jeremy Hardy

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Summary and Notes

### **Introduction - Why Most People Aren't Happy**

“There is no way to happiness - happiness is the way”. **Thich Nhat Hanh**

When you are chasing happiness externally, it's because you're disconnected internally, and when you're disconnected internally, then you're trying to fill a GAP.

### **The Gap and the Gain**

“Your future growth and progress are based in your understanding about the difference between the two ways in which you can measure yourself: against an ideal, which puts you in what I call ‘the GAP’, and against your starting point, which puts you in ‘the GAIN’, appreciating all that you have accomplished.” **Dan Sullivan**

High achievers are particularly prone to being in the GAP - even after some massive victory, their mind quickly goes to the next unreached achievement. Externally to the world they are “successful”. Internally they are prone to depression and anxiety as they continuously seek happiness “out there”. Many, if not most, high achievers remain unhappy, and their unhappiness grows deeper and deeper with each external accomplishment. They stay in the GAP.

Per the Constitution, we have the God derived rights of “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”. Unfortunately, Thomas Jefferson's GAP-thinking mind set has become pervasive throughout Western ideology and thinking. If we are constantly pursuing something, then by default - we never actually attain it. Happiness is out *there*, never *here*. We stay in the GAP.

When you're in the GAP, you see everything through your GAP-lens. Nothing is ever enough. Nothing will ever be enough. You can't look back and see the GAIN in yourself and others. And until you do you will never be happy. Happiness is now. Happiness is not in the future.

The GAIN connects you to yourself and your own progress. It transforms everything and gives you the power over the direction in your life. The GAIN - gets you out of - the GAP.

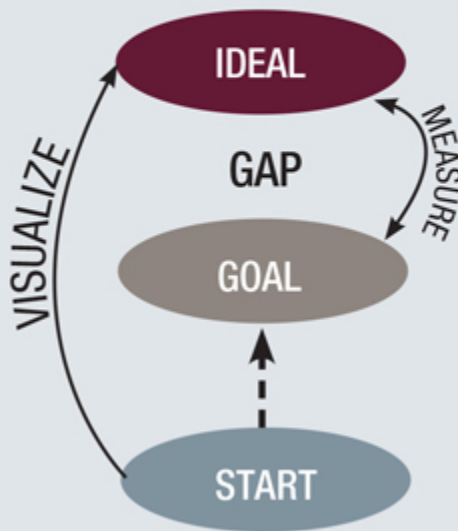
To be the GAIN, you visualize and plan to the Ideal, but you measure in the past, from where you started, to the attainment of each goal on the way to Ideal. You can't measure the future - the GAP. It doesn't exist.

# The Gap And The Gain

Either

Or

YOUR  
BRAIN



## **Get Off The Gap Treadmill**

“The day you stop racing is the day you win the race”. **Bob Marley**

Get off the GAP treadmill. Measuring yourself against an ideal is an endless race to nowhere - it keeps you from living within your own experience. The GAP makes any form of progress a letdown because the “standard of success” keeps moving.

Psychology has a term for this moving horizon, **hedonic adaptation**. It’s the tendency of humans to quickly adapt to where they are and what they have and it leads to never being satisfied, and to constantly seeking the next thing. Dr. Michael Eysenck gave this phenomenon the term “the hedonic treadmill”. When you’re on this treadmill, you’re working harder and harder to be happy but staying exactly where you started.

Ideals are meant to provide direction, motivation, and meaning to our lives, the sun that illuminates the path ahead - they are not the measuring stick. Our society has trained us to measure ourselves against our ideals, which by definition are unreachable. Goals, conversely, are reachable.

Being in the GAIN means you measure yourself backward, against where you were before. The GAIN is about real measurables, not ideals.

“Winners don’t have a ‘to-do’ list. They have a ‘done’ list”. **Tim Grover**

You value your experiences - all of them - because every experience is viewed as a gain which also makes you psychologically bullet-proof. It really won’t matter what the experience was; the choice is fully yours in how you frame and contextualize it - whether in the GAP or the GAIN. Mistakes are learning experiences and therefore a GAIN. Everything in life happens FOR you, not TO you.

You must convert all experiences into learning, one way or the other. Being in the GAIN leads you to becoming increasingly unique and self-determined, no longer measuring yourself against externals. You’re playing your own game, seeing new progress every day. You’re defining what your own experiences mean and you’re loving your life.

## **Be In The Gain For Others**

“The meaning of life is whatever you ascribe it to be”. **Joseph Campbell**

When you are in the GAP about your family and friends, you are measuring them against where you wish they were as a person. You are measuring them against *your* ideals. Through this lens, all you can see are the flaws, not for who they truly are as a whole person. You do not see growth, or progress because you're looking forward towards an ideal that more than likely isn't their ideal anyway.

We must see people thoughtfully against where they were, and who they were and how much progress they have made in moving towards their own goals, their GAINS. No one will ever measure up against your continually changing ideals about who they should be. No one. And they shouldn't be trying to live up to your ideals either. If they were, then they would be in the GAP as well.

Focus on their GAINS, vocalize those GAINS. *Transform each other.*

## **Chapter 1 - Embrace the Freedom of “Wants”**

“Happiness is not something you pursue. Happiness is not somewhere in the future. Happiness is where you start, not where you finish.” **Dr. Benjamin Hardy**

Again, the future isn't a reality - it's a projection. And because it's not reality, it can't be part of any real measurement of your progress. The only way to measure goals is backward, against the past. Use the reality of where you currently are and measure backward from there to the reality of where you started. That's the GAIN.

The “**Broaden-and Build Theory**” of psychology, introduced by Dr. Barbara L. Fredrickson, shows that positive emotions are the starting point of learning, growth, and high performance. Positive emotions *broaden* your options of thinking and acting. Negative emotions (fear, anger, sadness) leave you with only a few rigid ways of handling a given situation.

With a broadened mindset, you can then build new “resources” that you can use now or in the future, whether they be fresh perspectives, increased emotional flexibility, new strategies, or new relationships.

**Positive emotional states** facilitate higher performance, which increases confidence and filters back more positive emotions in a virtuous cycle. Joy and especially **gratitude** - of your GAINS - bring about this broaden-and-build process ad infinitum. Success then creates confidence, not the other way around. Confidence then drives us towards more success.

When you're in the GAP, you have an unhealthy attachment to something external. Your happiness is tied to a moving, unreachable target. You feel you **need** something outside of yourself in order to be whole and happy. When you are driven by need, rather than want, you have an urgency and desperation to fulfill that need - to fill that GAP. Conversely, in the world of **wanting**, there is no scarcity, because it is a world of innovation - not of taking. Wanters are creating things that didn't exist before.

“Training yourself to be happy is completely internal. There is no external progress, no external validation. You're competing against yourself - it is a single-player game”. **Naval Ravikant**

Your viewpoints and judgements of your own experiences are infinitely more important than anyone else's judgements of you and of your experiences. Happiness is a byproduct of realizing that *you* are the destination, that *you* are enough and you have enough and are worthy of love.

### **Obsessive vs. Harmonious Passion**

Psychologists have separated needs and wants into two core types of passion: obsessive and harmonious.

**Obsessive passion** is highly impulsive and fueled by suppressed emotions and unresolved internal conflict. You become obsessed with something to the point of an unhealthy desperation. You believe you *need* it, and can't be happy without it. You also tend to lose sight of the other areas of your life and your obsession takes a more central role in your emotions and thoughts. When you become obsessed with something, you're in the **GAP**, and this can be big or small things.

You measure your experiences or situations against how you ideally imagined it was “supposed” to be, rather than learning from the experience and being happy regardless. Obsessive passion stops you from being **mindful**, and you are a slave to whatever emotions present themselves. Obsessive passion actually prevents you from being in a flow state - or the state of being fully immersed in what you're doing. It is also correlated with low self-esteem, since you need something external to you - you are not enough in the here and now.

**Harmonious passion**, on the other hand, is intrinsically motivated and healthy. You control your passion rather than having it control you. You are intuitive and thoughtful about what you are doing, not reactive and irrational. You are purposeful and goal-directed, not “need”-driven.

### **Play The Long Game**

In psychology, **grit** is defined as passion and perseverance toward long-term goals and is related to harmonious passion. Obsessions are short-term, and sooner or later, you'll shift that unhealthy need onto something else - the hedonic treadmill continues.

With harmonious passions you also tend to be **intrinsically** motivated - which also adds to your grit profile. Doing something you genuinely love, and doing it for yourself, defines you as intrinsically motivated and the passion as healthy. You don't have to force things or prove yourself. You're playing the long game. You're playing your own game. You're not competing with anyone else or measuring yourself against anyone else's standards.

By freeing yourself from unnecessary "needs", you're finally enabled to create the progress and life you want. You know you are already whole and completed without those goals. You are fully free to have whatever you want, and because of that, it's actually easier to get what you want. When you are in the Gap if you're "here", but wishing you were "there". The GAIN creates freedom. The GAP enslaves you.

"Faith knows it has already received and acts accordingly". **Florence Shinn**

### **Freedom "From" vs. Freedom "To"**

"Freedom is now or never". Jiddu Krishnamurti

Per psychologist Erich Fromm, there are two types of freedom:

1. Freedom from (which is external)
2. Freedom to (which is internal)

**Freedom from** is a lack of obstacles - you are not a slave to someone or something.

**Freedom to** is the presence of control - you are your own master.

**Freedom from** is objective and external - you have objective freedom if you live in a free place.

**Freedom to** is subjective and internal - you have subjective freedom if you feel free.

Despite having an enormous amount of freedom from constraints (in most Western countries), it can be difficult to courageously seize the freedom to be whoever you genuinely want to be.

There are a lot of expectations and ideals to live up to, which can hamper intrinsic motivation if you allow them to.

The goal of creating an environment of freedom is that as an individual, you actually live your life according to your own choosing rather than **compulsion**. Very few people are aware of this cognitively, and most that are aware, are not willing to take the leap into a higher level of personal, intrinsic freedom.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow's **hierarchy of needs** expresses this well. The lower levels of the hierarchy are *freedom from*-based - such as freedom from hunger, dangers, the elements, social isolation and even lack of self-esteem. *Self-actualization*, the highest level of the hierarchy, is another way of saying that you have the freedom to be whatever it is you choose to be. You've freed yourself from internal and external constraints that would stop you from having autonomy and choices.

When you're in the GAP, you're not operating out of freedom and choice. Instead, you're operating from a position of lack or need. You are only trying to free yourself FROM something. You're trying to fill a GAP.

You must free yourself - from the GAP. Once you are out of the GAP, you're at the "freedom to" stage, where you can truly be whoever you want to be. You are now in the GAIN.

## **Chapter 2 - Be Self-Determined**

"Define success on your own terms, achieve it by your own rules, and build a life you're proud to live". **Ann Sweeney**, Disney Media

Do public education and its "measures" breed success or compliance?

Seth Godin and many others have explained that public education was actually invented in 1918 to get children out of the factories. The education system was designed to train kids to be "better" and more obedient, productive, and submissive workers in the future. The goal of the education system was definitely NOT for those children to become leaders or creative thinkers, but to become people who did what they were told, looked for the "right answers" and did not think for themselves. The last thing that the powers that be at any given time want, is for people to think creatively and for themselves.

Per Seth Grodin, "The plan was to trade short-term child labor wages for longer-term productivity by giving children a head start in doing what they're told." This is not a new invention via Western civilization. This has been happening, in one form or another, since civilizations first constructed themselves thousands of years ago.

Our education system hinders creativity and autonomy by HOW they measure success. Each child is measured against a "reference point", a standard for evaluation and comparison against national averages on test scores. Each child is measured against other children and given a percentile rank.

Being fixed on outside reference points puts you in the GAP. Being directed by your own internal reference points strengthens being in the GAINS. Children are trained to measure themselves against external reference points not generally chosen by the child, but by society and the education system. As these children mature, they adopt the reference points that society deems as “success” - money, fame, social media likes, etc. And then we wonder why depression and anxiety are so prevalent in our society?

Since the “success” goals from society are based on unreachable and externally defined ideals, people tend to generally become desperate as they fail the race to “measure up” to these external and ever changing ideals. The hedonic treadmill now has an additional participant.

### **Ask yourself these questions:**

What are the reference points I use to measure myself?

Why have I chosen those particular reference points?

How do you define and measure success for yourself?

You may have never taken the time to consider these concepts and questions, and if so, you are not alone. Find a quiet place, take the time, start the process of revelation of who you are and where you are, so you can set a true course for where YOU want to go. Only you can do this. It's not easy. It's not supposed to be easy. But it is critical that you be able to evaluate yourself and where you are HONESTLY. No one can do this for you. You're looking for the TRUTH, and the truth is not good or bad - it's just the truth. And the truth will set you free.

### **Become Self-Determined**

“To be free, you must be self-determined, which is to say that you must be able to control your own destiny in your own interests”. **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy**

According to **self-determination theory**, a crucial aspect of motivation and thriving as a person is autonomy. You have to take ownership for yourself and your circumstances. You have to make yourself the reference point and be intrinsically motivated, not extrinsically motivated by what is “out there”. You make the effort to know yourself, choose what truly motivates you and set your goals accordingly.

Being self-determined means that you have decided what success means to you and you don't need anyone else's permission for what you want, nor do you need to explain yourself if you don't feel the need. You never need to apologize for these decisions and your life's path - ever. You must be CLEAR on WHY you want what you want. You are no longer competing against anyone else. You are now in YOUR GAINS - and this leads to self-determination.

Being self-determined is quite difficult in today's world and **you will feel alone oftentimes on your journey**. Train yourself to be OK with being a party of one - often. The noise and distractions of the world are relentless and this makes it difficult to develop and maintain your internal compass - but you must at all costs, every day.



**Social media is specifically designed to put people in the GAP.** It is designed to create unhealthy needs around being accepted and “liked”. Social media and FOMO (fear of missing out) go hand in hand. FOMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing, to “need” to know how and what they are doing, and to have others know what you are doing. How can anyone possibly spend any time in their own internal world, striving towards their intrinsic goals and self-determination AND spend time in social media, which is *literally designed to keep you from doing that very thing?*

Don't fool yourself. Disengage from social media. It is not blessing your life in the least. It is in fact, keeping you from any life worth living. **Social media is the most destructive form of living in the GAP - all day, every day.** Social media does not care about you in the least. How you engage their media - whether you are happy, sad or angry - means nothing to them. They are selling your engagement, the engagement of your mind, and they don't care how it affects you in the least.

Per Jared Lanier, a computer scientist and virtual reality pioneer via the Netflix documentary, *The Social Dilemma*, “It's the gradual, slight, imperceptible change in your own behavior and perception that is the product. That's the only possible product. That's the only thing there is for them to make money from. **Changing what you do, how you think, who you are. It's a gradual change. It's slight.** We've created a world in which online connection has become primary, especially for younger generations. And in this world, anytime we connect with another person, the only way it's financed is through a sneaky third person who's paying to manipulate those two people”.

Ninety percent of people use social media websites for the specific purpose of comparing themselves with others, and nearly 100 percent of those are “upward social comparisons,” meaning people are comparing themselves with those they perceive to be “above” or “better than them.” **This form of social comparison puts you in the GAP - every time.** All of social media is a contradiction of self-determination and intrinsic motivation. You will lose your own identity. You will lose your own compass. You are chasing someone else's ideals and they can change the game anytime they want to. Get out. Disengage.

If you question the validity of these sentiments, let me challenge you to delete all social media from your phone for one month and check them only if needed for work via your laptop. Then keep a pen and pad handy and make a note every time the nonconscious part of your brain cues you to take a look at social media. That number should astound you, and scare the hell out of you. Disengage social media. Do it today. It has and will destroy enough lives. Don't let yours be one of them.

**Your happiness as a person is dependent on what you measure yourself against.** Get out of society's GAP, by measuring your self-determined GAINS. You measure yourself against YOU. You do not care how others are measuring themselves. That's their boat - let them row it. You row yours.

**Ask yourself these questions:**

Are the reference points you measure yourself against external or internal?

How often do you compare yourself to others?

How much time do you REALLY spend on social media?

Are you self-determined and free?

**Define Your Success Criteria**

Consider the inherent problem with "seeking success". Using the phrase "I'll be successful when..." leads people to chasing the wrong and/or other's external forms and definitions of success.

Flip the question to the here and now. List 5-10 items that you can reference at the end of each day to ask yourself, "I know I'm being successful when.....". Work with that list for a few weeks, edit it as you see fit. You're self-determined - it's your life and your list.

**Lee Brower** developed a list of six questions that he uses as a filtering process for making high-quality decisions:

1. Is this opportunity, person, expense, experience, relationship, commitment, etc., aligned with my values?
2. Will this opportunity, etc., take advantage of my unique ability and make me stronger? Will it lengthen my stride?
3. How will this opportunity, etc., benefit the world? Is there a bigger cause or purpose that will benefit society?
4. Does this make sense financially?
5. Is this transactional or transformational? In other words, is this a stand-alone opportunity or a gateway opportunity?
6. If I say "yes" to this opportunity, what then must I say "no" to?

Both of the above lists/exercises help us define our self-determined life and live based on clear measurables that we have chosen. **This is living in the GAIN.** You use these criteria to make decisions and move your life forward. As you move forward, you regularly measure yourself backward to evaluate your own progress. You gain confidence from running your own race. You no longer compare yourself to others or to society as a whole.

The philosopher Seneca called this state *euthymia*, which meant to him, **"That you're on the right path and not led astray by the many tracks which cross yours of people who are hopelessly lost."**

### **Use Your Filtering System To Go Further, Faster**

“If you’re not saying ‘Hell yeah!’ about something, so ‘no’. When deciding to do something, if you feel anything less than ‘Wow! That would be amazing! Absolutely! - then say no.

**Derek Sivers**

Try these filters when making decisions:

Will it make me a better person?

Will it increase me in ways that I can then share with others?

Will it move me towards my intrinsic goals?

Will it increase my education in subjects that truly matter to me?

Will this bless my life - or curse it?

It’s your GAP or GAIN. Create your own filters. It’s your boat. Row it!

### **Chapter 3 - The Compound Effect of the GAP or GAIN - Train Your Brain**

“Sometimes the greatest scientific breakthroughs happen because someone ignores the prevailing pessimism.” **Nessa Carey**, British biologist

The GAP is a habit, one we can literally fall into hundreds of times every day. It taxes you, stresses you out and erodes your emotional well-being. If you spend extended time in the GAP, the compound effect over the course of your lifetime will shorten your lifespan. Research shows that the rate at which your body ages is modulated by how your genes interact with exposure to stressors. Exposure to short-term stress like exercise strengthens your cellular responses and promotes longevity. Prolonged exposure to other stressors overwhelms the system and shortens your lifespan. Being in the GAP wears your body down. Being in the GAIN is restorative, healing, and empowering.

Optimistic people tend to live 10 years longer than pessimistic people - and the life they actually lead in all of those years is positive and filled with joy. Research tells us that unhappy people get sick more often and, on average, take 15 additional sick days from work each year vs happier people.

The field of *epigenetics* is showing us that our perception of events and situations, the way we mentally filter experiences, shapes how those events affect us, despite their objective characteristics. Our perceptions, and therefore our emotional and physical response to experiences, determine the impact of stress and illness on our bodies. Our perception literally shapes our biology, our unique genetic code, which then expresses itself via how our bodies function. Our genetics can’t be changed - our expression of those genes is shaped by our choices.

So much of experience comes down to the meaning or framing a person gives to it. When you change the context, you change the meaning. The meaning determines the psychological and physical impact of the content. It only matters what it means to YOU.

The most fundamental context for everyone, in every situation, is how they measure the value of their developing experiences as either negative or positive. Is it a GAP, or a GAIN? Is the world happening to you or for you? Instead of viewing something negatively, ask yourself, "How can this make me better? What did I learn? How can I make this a GAIN?"

Being in the GAIN doesn't just make you happier. It makes you more resilient to challenges. It increases your health, productivity and longevity

### **Stop Comparing and Practice Gratitude**

"Comparison is the thief of joy." **Theodore Roosevelt**

The GAP robs you of enjoying life. It robs you of appreciating what you already have. It completely kills the reward of any positive experiences you have or progress you make.

Research shows that people with low emotional intelligence are highly sensitive to "fairness violations." They really want everything to be "totally fair" or "weighted in their favor" or they'll be upset - essentially throwing a tantrum to get what they want or trying to prove they're in control. They go into the GAP because their "want" becomes a "need".

People who are grateful, who are mindful of and practice *gratitude*, don't overly obsess over "fairness" or comparisons. Being grateful helps you appreciate your GAINS and helps you make smart short-term and long-term decisions. Being in the GAIN isn't being a pushover. You just simply rise above situations that don't turn out exactly how you felt they should and see the GAIN that you did acquire.

### **Call Yourself Out and Give Others Permission to Call You Out**

"Language is very powerful. Language does not just describe reality. Language creates the reality it describes." **Desmond Tutu**, Anglican Theologian

We must identify and celebrate our GAINS. We have to stop searching for and "needing" the next thing that will make us happy. It is important to have compassion and appreciation for yourself. The GAP is a stone around your neck, the GAIN mind set is freedom to be uniquely you.

Everyone will fall into the GAP from time to time - we are human. If you notice you're in the GAP, call yourself out. Don't make a big deal about it, just acknowledge it, refrain your reference and move on. Now that you understand that the GAP exists and have language to describe it, you will notice the GAP everywhere - on TV, social media, in other people's conversations.

You can help others appreciate their GAINS by sharing this information with them. Help them appreciate their GAINS so they can also become empowered. When in a difficult situation, train yourself to ask, “What is the GAIN in this?” Or “How can we turn this into a GAIN?”

### **Practice Mental Subtraction**

By imagining the absence of everything good in your life, your outlook can instantly change. This is mental subtraction and it is one of the most effective science-based techniques for boosting gratitude and happiness.

Being in the GAIN is appreciating everything in your life, including the progress you’ve made as a person. It’s about measuring yourself against where you were before. It’s about seeing everything in your life as a GAIN.

We all go into the GAP way too much. We go into the GAP about ourselves, undervaluing and underappreciating ourselves. We go into the GAP about other people, turning them into a problem or enemy.

### **Give Yourself a Few Moments in the GAP, Then Move Forward**

“One thing that makes it possible to be an optimist is if you have a contingency plan for when all hell breaks loose. There are a lot of things I don’t worry about, because I have a plan in place if they do.” **Randy Pausch**

Focus on what is actually tangible, and continually increase your tangible measurables - which are backwards, where you have moved forward FROM - in the GAIN. Being in the GAIN is how you take responsibility for your life and outcomes. You accept where you are, dust yourself off, and move forward with a smile and a plan.

In performance psychology, there is a concept known as **implementation intentions**, which is a strategy to plan for the worst, so you can perform your best with a clear mind and focused purpose. You specifically plan for when things will fall apart. You plan for obstacles and setbacks. Just as importantly, you pre-plan how you will respond to those obstacles. When the world presents you with a question - you already have an answer. You have already made that decision and your response is automatic.

**Decision fatigue** happens when you are not sure what you’re going to do. It’s when you’re torn between options and, due to your indecisiveness, you often cave to the tempting worse option. Having a pre-plan in place enables you to be intentional, and to avoid the willpower burnout that comes through decision fatigue. You have to become the person you want to be. You have to be that person. The new you has to be the new you. The old you is no longer.

We all get in the GAP from time to time. The goal is to get out of the GAP as quickly as possible. Recognize the GAP for what it is and then reset your mind to the GAINS and move on. Being continuously in the GAP creates a negative compound effect in your life. It literally affects everything. Change your mind - your life will follow.

## **Chapter 4 - Always Measure Backwards - Increase Your Hope and Resilience**

“You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards.”  
Steve Jobs

Progress is everything and you can’t judge someone else’s progress. If you’re not progressing as a person, you’re giving up on yourself. If you don’t believe someone else can make progress, you’re giving up on them. Measure yourself against what you do and where you want to go.

When you stay in the GAIN, your motivation to push through challenges is not only enabled but strengthened. Being in the GAIN helps you discern the progress that others in the GAP would miss. **Inattentional blindness** occurs when you are so fixated on one thing that you fail to see everything else going on around you. It’s easy to miss the GAINS happening throughout our lives or business because we may have tunnel vision on the problem in front of us.

Seeing GAINS gives you hope, confidence and motivation to keep going - even when progress is difficult or slower than desired. As the process of *automaticity* happens in our minds - adapting quickly to “new normals” over time - if you’re in the GAIN, you remember your achievements and use that confidence and motivation as you continuously grow as a person. If you’re in the GAP, you forget the GAINS and concentrate on problems and perceived failures. You are either in one mindset or the other and this is always a moment by moment choice.

The **Conscious Competence Learning Model**, generally attributed to William Howell, is a four-stage learning theory that explains the process of automaticity.

**Stage One** - Unconscious Incompetence: You don’t know how to do something and don’t even recognize your ignorance. At this stage, you deny the relevance of learning a particular skill.

**Stage Two** - Conscious Incompetence: You don’t know how to do something but you can see your ignorance and lack of skills. You now see the value of GAINING knowledge and skill to address your current deficiency and you begin seeking growth.

**Stage Three** - Conscious Competence: You now know a great deal on the subject and can reliably perform the tasks involved. However, you have to concentrate on the task while doing it.

**Stage Four** - Unconscious Competence: You’ve practiced and performed the task so much that it’s become second nature. You can now perform this task effortlessly and unconsciously - even when doing or thinking about something else.

Achieving the fourth stage of unconscious competence, you operate in the world differently. You have new experiences, perspectives, skills, habits, and relationships that influence how you see and behave. All of these things frame your perception and decision-making forever. Your life, spent wisely, is the stacking and combining of these Stage Four realities of learning.

However, know that the past, and how we view it, is more a reflection of where we currently are than of the past itself.

“Our memories are not stored and objective entities but living parts of ourselves in the present. This is the reason our present moods and future goals so affect our memories.” **Dr. Brent Slife**, *Time and Psychological Explanation*.

You can forget what you previously struggled with and overcame, because the context of your mind has been modified over time. Without being conscious and intentional, you can easily “forget” or lose sight of your former GAINS. You can take for granted how far you’ve come, ignore your progress, and miss out on the confidence of remembering where you were.

Keeping journals, records, or “annual reviews” are incredibly powerful and important. For a monthly journal, here are 5 questions as an example, for how you might define where you are at the beginning of a month, what wins you plan to accomplish and your end goals that will be achieved. There will be multiple bullet points per question based on you, subjectively.

1. Where am I right now?
2. What are my wins from the past 90 days?
3. What are my desired wins for the next 90 days?
4. Where will I be in 12 months?
5. Where will I be in 3 years?

As you look through your journal entries over time and compare snapshots of your former self with your current self, you will quickly move into the GAINS mentality. There is only one way to measure success. You measure success backward by looking at where you are now compared to where you were before. Being in the GAP or the GAIN permeates your entire existence and affects everyone and everything. Planning life in the GAIN enables you to use your time better, on your goals and create more impactful and meaningful GAINS. This process produces immediate confidence and momentum.

“Your increasing sense of individual uniqueness makes you aware of everything and everyone that’s rigidly opposed to any kind of growth. This enables you to identify and move toward everything that’s growing.” **Dr. Benjamin Hardy**

### **Now It’s Your Turn: Let’s Measure Your Gains!**

Most people realize, then they consider it honestly, that they are not the exact same person they were ten years ago. You evolved and improved, you became more unique. You now process your universe differently and that universe is you, your family, your friends, your work and beyond.

Ask yourself these questions. **10 Years Ago:**

Where were you?

What were you focused on?

How did you measure success?

What do you know now that you didn't know then?

What are the biggest lessons you've learned?

What have been your biggest accomplishments?

Gains aren't just external accomplishments, but any form of growth or progress and should include experiences such as vacations, challenging events that you've gone through - lessons learned and relationships built. Be as specific as possible. People who measure their accomplishments in terms of specifics tend to be happier and more energized than people who speak in generalities.

Most of us have trained ourselves to brush off compliments and never appreciate our progress. Do not do that. The more you practice it, the more specific you will get a seeing, appreciating and framing your GAINS.

Now ask those questions above again, with the framework of GAINS over the **past 12 months**.

**Alain de Botton** said, "Anyone who isn't embarrassed of who they were last year probably isn't learning enough." That being said, being negative about your former self is GAP thinking. The truth is, you're not the same person you were in the past. Your former self didn't know what you know now, they weren't as clear as you are now.

### **Love your former self.**

Have empathy, compassion, and respect for them.

They had a different perspective within a different context.

They had a different job or peer group.

They didn't have the knowledge and skill you have now.

You should always be outgrowing your former self, always making GAINS. Now ask the questions one last time, with the framework of GAINS over the **last 90 days**.

**Josh Waitzkin**, the former chess prodigy and author of the *Art of Learning*, always asks himself this one question every 90 days: "What did I believe 3 months ago that I no longer believe today?" His goal is to continuously be "less wrong" which is a GAIN.

You can always start by keeping your GAINS private in a journal, but having supportive and motivating people around you to share your GAINS with is powerful. It's exciting to share your GAINS, and to hear other people's GAINS, when you're not comparing or competing. As you get the hang of this, try drilling down to a monthly or weekly basis. If you've read *Atomic Habits* by **James Clear**, this journaling will work nicely side by side with your Process Week planning and development.



## Chapter 5 - Measure 3 Wins Daily - Maximize the Highest-Leverage Hour of Your Day

“Our eyes only see and our ears only hear what our brain is looking for.” **Dan Sullivan.**

The last hour of the day should be your “sweet spot, a GAIN hour, one that positively transforms how you sleep as well as your entire day. While you’re sleeping, your brain processes and codes everything you did that day - deciding what is important and moving it to long-term memory - and what is not. What you attend to mentally in the hour before you sleep tends to get preferential treatment.

Top-athletes and performers create visualizations of success just before they go to sleep. What you habitually do with that last hour before bed sets the tone *for the rest of your life*. This is where your deepest habits can form. How you end your day also determines how well you sleep and when you’ll wake up. Those habits give order to how clear and directed you are when you awake. It decides how committed and sold you are on what you will do and who you will be the next day.

Without a clear and committed plan, you become reactive to what happens around you and reactivity breeds more reactivity.

Using your phone before bed decreases your ability to fall asleep and sleep well - it affects the normal circadian rhythms that your brain and body use to create your recovery from the day. At the very least, you will have less energy and think less clearly. The daily habit of staring at your phone before bed is one of the worst things you can do if you want to live an effective, present, and happy life.

All behavior, good or bad, influences your identity and you judge yourself based on your behaviors, a process called **self-signaling**. Therefore, all behavior over time - is addictive. Your behaviors in total are who you are. If you regularly eat sugar - you are a person who eats sugar and your mind reinforces that. If you regularly go to the gym - you are a person who goes to the gym and your mind will reinforce that. And all behavior seeks more of itself. To change your life, you have to create different and chronically consistent patterns of behavior that your own mind will eventually reinforce. These new patterns of behavior and reinforcement will then become the **new you**. You need a new plan.

Josh Waitzkin explains the importance of having a “proactive day architecture vs. a reactive day architecture.” Your day can either be designed by you proactively or it can be designed reactively by the world (the world is everything that is not you). Being proactive is freedom, being reactive is not.

Try giving yourself one challenge to consider before bed - no stress, just template the possibilities in your mind and let them go for the night. Then sleep on that thought and the next morning, before the “world” sends its insidious input to you, meditate and journal on that challenge. You will be amazed at the flashes of insight and creative breakthroughs that emerge without prompting, not only considering that particular challenge, but other ideas and musings.

This is a normal part of your mind’s design and creativity is primed just following sleep, especially after REM-based quality sleep. You are tapping into the subconscious integration and connections your brain processed and developed while you were sleeping. You can take advantage of this recovered and **clean mind** every single morning of your life. If you turn off the world and go to bed.

Try adding this to your daily journaling. Pre-plan your day, sleep on it, and then peruse it first thing in the morning. You will be energized to attack your day with a vengeance. But if you aren’t proactively setting yourself up for success the night before, your **morning mind** will be greatly diminished. The vast majority of people do not know how to do this, and most of them wouldn’t do it even if they did. Don’t be like most people. Boring.

### **3 Wins Each Day**

“Never begin the day until it is finished on paper.” **Jim Rohn**

The solution is simple. Phone off for the last 60 minutes of the day. You might tell those in your tight circle of family and friends when you will be “unavailable” at the end of each day. If they ask why, tell them. They can jump on the change train if they are so inclined. If not, that’s OK too.

In your journal, write down three things you’re grateful for each day. This habit of **gratitude** each day will increase your happiness and help you sleep better.

Now write down three specific “**wins**” you had **that day**. This will also boost your gratitude but will also simultaneously boost your confidence. Feeling good and acknowledging that you are making progress are essential to growth and happiness. Writing down these three wins will help keep you in the GAINS, and out of the GAP mindset. This is a chronic state of winning and making progress and this increases confidence and builds momentum.

Lastly, write down the **three wins** you would like to accomplish the **next day**. No more than three. You are priming your brain and assisting the integration process while you sleep. Essentially, when you wake up with a clean, morning brain, your mind knows exactly where it’s going. Proactive vs. reactive. Make these three wins for tomorrow important wins, not urgent ones.

**Winning is a habit.** Regardless of any setbacks or disappointments during the day, and you will have them, it doesn't matter - you still have three wins. Then you'll have three wins tomorrow. And at the end of the week, 21 wins. Winning is a habit YOU create in your own mind. You are in control. You will eventually realize that **you have power beyond measure** inside of you and it will snowball and gain momentum and color your entire proactive world. You are literally writing the story of your life.

Ending each day by writing down your three wins for the day, and then writing down the three most important wins for tomorrow begets:

Increases in gratitude and confidence.

A directed subconscious while you sleep.

Giving yourself a purpose for the next day.

Retraining your brain to see the GAINS rather than the GAP

Retraining your mind takes into account the concept of **selective attention**, that our attention focuses on what matters to us personally.

"Millions of items of the outward order are present to my senses which never properly enter into my experience. Why? Because they have no interest for me. My experience is what I *agree* to attend to." **William James**, Harvard psychologist.

Your experience is what you choose to focus on. When you're in the GAP, you're looking for the GAP. When you're in the GAIN, you're looking for the GAIN. You find whatever you have trained yourself to look for. Or you can find what the "world" wants you to find.

To recap, you want to go to bed happy and confident and wake up energized and with a purpose. This is a behavior change process and it takes time. Be consistent, but be patient with yourself. Progress, not perfection.

As your mind changes you will begin seeing GAINS everywhere, even in the smallest of places and when you find yourself in the GAP, you'll notice it much quicker and reframe the context and move on. Everything is a GAIN. Everything.

### **Two-Minute Accountability: Report Your Gains Daily**

Measuring your progress is a powerful internal signal that you're serious about what you're doing. Measuring proves that something did occur and makes you conscious of that fact.

"What isn't counted, doesn't count." **Lyn Craig**, sociology professor

When performance is measured, and reported back, you add another boost to this process. Identify an accountability or “success” partner. You can simply text them your three wins and your three wins for the next day. You are sharing your wins with someone you respect. This process can be energizing and increases focus, accountability and adds a layer of what can be crucial support. Your accountability partner can and should be sending the same information to you. Don’t overthink this. It’s a short, daily text.

## **Chapter 6 - Transform Every Experience Into A Gain - Take Ownership of Your Past**

“Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change.” **Stephen Hawking**

Embrace your past and transform what may seem to be failures into growth opportunities. What needs to change? What adaptations need to be tried? Is it me or my systems? And what does the entire picture of what occurred actually mean, not only in the current context, but in any larger or small context and in proposed future contexts.

Meaning and value aren’t given to us. We create our own meaning and value for every experience.

### **Taking Ownership of Your Experiences**

“Life is simple. Everything happens for you, not to you. Everything happens at exactly the right moment, neither too soon or too late. You don’t have to like it. It’s just easier if you do.

**Byron Katie**

When you’re in the GAIN, you’re proactive about your experiences - you look at your experiences and utilize them to become more adaptive and successful in your future. Conversely, when you’re in the GAP, you’re reactive to your experiences - looking at them and being frustrated over what happened. Rather than learning and improving, you stall in negativity.

When you frame an experience in the GAP, you lose power and ownership over that experience. The GAP puts you in the passenger seat of your own life. The GAIN mindset puts you in the driver’s seat.

The GAP takes away your agency as a person and makes you psychologically rigid. The GAIN increases your agency and makes you increasingly psychologically flexible - which means you manage your emotions, they don’t manage you.

**Low psychological flexibility** is associated with: higher anxiety, more depression, more overall physical pathology, poorer work performance, inability to learn, substance abuse, lower quality of life and long term disability. Basically, it's the inability to identify and be in touch with your own emotions.

Win you're in the GAIN, you're either winning or learning. When you're in the GAP, you're losing.

A fundamental aspect of flexibility is what psychologists call **pathways thinking**, and it's the ability to find or create many workable paths to a given outcome and you are willing to explore and try those options to solve challenges and create novel solutions. Pathways thinking is a core concept of hope. Having **high hope** means you believe there is always an answer, it just takes guts, time and hard work to reveal it. And sometimes it takes longer than other times - but it's always there.

In the book *Peaks and Valleys*, Spencer Johnson explains that the good things in people's lives happen **because** of what they do in their valleys, whereas the bad things in people's lives happen because of what they do in their peaks. You have to GAIN from the valleys, and if you do, you can reach higher peaks in life via your GAINS.

### **Don't Compare Your Experiences, Transform Them**

"Your past is just a story. And once you realize this, it has no power over you."

**Chuck Palahniuk**

Just because you have an outcome that was not foreseen and not to your liking, doesn't mean learning didn't take place. It absolutely did. You learned something that doesn't work so you don't do it again. Learning is learning. The outcome doesn't predicate its value. This is how research in any field actually works and how ideas are modified and inched forward or discarded. You can't always control the pace of learning. It tends to be its own animal fairly often. Find the levity in the process. At least you're learning.

### **With your journal try this exercise:**

Think about any specific experience - positive or negative.

Ask yourself: What about this experience worked well?

What "usefulness" can you get from this experience to improve your future?

What can you learn from this experience that you *don't* want?

Knowing what you know now, because you've had this experience, how will you approach your future differently?

What about this experience are you *grateful* for?

**You're in the GAIN** when you take full ownership of your experiences and past, you can do whatever you want with them. You decide what your past means, and what it doesn't mean. The GAIN transforms your experiences.

**In the GAP**, you compare your experiences to other people's, and can feel worse off as a result. This makes you distance yourself emotionally from them, which can create trauma. At the very least - nothing is learned.

The **GAIN mindset** rethinks those experiences with ever evolving thinking and reasoning, extracting new lessons, building a more efficient and effective decision-making process that is unique to you and your experiences. Your past, and the wisdom of others, moves you forward. Never hesitate to seek advice. Then contemplate it wisely and add it as you see fit.

The more you transform your experiences into learning and growth, the objectively better your experience will become and the more confident you will become in dealing with new, negative (or positive) events in the future. The GAIN mindset breeds confidence. All day. Every day. **You are literally creating a new you, every day.**

The GAIN mindset also lets you organize your past and see your thoughts, emotions and decisions in a new light - and how they have impacted you up to now. A disorganized and nontransformed past is chaotic and confusing. Another word for this is *trauma*.

**Trauma** is a dysfunctional belief about an experience that creates ongoing dysfunction in the present and future. It occurs when a person is avoiding and resenting their past, rather than approaching and transforming their past. Your past is not fixed, but flexible - your view of your own past can evolve over time.

As the psychiatrist **Gordon Livingston** explained, "The stories of our lives, far from being fixed narratives, are under constant revision.... We are all able to color our past as either happy or sad." The past is nothing more than the meaning you ascribe to it.

Motivation is often broken into one of two categories: **approach or avoid**. Being in the GAP leads you to avoid your past. It makes you the victim. It stops you from taking ownership. Being in the GAIN allows you to transform your experience as you see fit, and give those experiences meaning, the meanings you choose.

**Post-traumatic growth** occurs as you proactively find benefits from former hardships. You also actively frame tragedies or challenges in a way that gives you greater strength and empowerment than you had *before* the experience. You grow from the experience by getting value and usefulness out of the experience. The GAP is passive. The GAIN is active.

Taking the time to sit down and think about your experiences is what psychologists call **deliberate rumination**. It's where you:

Actively think about an experience

Proactively create the meaning you want that experience to have for you.

Revise your life narrative in a positive way for growth as a result.

When you don't take the time to define and transform your experiences into growth and purpose, and avoid those experiences in the GAP, then you experience what's called **intrusive rumination**. This is where uncomfortable thoughts and emotions randomly hit you, triggering the painful emotions of the past. Those uncomfortable emotions and disorganized thoughts are still there because you haven't transformed the experience and chosen what it means.

You can go back to previous experiences at any time and transform them, again and again, and acquire new insights and new lessons. When you're in the GAIN mindset, you have a new and more unique mind to be able to do this.

**Dr. Nassim Taleb** explains it this way, "**Antifragility** is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better." If you're measuring in such a way that every day you have an increased sense of winning or learning - never losing - it makes you antifragile. Being in the GAIN is being antifragile.

Being in the GAIN enables you to continually move forward, regardless of what happens. And not just move forward, but do so in a more engaged, informed, grateful and enhanced way.

## **Conclusion - Life, Liberty, and the Expansion of Happiness**

"There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self." **Ernest Hemingway**

Thomas Jefferson's formula of "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of happiness" makes happiness an unachievable ideal. Jefferson wasn't wrong in having ideals. He was wrong, however, in measuring his happiness against his ideals. When you're pursuing happiness, then you're measuring yourself against whatever you're pursuing. This is an absolutely terrible formula for happiness. Ideals are never something you ever actually achieve. Trying to achieve and ideal always puts you in the GAP.

**Ideals are like a horizon in the desert. They illuminate the path up ahead, and give you directions for setting achievable and measurable targets. But like the horizon, the ideal itself is immeasurable, unreachable, and constantly moving.**

Instead, always measure backward and measure your progress on where you were before. By measuring yourself backward, you get the following benefits:

- You liberate yourself from the GAP.
- You get off the hedonic treadmill of working harder and harder to reach an unreachable target.
- You stop comparing yourself and competing with anyone else but yourself.
- You appreciate where you truly are.
- You appreciate your progress.
- You appreciate everything in your life - gratitude.
- You see every experience as a GAIN.
- You're enabled and have the power to transform every experience *into* a GAIN.
- You never start from scratch again, but always with the momentum of all your GAINS behind you.
- You start each new day already HAPPY based on the happiness you achieved to this point, and you EXPAND that happiness every day because you know happiness is created by measuring your progress backward.

**How you see anything is how you see everything.** Happiness is your starting point, which you expand every time you create GAINS and measure your progress backward. You are liberated from wishing your life was different. You can be liberated from a non transformed past. You are further and freer than you were yesterday.

You've already made incredible GAINS in your life and you are so much further along than you even realize. If you've begun to truly fathom the power of being in the GAIN, you'll be immediately humbled. There will be a moment when it hits you just how far you've already come. You'll be shocked about all the low moments you've fought and passed through. You'll shake your head at all the miracles and lucky breaks that seemed to go your way. You won't even know what to say to all the people who loved you and sacrificed so much of themselves to even give you a chance.

Per **Dan Sullivan**, "You'll notice as you go forward that everything you want in your future has the qualities of being both more achievable and more measurable than the things you did in the past."

This is what being in the GAIN looks and feels like. You can have it right now. You can have it this instant. Happiness is right here, right in front of you.

The question is: Will you choose it?