

A photograph of a group of children playing in a courtyard. In the foreground, a young girl in a white sleeveless shirt and blue jeans is running towards the camera, smiling. She is surrounded by many pigeons, some of which are in flight. To her left, a boy in a white shirt and blue jeans is also running. To her right, two more children are visible, one in a striped shirt and red pants, and another in a pink shirt and grey pants. The background features a traditional building with a tiled roof and wooden structure. The overall scene is lively and captures a moment of childhood play in a public space.

# Disrupting the Rabblement

How to think for yourself, live your dreams, and piss off some zombies.

by Niall Doherty



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About the guy who wrote this

Hello. I'm Niall Doherty.

I was born and raised near Waterford City in Ireland. I'm writing this manifesto two hours away in Cork, having just returned from a three-year stint living and working in New Orleans (great place, you should visit).

I've abandoned the default lifestyle and am on a mission to make a living doing work I'm passionate about while traveling the world (I move to Spain in May). In the process, I hope to help other people think for themselves, live their dreams, and experience more of the fantasticness life has on offer.

I encourage you to question and challenge everything contained in this manifesto (except for this sentence), and indeed everything posted on my blog.

You can connect with me via Facebook and Twitter, or contact me directly via this page. You can also stop me in the street and say hey. I'll be the guy not wearing headphones.

Mise le meas,

- Niall



# The introductory bit

Welcome, fellow Rabble Rouser. Thank you for checking out my manifesto. I sincerely hope it serves you well.

The Disrupting the Rabblement concept is all about thinking for yourself, living your dreams, and pissing off some zombies. Elaborating a little on those points...

## Thinking for yourself

It's rare nowadays that people think for themselves. Throughout our lives, we're conditioned by our parents, our peers, our communities, our religions, our schools, our workplaces, the media, advertising, government... the list goes on and on. Many people neglect to stop and think deeply about what they really want to get out of life. They're too busy living up to external expectations, working jobs they don't like to buy things they don't need to impress people they don't care about.

I used to be one of those people, and I still am in many respects. I have to question my choices regularly to ensure I'm making them consciously. I'm engaged in a never-ending battle with my human propensity to shun responsibility, to be lazy, to take the easy way out.

Since you're reading this manifesto in the first place, I suspect you're already more thought-autonomous than most (congrats!). I aim to share with you what I've learned so you can take your thinking to the next level.

## Living your dreams

Growing up in Ireland, I somehow became obsessed with basketball and dreamed of one day becoming a season ticket holder for my favorite team, the New Orleans Hornets. At the age of 25, after much effort and persistence, I secured a work visa and moved to New Orleans. I attended every Hornets game I could, and thanks to a fan website I had started years before, was eventually able to land a media pass which allowed me locker room access and a free seat on the baseline each night. My dream had become my reality.

I've since outgrown my basketball obsession and moved on to the pursuit of a different dream, but I'm eternally grateful for my experience in New Orleans. Everyone has dreams, but few people live them. I've come to understand the difference between those who do and those who don't, and I'll share what I've learned in the coming pages.

## Pissing off zombies

The sad thing about thinking for yourself and working towards your dreams is that you'll inevitably run up against some zombies. And they will be pissed.

Zombies, you see, are people who neglect to think for themselves and make their own conscious choices. They have dreams every now and then, but no confidence in their ability to achieve them. And then you come along with your free thinking and firm belief in a world of opportunity. Your can-do attitude shines a disturbing light on the existence they're busy squandering. They'll resent you for this.



But that's okay. Thinking for yourself and living your dreams isn't all sunshine and rainbows. Zombies and other obstacles will be there to test your resilience. You can let them defeat you, or you can carry on regardless.

I recommend the latter.

# What is the Rabblement anyways?

The Rabblement is the status quo, the settling for mediocrity, the good enough as good enough, the average, the normal, the don't stand out, the don't make a scene, the resistance of the remarkable, the suppression of expression, the not thinking for yourself.

The Rabblement is alive and well all over the world. We have become a planet of zombies, moving through life on cruise control, never much questioning why we do what we do. We live out the dreams of advertisers and corporate fat cats. We are cogs in an unforgiving wheel, easily replaceable, easily forgotten.

I've written this guide to help you break free from the type of mundane life described above. It's no fun, and we don't have to partake. We're free to check out at any time and start thinking for ourselves, going our own way, doing work that matters, living a meaningful life, and leaving an inspiring legacy.

As I've already suggested, the Rabblement is everywhere. It's in our schools, it's in our jobs, it's in our food, it's in our entertainment, it's in our religion, it's in everything.

Given that, it may seem like there's no escape from it, but there is. However, escape is an ongoing process. You don't escape once and then you're done.

No, even after first breaking free you'll need to remain constantly alert to ensure you don't fall back in with the Rabblement, or create your own small version of it.

## *An ode to James Joyce*

Where does the term Disrupting the Rabblement come from? Well, let me tell ya...

The word rabblement is obsolete now. Rabble means the same thing, I just prefer the sound of the longer version. It comes from the title of an essay by the famous Irish novelist and poet James Joyce. In 1901 he wrote *The Day of the Rabblement* ([read it here](#)), in which he criticized the Irish Literary Theatre for abandoning the true and the good and surrendering to the popular will. The theatre started out claiming to be “the champion of progress, and proclaimed war against commercialism and vulgarity.” But gradually they abandoned high art and settled for lowbrow crowd-pleasers. That was the safe and secure route, one less likely to draw criticism. Joyce wished for a more progressive mindset.

# Know your Enemy

Let me give you a prime example of someone who has become property of the Rabblement. Let's call him Seamus (pronounced shay-mus for you non-Irish folks out there).

Seamus is awakened on a Tuesday morning by his alarm clock. After hitting the snooze button a couple of times, he reluctantly gets out of bed and hurries through a highly-processed fake-food breakfast. Seamus then commutes to work during rush hour, becoming agitated when traffic slows to a standstill or someone cuts in front of him. He turns on news talk radio to take his mind off the madness.

When he finally gets to work, Seamus pours himself some strong coffee and wonders what project he should get started on. Unable to decide, he spends the next hour checking and responding to email. Then he checks Facebook and ends up reading random blogs and message boards for a while. He gets called into a pointless meeting at eleven o'clock and zones out for the duration since he really doesn't need to be there and nothing important is being said.

Then it's lunch time so Seamus grabs his friend Sully from two cubes down and they head off to stand in line at Burger King. As they eat their non-degradable food-like substances, they talk about that stupid meeting and their idiot boss and what was on the front of the tabloids this morning.



Late back from lunch, Seamus decides he'd better get some real work done, so he launches into his TPS reports. He's just about getting into the flow and starting to make good headway when his phone rings. It's Jill from marketing, wanting to know if he's seen that email she sent him a few hours ago. Seamus says that he has, and was planning to reply to it later. Jill says no rush, just wanted to make sure you got it and hangs up. Seamus tries to bring his

focus back to his TPS reports, but thirty minutes later gets interrupted by Sully who wants to show him a video of a kid falling off a bus on YouTube. They watch it in Sully's cube, have a good chuckle and spend a few minutes talking about maybe going for a few pints and watching the match this weekend. The discussion ends when their boss walks past and raises a disapproving eyebrow. Seamus returns to his desk and tries once more to get his real work done, but abandons it altogether when a buddy from college starts chatting to him on instant messenger ("Any craic?").

Seamus finishes out the work day arseing around on Facebook, waiting anxiously for five o'clock so he can go home. He's excited when the little hand hits twelve and he rushes out the door to go sit in more traffic.



Once home, Seamus plonks himself on the couch with a box of cookies and throws on his big-screen TV. He ends up watching a sitcom. He knows all the punchlines because he's seen the episode several times before. His girlfriend rings and says she'll be a bit late coming over tonight since she's stuck at work. Seamus grabs his laptop and checks his fantasy football team. The news is on in the background, something about job losses, dead tourists and global warming.

Girlfriend finally comes over at eight. On the way, she stopped to pick up a frozen pizza and to play the lotto. They eat the pizza and watch the fifth season of *Lost*. She drinks wine, he has a few cans of Bud. Seamus falls asleep on the couch while Girlfriend shops for shoes online. She can't decide between three pairs so she buys them all. She can't really afford them, but she has a credit card.

They leave the couch and head to bed at around midnight. Seamus is now wide awake and feeling frisky, but Girlfriend is tired after a long day and promises another time.

Seamus lies awake until about two o'clock, rethinking his fantasy football team and wondering what shite he'll have to put up with at work the next day. At some point, he starts feeling a little sad about his life and wonders where all the joy went. This makes him uncomfortable so he turns on the almost-as-big-screen TV in the bedroom and soon falls asleep to some lady selling the best patio furniture ever.

Seamus dreams of becoming rich and buying a big house with a patio.

## **There are lots of people like Seamus out there.**

They've resigned themselves to thoughtless living, never coming to understand what they really want out of life. They go through the motions each day, delegate their thinking to bosses and governments and corporations who rarely have their best interests at heart. It's a sad and ultimately frustrating existence, and one we don't have to settle for.

### *Signs of the Rabblement*

It's fairly easy to know if someone has become the property of the Rabblement. There are many telltale signs. Examples:

- Watching TV regularly
- Eating lots of processed food
- Not reading actual books
- Working an unfulfilling job
- Buying lots of useless crap
- Not exercising regularly
- Obsessing about celebrities
- Lack of focus
- Not offending anybody

# Why we buy into it

Why do we fall into mediocrity so easily? Why do we settle for the default lifestyle?

We're conditioned from a very young age how to think and act, conditioned by society as a whole.

Some of this conditioning is right in your face. Billboards and television and the sides of buses tell us that we won't be happy until we buy this or that. Fat cats sit in big corporations figuring out how to make us think less and consume more. The banks want us in debt and the drug companies want us to get sick.

Other conditioning is more subtle and well-intentioned. We're told not to talk to the homeless person, he might be dangerous. Stop running around, you might hurt yourself. Don't trust your gut, it might get you in trouble. Stop dreaming big dreams, you're only setting yourself up for disappointment. We never hear those things outright, but the suggestion is always there, repeated over and over again by different people using different words.

The message we get from it all amounts to this: Don't take risks, don't be different, follow the rules.

We hear that message so many times as we grow up that we buy into it. Every now and then we may hear a conflicting message, a few inspiring words that suggest we don't have to live our lives the way other people expect us to, but

we let them get drowned out by the overwhelming noise of the Rabblement.

We rarely question it all because everyone else buys into it, too. Most people you meet have resigned themselves to a life of mediocrity. They don't believe they can be remarkable. They don't ask themselves what they really want out of life. They just go through the motions. Clock in, clock out, follow the rules, collect a paycheck. They feel threatened by anyone who doesn't do the same.

And because so many people are like that, it's easy for us to be like that, too. We all want to fit in, to be accepted. But to be accepted by the Rabblement, we have to pay a big price. We have to give up a large part of ourselves. We have to turn our back on our uniqueness. We have to suppress the art and creativity inside of us. We have to stop thinking and subscribe to popular opinion. This is what most people do, and it's why, as Henry David Thoreau observed, most people live lives of quiet desperation and go to their graves with their song still in them.

**But that doesn't have to be you.**

None of us start off settling for mediocrity. We're born fantastic, ready to be remarkable. As kids, we let our imagination run riot and the world seems full of possibilities. If something interests us, we go and interact with it directly. We're curious, we ask lots of questions, we let ourselves feel every emotion completely and then move on to the next thing. We're always present, always in the moment. We'll happily talk to our imaginary friend in the middle of the

supermarket. We don't care about the strangers looking at us when we pick our nose.

But as time goes on, doubts are planted in our minds, we become self-conscious, fear creeps in. We end up terrified of the big bad world and believe it's safer to blend in and conform.

Traditional schooling reinforces the message. Follow the rules and you get rewarded. Failure is bad. It's better to be average at everything than exceptional in one subject and sub-par in the rest. We're given the tools we need to succeed in high school, which in turn prepares us for college, which in turn prepares us for 9-to-5 jobs where we have to follow even more rules and not think too much for ourselves. Sit in meetings, get interrupted, put out fires, do work that a million other people could do, collect a steady paycheck, hate your life.

We stay in jobs we don't like so we can earn money to buy things advertisers say we need. We get overworked, we exercise too little, we eat shitty food, we seek out passive entertainment, we spend more money trying to protect an image of ourselves that society approves of. We get trapped, knowing there must be more to life, but afraid to turn away from the familiar to find out what the alternatives are.

Since you're reading this, you know that there's more to life than falling in line and settling for mediocrity. That's great, let's be friends. See, you're already better off than most. You may not be living the life of your dreams right now, but you've awakened to the fact that the dream is possible for you. In the next section, I'll share with you how to make it a reality.

### *Who's to blame?*

I may rail against big corporations, traditional institutions and outdated paradigms throughout this manifesto, but I want to be clear that we're as much to blame as anybody else for whatever unfortunate situations we find ourselves in. Viewing the problem as something external from ourselves is to surrender our power to be part of the solution. Not a good idea.

As some lad named Mahatma Gandhi once said, we must be the change we want to see in the world. It does us no good to sit around complaining and pointing fingers. Our time and energy will be better spent working to become the antidote for what ails us.

# How to break free of said Rabblement

Having defined the enemy and figuring out how we come to be stuck in the first place, how can we now go about making our escape?

Becoming aware of the Rabblement is a good first step. Most people never realize they're being brainwashed by modern society and that their choices are not their own.

So congrats on not being like that.

But you need more than just awareness to truly break free and start living life on your own terms. In this section, we'll fill in the gaps so you're better equipped.



## What you're really up against

Be forewarned that breaking free of the Rabblement is not for the faint of heart. There will be strong resistance to it, both internal and external.

Internally, you'll have to change old habits and abandon disempowering mindsets. You'll have to learn to ignore that voice in your head that tells you you're not good enough, you're not smart enough, that you should take the easy way out. You'll have to take frequent trips outside of your comfort zone, suffer numerous embarrassments and fight through regular periods of uncertainty. You'll have to learn that "no" doesn't mean "never," and persist until the universe concedes and you get what you want.

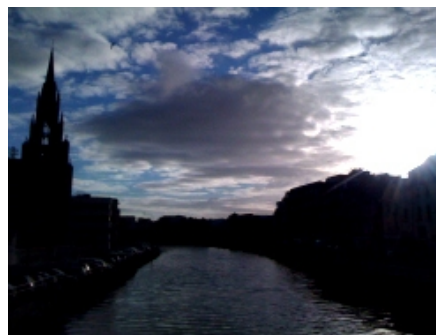
Externally, you'll have to put up with people belittling and criticizing your dreams. Some will see the choices you make as a judgement on them (I learned this when I gave up eating meat). Friends will say you've changed and start to feel uneasy in your presence (as will you in theirs). Society will deal you frequent setbacks and roadblocks and you'll have to continue on regardless. The majority will think you're weird and tell you to settle down, to stop thinking so much, to be like everyone else.

As they say, freedom isn't free. You have to be willing to pay the price.

## How to know if you're ready

Breaking free can be tough, and trying to escape before you're ready can leave you worse off than you are now.

The one thing you **MUST** do before you start your journey is take full responsibility for your own life. You cannot blame anyone else for what happens to you. Not the government, not your parents, not your ex-girlfriend. Some people may have done you wrong in the past, but it's entirely up to you how you react. You can let shitty circumstances hold you back, or you can dig deep and use them as motivation to keep going. Most people let adversity be their ruin, while a rare few see each adversity as a challenge to be overcome. It's entirely your choice which route to take.



Attitude is also of the utmost importance. A lot of people deliver half-assed effort in jobs they hate, telling themselves they'll work hard once they find a job they like. That's a trap. Just as people who can't save any money when earning 30k won't save any money when earning 40k, you can't just turn on good habits and work ethic. You have to develop those things, and there's no better place to start than where you are right now. As Robin Sharma would say, you need no title to be a leader. No matter your current situation, resolve to always give your best effort and maintain a

positive attitude.

A few other questions you should ask of yourself before setting out on this journey:

1. Why the hell am I doing this anyway?
2. Am I willing to endure potentially long periods of frustration and loneliness?
3. Do I accept that things may get worse before they get better?
4. Am I willing to face my fears?
5. Am I willing to sacrifice a few things I like to make more room for the things I love?
6. Am I willing to try new things, challenge assumptions and embrace change?
7. Can I handle being disliked and ridiculed, perhaps even by friends and family?
8. Am I capable of getting back up and trying again and again after inevitable failures?

You don't have to be supremely confident in your answers to the questions above. I know I wasn't. Just keep them in mind and know that you'll have to answer each one definitively at some point before you can be completely free.

Related blog post: [How to be more courageous \(hint: it's all about perspective\)](#)

### *There's no one right way*

There's no one right way to do anything. There's no one right diet, no one right religion, no one right type of employment. My own biases may sneak into my writing from time to time (vegan, baby!), but know that you must figure out what's best for you and walk your own path. What doesn't work for one person at one time in one place may work for another person at a different time in a different place.

Think deeply about what you really want to get out of life and let your choices be guided as such. As William Ernest Henley once wrote, you are the captain of your fate, the master of your soul.

Figure out happiness looks like for *you*, and steer your soul in that direction.

# Question Everything

If you only remember one thing from this manifesto, let it be this: Question everything.

Yes, *everything*.

Ask and keep asking. When you ask “Why?” look out for the following answers:

- Because I said so
- Because it’s always been done that way
- I don’t know
- Because everyone else is doing it
- \*shrug\*

People of the Rabblement fail to ask questions, and so they end up living their lives unconsciously.

Ever consider how many of your thoughts and beliefs are actually your own, and how many of them have been programmed into you?

Do you buy things because you really want them, or because the TV said you should? Do you subscribe to a particular religion because the doctrine resonates with you, or just because it’s easy access to community and a way to feel better about your impending death? Do you eat the foods you do

because that’s the diet you were raised on, or because it makes you feel strong and healthy? Do you have that job because you love the work, or did you resign yourself to wage slavery because everyone else was doing it?

If you were a white male born one hundred years ago, you likely would have been a racist wife-beating homophobe with more kids than you could handle. Why? Because that was acceptable back then. Society didn’t frown upon racism. Women served men or suffered slaps. Homosexuality was an abomination. Sex was only for making babies.

It all seems so ridiculous now, and you might think you would have known better if you lived in those times, but most likely you would have conformed just like everyone else. You would have subscribed to the same religion your parents subscribed to, dressed the same way your friends dressed, believed what the majority believed. Hey, I’m pretty sure I would have, too. The Rabblement was much stronger back then. Just ask James Joyce.



Now, think forward one hundred years. Our great grandkids will be reflecting on our thoughts and beliefs. You can bet that they’ll be amazed by how backwards we were, how small-minded, how stuck in our ways.

Or, maybe your great grandkids won't be amazed, because you didn't settle for the status quo, you didn't live a mediocre life. No, you thought for yourself, kept asking questions and stood up for what you believed in despite all the pressure to conform.

The best people in history kept asking questions and refused to settle for lazy answers like those listed above.

Nicolaus Copernicus questioned whether the Earth was really the center of the Universe. Mahatma Gandhi wondered why India wasn't autonomous. Martin Luther King Jr. asked why black Americans were second class citizens. Paris Hilton questioned the popular assumption that you need actual talent to be rich and famous.

Likewise, you should question the obvious and test your assumptions.



# Advice vs. Opinion

When you set out to do something remarkable (which you must if you want to break free of the Rabblement) you're likely to get all sorts of feedback from well-meaning people. This feedback can generally be divided into two categories: Advice and opinion.

Everyone has an opinion, and they'll gladly share it with you. Since I've started my own business, lots of people who have never even tried to start a business have given me their 2 cents on the topic. I've also heard from many people who have tried and failed to start a business. They'll often start by saying, "Let me offer you some advice..." but what they're really offering is an opinion. I'll usually be respectful and listen to what they say, but I don't take any of it to heart.

Advice, on the other hand, only comes from people who have already done what it is that you're trying to do. They've been there. They've done that. They've actually succeeded and so they can advise you how to do the same.

That's why I pay serious attention to the likes of Corbett Barr, Everett Bogue and Colin Wright. Those guys have achieved what I'm trying to achieve, and they share how they've succeeded on their respective blogs. I read every word they write, and have learned a lot from each of them.

Whenever you receive feedback, consider the source. Don't take relationship advice from the loneliest guy in town. Ignore the triathlon tips coming from the drunken hobo. Shrug off the business lesson given by the lifelong cube-dweller. Folks like that obviously don't know what it takes to succeed.

Listen only to people who do.

# Journaling

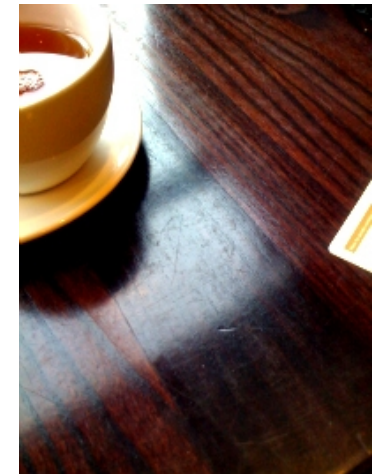
Journaling can be a great way to break free of social conditioning and figure out your own true thoughts on a subject. All you do is sit down and have a written conversation with yourself. Type out a question, then answer it as best you can. That usually leads to another question, and so you type another response. You continue like that until you achieve a sense of clarity (or until you get hungry, whichever comes first).

My conversations usually go one of two ways:

1. **Devil's Advocate** – Essentially, I interrogate myself, trying to poke holes in a theory or idea of mine to see if it stands tall or crumbles. I started doing this in college to find conceptual or design problems with websites I intended to build, before I actually built them.
2. **Personal Shrink** – If I'm feeling down about something, I act as my own personal psychiatrist, asking about the problem, what might have caused it, and how I can move forward. Whenever I do this, I feel like a weight has lifted off my shoulders.

Through these conversations I force myself to organize my thoughts. I drag them out of the fog of my mind and articulate them clearly in writing. That's a very powerful thing to do. I can also refer back to what I wrote if I ever need to recall how I arrived at a certain decision or came to a particular conclusion.

Try conversing with yourself and see where it leads. Most likely you'll gain some clarity and come to know yourself better.



# Overcoming fear

**“The absence of fear is not courage; the absence of fear is some kind of brain damage.” – M. Scott Peck**

Breaking free takes a lot of courage. You have to step outside your comfort zone repeatedly, resist social pressure and burn some bridges. You may also experience resistance and criticism from people you're close to. You'll have to deal with the fear of rejection, loneliness, change and failure. How do you handle this?

I realized a powerful truth a few years ago: **You don't overcome the fear then do the thing. You do the thing and then you overcome the fear.**

I waited until I was 22 years old before learning how to drive. I was scared, but I went ahead anyway, put myself out there on the road, learned by doing. Eventually the fear went away. Now I don't even have to think about driving. It's easy for me. There is no fear.

Some fear never fully goes away, but through practice you learn that fear doesn't have to be a roadblock. An example of this for me would be public speaking. When I first joined Toastmasters International, I was incredibly nervous whenever I got up to speak in front of my club, but I kept throwing myself up there. Many months and plenty of speeches later, I still get nervous, but I've learned that the world will not end if I stumble over a few words or lose my place. The fear hasn't gone away; I've just gotten better at handling it.

So if you're waiting for a time when you'll feel completely confident and fearless before taking a bold step, stop fooling yourself. That time will never come. Breathe deep and take that step right now. Tomorrow, the fear will have subsided.

If you need some help overcoming fear, I recommend you check out a recent project of mine called [Random Acts of Courage](#). Over the course of one week I issued myself 50 challenges, each one designed to push me out of my comfort zone. Read about how I fared, and resolve to try a few of the challenges yourself. If you attempt all 50 like I did, I guarantee that you'll be left flexing some serious courage muscles ;-)

# Embracing uncertainty

There's a certain fear that needs special mention here, and that's the fear of change. The Rabblement is scared to death of change, and so to truly break free, you must learn to embrace it.

The Rabblement loves the old and the familiar. People of the Rabblement go to the same holiday spots each year (if they leave town at all), cling to the same old stale jobs, watch the same old reruns of *Friends*, use the same tired approach in every relationship. They criticize and belittle anyone who steps too far out of the box, most often because such behaviour shines an unflattering light upon their own mundane, routine-filled lives.

What the people of the Rabblement refuse to accept is that change is inevitable. It happens whether we like it or not. Resistance to change is like a beach mouse resisting a tidal wave. Tough shit buddy, that thing's coming for you no matter how hard you fight it.

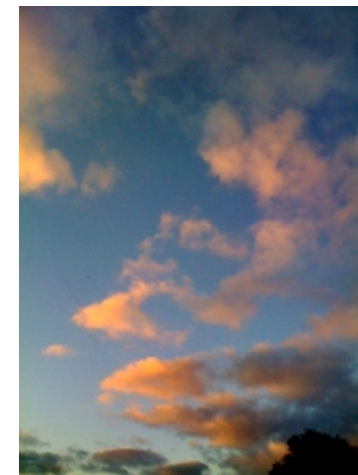
Since change is inevitable, the only intelligent response is to embrace it. You don't know what's coming for you, but you can choose to roll with it no matter what. See challenges as opportunities, adversity as growth, failure as educational.

If you're a bit of a control freak and find yourself terrified by uncertainty, you need to let go. Know that you can handle anything that comes your way. After all, you've handled everything that's come your way so far in life. I mean, you're still alive, right?

Fearing uncertainty is also a waste of time and energy. When you worry about the future, you're projecting forward to a moment that hasn't happened yet, which is utterly pointless. The only moment you have control over is the current one, so that's where your attention needs to be. If you're worried about an upcoming exam, the best thing you can do is start studying right now. If you're too busy thinking about that first date tonight, you might forget how to use stairs and bust your chin open, which can be very unattractive.

Instead of clinging to a desired outcome and worrying about everything going to plan, just set your intention, lay the foundation and then let the chips fall where they may. Be flexible and make the most of whatever situation you find yourself in. Abandon the black-or-white mindset and embrace the infinite shades of gray.

Related blog post: [When will you be happy?](#)





### *The dangers of labels*

The only label you need is you. You are not a catholic, a vegan, an accountant, a married woman, or any other label. You are not even your name. You are just you, and there will never be anyone quite like you ever again. Don't pigeonhole yourself. Don't box yourself in. Be whoever you want to be, labels be damned.

## Minimalism

One of the most effective tools I've found for breaking free of the Rabblement is minimalism. Minimalism isn't just about getting rid of all your possessions. You don't have to fit everything you own into a backpack, burn your money and hop a freight train to Alaska.

To me, minimalism is about prioritizing. You figure out what matters most to you in life, and then you eliminate or greatly reduce the time, money and attention you devote to everything else. Obviously, this requires you to think for yourself.

I won't write much about minimalism here, not because it's unimportant, but because there are plenty of great resources out there already if you want to learn more. Here are two I especially recommend:

- [The Art of Being Minimalist](#) by Everett Bogue -- Ev's ebook was my introduction to minimalism, and it blew my socks off. It originally cost \$17, but was taken off the market in February of 2011. [Contact me](#) if you want a free copy.
- [Unautomate Your Finances](#) by Adam Baker -- Minimalism applied to finances, and it works. This guide is also underpriced at \$17.

Related blog post: [What minimalism is NOT about](#)

# Owning your attention

Your attention is a limited resource and you should guard it appropriately. We live in a world that is always screaming for our attention. Advertising wants to be seen, people want to be noticed, e-mail wants to be answered, work wants to be done, food wants to be consumed, thoughts want to be thunk.

But what do you want? That's really the only question you need to ask, and your answer is where the majority of your attention should go.

I want to improve myself every day and help others do the same, so that's where most of my attention goes. I read books that help me learn and produce content that I believe will help other people. I don't watch television or aimlessly surf the web. I keep a clean working space and own few possessions so I'm not distracted by clutter. I practice meditation and yoga to improve my focus and gain better control over my thoughts and my health.

Too many people give away their attention for free, not realizing the cost of it. When you throw on the television and sit there absorbing whatever happens to be on, you're giving away your attention to TV producers. When you watch the news, you're giving away your attention to all the bad things that recently happened in the world. When you hang out with whoever happens to be available, you're giving your attention away to mindless chit-chat and meaningless banter.

I've found that giving up all kinds of passive entertainment to be hugely beneficial to me. I'm careful not to let my attention drift to just any old thing. There's no point worrying about things you can't control, spending money on things you don't need, hanging out with people you don't care for, reading books you're not interested in. You end up absorbing lots of useless information and feeling a little dead inside.

What if, instead of devoting your attention to those things, you devoted it to things you really enjoyed? You read books that you found deeply fulfilling and/or enjoyable, spent time with people who really inspired you, or vice versa. What if, instead of succumbing to the latest sales pitch from a high street store, you walked right on by to the only store you intended to go to in the first place?

I'll repeat myself because this is important: Your attention is precious, and you should guard it appropriately. Likewise, don't ever take the attention of other people for granted.

Related blog post: [Why you should stop watching the news](#)

### *Why you should stop watching TV*

Television has the perfect name. It's somebody else telling you their vision. But what's your vision? See, when you turn on the TV, you turn off your mind. It's passive entertainment, requiring little-to-no thought processing on your part. You zone out and let all kinds of unfiltered messages into your brain. Before you know it you're craving a McDonald's and Coke (thanks to advertising), feeling deeply unsatisfied with your current lifestyle (thanks to almost any TV show and more advertising), and fearing strangers (thanks to the evening news and an overabundance of crime dramas). You'll have also wasted a bunch of time and money for the privilege.

I advocate cutting television out of your life completely. Try ditching it for at least 30-consecutive days and see how much better off you are.

## Choosing your response

One of the best lessons I've ever learned came from a book written in 1946. The author, Viktor Frankl, was an Austrian psychiatrist who survived the Holocaust and went on to found logotherapy. In [Man's Search for Meaning](#), he recounts his experiences in the Nazi concentration camps. He writes of the guards taking everything away from the prisoners, all of their human freedoms, in an effort to crush their spirit and destroy their will. But Frankl came to the realization that there was one thing the guards could not take away: his freedom to choose his reaction to what was happening to him. As Frankl himself puts it:

**Between stimulus and response lies man's greatest power:  
the power to choose.**

Frankl went through a living hell and lost just about everyone he ever loved. He wasn't sure if he would ever make it out of there alive. But he refused to surrender that power to choose. He found meaning in his suffering. Lucky for a lot of people that he did, because he went on to help and inspire millions through his writings and teachings after the war.

Whenever you get upset by someone or something, you're giving that person/thing power over you. But you don't have to surrender that power. You can choose not to.

A story about the Buddha reinforces this point. There was a man who

constantly harassed and insulted the Buddha, throwing all sorts of verbal abuse at him. But the Buddha never seemed fazed by this. When someone asked why he didn't take offense, the Buddha replied...

**If someone gives you a gift and you refuse to accept it, to whom does the gift belong?**

Whether it's stubbing your toe in the morning, having your laptop stolen or getting laid off, you can choose your reaction. Who says you have to feel bad about such things? What if you just laugh it off, take it as a wake-up call or view it as an opportunity, the start of a new chapter in your life?

Now I'm not suggesting that you put your fingers in your ears and ignore the gravity of a life-altering situation (remember [the Stockdale Paradox](#)). But you can choose to use the hard knocks more like a springboard than a stumbling block. Lots of people can recall a turning point in their lives, an event that seemed disastrous at the time, but in hindsight proved to be the best thing that ever happened to them. Imagine if you started to look at everything "bad" that happens to you in that light, right then and there as it's happening.

Got laid off? Great. Now you get to be creative and resourceful in finding work that you truly love and will be fairly compensated for.

Develop that mindset. Choose your reactions and watch your world change for the better.

Related blog post: [When things go wrong](#)

## Letting go

As you know by now, the Rabblement won't let you go without a fight. It's got plenty of tricks designed to keep you from thinking for yourself, to keep you from breaking free. One such trick is getting you to commit to things you'd rather not commit to.

This is where you must learn to say NO.

I used to find myself committing to all sorts of crap, mostly because I was afraid to say no. I wanted to be a nice guy. I wanted to be liked. The problem though with taking on commitments you'd rather not take on, is that you end up disliking yourself. And you are the worst person to have not liking you.

I lived in an apartment complex in New Orleans for two years. Word spread among my neighbors that I worked with computers (as a web designer). Before long, I had old ladies knocking on my door asking me to come look at their printer or fix their wireless. Wanting to be a good neighbor, I always obliged, then would fumble around trying to fix hardware I knew little about before having to tell them to call a professional. So essentially I ended up wasting my time and theirs, but hey, at least I was a nice guy who did what he was asked, right?

Wrong.

The problem with taking on commitments like this is that you take time away from things that are really important to you. Trying to fix other people's IT



problems took time away from me hanging out with good friends or doing work that was meaningful to me.

Now I have NO as my default answer, so I can devote more of my time, energy and attention to what's really important to me. Some people get upset that I won't help setup their new webcam, but hey, I really want to focus on writing, so that's what I'm going to do.

Oh, and you can say no without being an asshole. You shouldn't have to lie. Never say you have a previous commitment if you don't. If you simply don't want to do something, you can always say, "I'm sorry, I'd rather not do that." Remember, a firm no is better than a half-assed yes. You'll come to regret the latter, hating yourself for not saying no in the first place and resenting the other person for ever asking.

**"The only man who is really free is the one who can turn down an invitation to dinner without giving an excuse." - Jules Renard**

Letting go also applies to relationships. If you have people in your life that are holding you back, keeping you stuck, let them go. They're not doing you any favors, and you're not doing them any either. Let them go to make room for better relationships in your life. The break up will also give the other person the opportunity to find someone more compatible.

If you can cut the cord quick with such toxic relationships, do so. It can be as simple as saying something like, "I really need to surround myself with people who support me in what I'm trying to do, and I don't feel I'm getting that from you. So I believe it's better that we don't spend so much time together anymore."

Other relationships you may just be able to let fade out. Just gradually reduce how much time you spend with the person until you hardly see them anymore. Sometimes this is the better approach, but I generally recommend being clear with someone up front, letting them

know that the relationship isn't working for you and you want out. There may be some immediate tension, but in the long run you can feel good that you confronted the issue and there's a reasonable chance that your honesty will be appreciated.



# How to deal with Resistance

As you journey towards freedom, you'll inevitably encounter resistance. The normal response to resistance is to stop and turn around. Someone doesn't approve of what you're doing, so you stop doing it.

The thing to realize is that nothing you do will ever be good enough.

There will always be critics. There will always be detractors. Someone will always be disappointed in you, angry with you, belittling everything you've accomplished.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the greatest men who ever lived. He had a lot of critics during his lifetime, constant opposition to what he was trying to accomplish. He embodied truth, love and non-violence, and was assassinated for his troubles.

Martin Luther King is a similar story. Same with that dude named Jesus from way back.

Today, you can look to the sports world for easy examples. While Michael Phelps was busy performing unprecedented Olympic feats in 2008, internet trolls were busy criticizing his diet. He should be eating wholewheat bread instead of white bread they yelled from their keyboards.

Really? I think the white bread worked just fine.

Kobe Bryant reinvented himself as a team player to win the last two NBA championships. People hate that guy. Lance Armstrong dominated the sport of cycling after beating cancer, yet the head of the Tour de France said Armstrong was embarrassing the tour when he returned from a four-year absence in 2009.

So if the best people in the history of the world and today's top sports stars can't please everyone, there's not much hope for you and me.

But I see this as a good thing. Here's why: Since nothing we do will ever be good enough for everyone, we can view criticism as inevitable and just roll with it rather than letting it get us down. As long as you feel you're giving your best to the world and living your values, that's all the validation you need.

I used to crumble at the first sign of resistance, but now I see it as evidence that I'm on the right path. Think of it like this: **If there's no resistance, nobody cares what you're doing.** When people start speaking up about your work, then you know you're doing something that matters.

Also, don't be tempted to dumb down or tame your message to appease certain people. Do that, and you might receive less criticism, but you'll also lose your true supporters who loved what you were saying and how you were saying it in the first place. When you try to please everyone, you end up pleasing no one.

So when you start out, take some time to consider who your message is aimed at. Who are you trying to please. Become very clear on that. And then take some time to figure out who your message is *not* aimed at.

I've gone through that process for this manifesto. Some characteristics I've identified for my target audience: action-oriented, open-minded, adventurous, positive, curious. And here are a few characteristics of the people I'm not writing for: disrespectful, negative, materialistic, begrudging, irresponsible.

The above doesn't mean that I reject all feedback from those who I perceive to be in the latter category. Some of it can be helpful. But usually the type of feedback coming from such people doesn't help at all. They'll list reasons why you suck and why you're wrong, and offer no explanation as to why they feel that way. They're stuck in Zombieland, and they want you right there with them.

Resistance can also come a little less directly. Rather than confront you, people will start turning their backs and ostracizing you from their world. This is actually a good thing. The type of people who are willing to drop you so fast are not the type of people you should have in your life anyway. If you were to stop being so remarkable so as to keep them around, you'd be preventing other, more rewarding relationships from coming into your life.

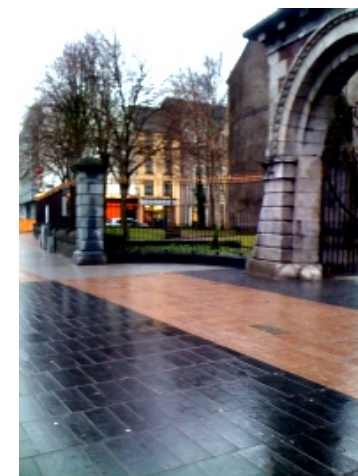
## Test Assumptions

The Rabblement stays strong because people make assumptions about what they can and can't do. You can't talk to that attractive girl, you can't be too ambitious, there's no way you can get a good job in this economy without a college degree.

Assumptions such as these need to be tested. They're often wrong.

There are all sorts of assumptions about plant-based diets. When I decided to do a 30-day trial of vegetarianism back in 2009, I assumed that it would be difficult, that I would need to take supplements, and that hippy chicks would begin to find me irresistible. All those assumptions proved to be false, but I never would have known that had I not dived in and experimented for myself.

There is something called confirmation bias that we humans are prone to. I've seen this with a friend of mine recently. He has very negative associations with women, believing that they're all witches and bitches who were put here on earth solely to torment him. He somehow manages to confirm this assumption with every interaction he has with a female. If a girl doesn't call him back, it's par for the course. If he tries and fails to hit on a lady at the bar, his theory is



confirmed. We were in a pub in Cork a few weeks back and the barmaid refused to serve him because he was caught trying to sneak a can of beer in the door. Of course, my friend didn't see this as a simple matter of cause and effect, but yet more evidence that women were all out to get him. He had made an assumption, and he sought and found confirmation. He felt validated.

If my friend could somehow flip a switch and begin trying to disprove his theory, he'd be much better off. Rather than seeking out and focusing on instances where he feels he's been treated unfairly by a woman, he could seek out and focus on instances where women are really nice to him. This would shatter his world view, and he'd be all the better for it.

Where do our assumptions come from? Usually from our own limited experience or from the stories of friends or from the media. Before I moved to New Orleans in 2007, I read news stories about it being the murder capital of America, and a friend there had told me about the time he got mugged at gunpoint right outside his home in a nice part of town. I remember being hesitant to go out after dark, and when I did walk the streets at night I made sure to stick to the big, well-lit areas and hide my money in my shoe. But as I talked to more people about life in New Orleans, I learned that crime rarely happened outside of the ghettos, and I met many people who kept their cash in their pockets as they took shortcuts home along dimly lit streets. I started doing the same and never caught so much as a whiff of trouble.

People make assumptions all the time to let themselves off the hook. *It's not as easy for me to lose weight because my metabolism is different. I'm terrible at remembering people's names. I don't have what it takes to succeed in business. I couldn't live with only three pairs of shoes!*

Actually, you can. You can do all those things, but only if you're willing to let go of old paradigms and test your assumptions. **Don't cling too closely to your beliefs. Many of them will eventually be proven wrong if you let them.**

Many people fail to test their assumptions due to fear. They have a certain belief about how the world works and it's safe and familiar. If that assumption were to be proven wrong, such people would feel lost and uncomfortable. The way around this is to be curious. Let your curiosity overrule your fear. Instead of thinking, *I could never ask for a raise*, think to yourself, *I wonder what would happen if I ask for a raise?* Make a game of it, test the boundaries. And don't worry so much about ending up in an awkward situation. There's very little you can't bounce back from, and it's better to ask forgiveness than permission.

Related blog post: [Curiosity vs. Fear](#)

# Experimentation

Closely related to testing assumptions is experimentation. A sure-fire way to grow and expand is to constantly try new things. Drop in on a Coopera class, take an improv comedy course, see what happens when you ask for what you really want. There is no failure, only feedback that you can use to make better decisions going forward.

I used to be terrified of experimentation. I wanted to stick to my safe and familiar routine. I remember a good friend of mine invited me to his 21st birthday party an hour away from where I was living, and I turned him down because it was too much of a break from the routine, the party was too far away, I wouldn't know enough people there. Nowadays I don't think twice about such an invitation. I jump at the chance to meet new people, discover new places, shake up my routine. I've come to understand that **excessive routine is the enemy of growth**.

I learned to love experimentation by taking a big leap back in 2004. I was working in a dead-end job that I didn't enjoy, so I went abroad to work in the US for a year. The jobs I got in America were no better than the one I had in Ireland, but suddenly everything was an

adventure, and I was more comfortable experimenting in social situations since I was in a new environment. Move 3,000 miles from home and you end up trying things you wouldn't try at home, talking to people you wouldn't otherwise talk to.

If you find yourself stuck in a rut and in need of some adventure, I highly recommend taking the leap and going traveling. Turn your whole life into an experiment. Trust me, it's a lot more fun that way.



## Build a support system

You may need to sever some ties and kill unhealthy relationships to help you break free, but that doesn't mean you need to go it alone. In fact, going it alone is generally a bad idea.

I went to Las Vegas last year to attend [Steve Pavlina](#)'s fourth Conscious Growth Workshop. Over the course of the weekend, Steve had us attempt dozens of power and courage exercises. For example, we were asked to go out in public and flirt with strangers, ask for free drinks at the bar, sing loudly as we walked down a busy street, and so on. When Steve first suggested we try such things, nobody in the workshop felt very confident that they could successfully complete all the exercises.

And it's likely we would have all failed if not for one thing: rather than going out and attempting the exercises individually, we split up into groups of three. Each person in the group had a turn taking the lead, while the other two offered encouragement. The results were phenomenal. With that support system in place, fear took a back seat and everyone was able to complete the entire list of exercises. As Stevie P explained when we got back to our seats, **environment is stronger than willpower**.

Another example to help illustrate this: There's a lad named Christy who wants to be basketball star. His core group of friends are video game junkies who like to gather several times a week for drunken Halo marathons. Meanwhile, across town, there's another lad named Damo who also wants to be a basketball star. All his friends are addicted to basketball and play intense

### *Nobody's perfect*

A word of caution about building a support system: be careful not to exclude people from your circle because they're not *exactly* who you're looking for. Accept that nobody's perfect. If you're holding out for an infallible friend or mentor to come along, you're going to be waiting a long time.

Related blog posts:

- [Learning from everyone](#)
- [Finding like-minded people in the real world](#)

pickup games almost every day.

If you had to put money on one of those guys, Christy or Damo, actually becoming a basketball star, who would you pick?

Obviously, you'd pick Damo. He has the better support system in place. If you also knew Damo has a habit of seeking out better players to play and compete with, you'd be even more confident in your choice, because you understand that one of the fastest ways to learn and improve at something is to hang with the big dogs; they'll drag you up to their level.



And so it is with virtually everything. If you want to become self-employed, there's no sense in spending all your time with wage slaves. Seek out some respected entrepreneurial types instead. If you want to become a successful artist, hang out with successful artists. If you want to improve your social skills, step away from your socially awkward friends and cozy up to some extroverts.

It's your life, and you get to choose who you spend your time with. I recommend spending it with people who help you become the best you can be.

This doesn't mean you have to sever old relationships completely. I stay in touch with many old friends from my college days even though we no longer have much in common and their goals (if they have any) are very different to mine. But we still have mutual respect and enjoy each other's company from time to time.

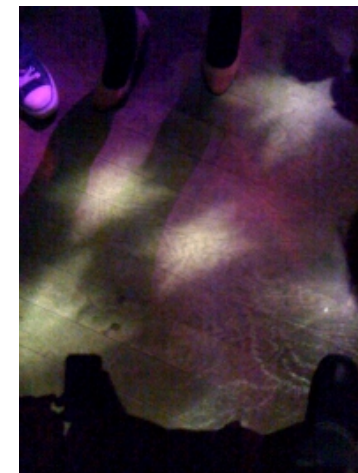
### *Alone time*

I know, I know. I've been busy espousing the virtues of building a support system and encouraging you to surround yourself with like-minded people, but I also want to emphasize the importance of alone time. I agree with M. Scott Peck, who once noted that individuals in a group have a natural tendency to forfeit their ethical judgment to the leader, and believed that this tendency should be resisted. As such, allow yourself regular periods of isolation so you can breathe deep and figure out your own thoughts.

Now, **how do you go about building your new support system?** Here are a few ideas:

1. Attend conferences and workshops on a topic you're interested in. If you're all into the metaphysical stuff, be at the next related gathering.
2. Join a meetup group. If you have a specific interest, [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) probably has a nearby group for you. If not, you can create your own. I've used Meetup.com to find meditation partners, big thinkers, Law of Attraction practitioners, hot Asian chicks in bathing suits, and many other people I wanted in my life.
3. Speak your mind. If you put yourself out there and let people know what you really want, there's a better chance you'll get it. As a bonus, you'll also repel small-minded people who feel uncomfortable around straight forward types. I've put myself out there by speaking regularly at Toastmasters, and also via online tools such as Facebook and blogging. In the coming months, I'll be attempting to get on national TV and radio so I can speak my mind and attract more people with similar goals and attitudes.
4. Seek out mentors. If you see someone with the type of life or skills you desire, go ask them if they can give you some advice. Most people will be flattered that you consider them an expert on the subject and will be glad to help. (As the yin to that yang, be willing to assist anyone who comes to you for help).

5. Online connections. There's no substitute for meeting people in real life, but if that proves difficult for you, seek out help online. Join a message board or start a blog. Post your goals and ask readers to help you stay accountable.
6. Seek introductions. If you're looking to surround yourself with successful business people, ask your existing friends who is the most successful business person they know, then request an introduction. You'll find that people are more willing to meet and share with you if you have a mutual friend.
7. Join [Couchsurfing](https://www.couchsurfing.com). Even if the thought of hosting strangers or crashing on foreign couches doesn't appeal to you, your local CS message board is a great place to connect with friendly, open-minded people. Just make sure you state clearly in your profile what kind of people you like to surround yourself with.



# Be playful

A sure-fire way to piss off the zombies is to have tons of fun as you chase your dreams and achieve big goals. Learn to look at the world with smiling eyes. Zombies will recoil in horror at your playfulness, because life is supposed to be dull and miserable and your playful behavior is like a stake through their heart (or however you kill zombies). Non-zombies will be playful right back.

I'm learning to approach each scary situation as a game to be enjoyed. When I do, the fear evaporates and I usually receive a positive outcome.

I find this to be especially true with flirting. When I go in thinking, "How can I impress this girl?" things usually don't go so well. But when I go in thinking, "How can I have some fun here?" everything tends to flow much easier and I often end up making an impression without even trying.

If this concept is entirely alien to you, I advise taking an improv comedy class. I did an 8-week course a few months back and the world soon began to feel like my own personal playground. I learned how to see everything through a comedic lens, finding humor and joy in even the dullest, most insignificant things.

My improv experience also taught me how to trust myself creatively, to the point where I could eventually step out on stage in front of a crowd of people, with no script and no idea of what was about to happen, and somehow build a hilarious scene with a teammate.

To achieve this you have to give up your attachment to your identity and allow yourself to create. **You are not your past. You can forget who you are and reinvent yourself at any moment.**

I believe it was Tony Robbins who said the following...

**Don't just ask yourself, 'How can I achieve my goal?' Ask yourself, 'How can I achieve my goal, and have fun in the process?'**

Related blog post: [A cure for zombies: Talk to strangers](#)

# How to handle all that new-found freedom

If something inside you clicked while reading the previous two sections, and you've come to realize that you're not living the life you really want, I offer you my congratulations. Just that realization is one of the biggest steps you'll ever take towards freedom.

In my experience, it's also the hardest one.

To take it, you have to admit to yourself that your current situation sucks, and you have to believe that you have what it takes to make it not suck. Those aren't easy realizations to come to. We naturally resist change, and we like to pretend that things are better than they are, that people who seem better off are liars or cheaters or don't have a conscience. But, as you know, none of that is true. What those people have is a different attitude and different expectations. They believe they can create their own reality, rather than settling for the one they grew up in or fell into.

I'm hoping you're at that point now. If so, take a bow. That's a big deal, and I'm excited for you.

But what comes next? Now that you've embraced a freedom mindset, how do you move forward?

# The world is yours

**“Rise up and take the power back, it’s time the fat cats had a heart attack.” - Muse, Uprising**

The Internet has changed everything, and this is good. Power is shifting away from corporations and to individuals. Go back twenty years, and if you wanted to succeed at pretty much anything you first had to get permission from the fat cats. The author had to win over the publisher. The musician had to impress the record label. The stand up comic had to hope a talent scout would be in the audience at the basement bar some night. That guy who produced delicious homemade granola bars had to suck up to the grocery store for shelf space.

Today, thanks to the Internet, the author can easily start a blog and self-publish an e-book. The musician can upload music and build a massive following. The stand-up comic can put her best routines on YouTube and have them viewed by millions. And the granola guy can sell bars from his website and have them shipped directly to customers.

Because of the web, we don’t have to wait for someone to give us permission to succeed anymore. The playing field has been leveled. The middlemen have become unnecessary, the gatekeepers are dead.

If you’re an information worker, there’s even more good news: You can now do your job from anywhere. You no longer need to be chained to a desk from 9-to-5 every day. That concept is archaic. It no longer makes sense in a world where technology can keep us so connected.

Let me give you a few examples of how people are leveraging the power of the Internet to make a living doing what they love, without relying on the permission of fat cats.

1. Everett Bogue quit his soul-crushing day job in NYC with just \$3k in the bank and started writing online about minimalism. He steadily built an audience and released some e-books. Eight months after leaving New York, he was pulling in more money than ever while working just 2 hours per day.
2. Zoe Keating uses nothing but a cello, a laptop and a few foot pedals to create her own orchestra. She’s built up a massive following via online social networks, and her self-released albums have sold over 35,000 copies.
3. Leo Babuata once published a book the traditional way. He didn’t much like the process, so he self-published his second book online. He was able to produce exactly what he wanted, without having to make compromises. He’s also busy raising six kids.

4. John T. Unger has been making a full-time living as an artist since 2000, selling firepits, firebowls, and other art made from recycled materials via his website.
5. Benny Lewis loves languages and travel, so he roams the globe learning foreign tongues and teaching other people how to do the same via his blog. He created a comprehensive language learning guide that kicks ass and supports his vagabond lifestyle.

Those are just a handful of examples. There are thousands more. And if you can't find someone making a living online doing the type of work you're passionate about, congratulations; you can be the first ;-)

### *Look after number one*

A common concern I hear: *Isn't it selfish to pursue your dreams? Won't I have to abandon my family/friends/responsibilities to do that?*

Listen, you can't be at your best unless you're happy and living a fulfilling life. Making sacrifices for others is fine if it's what truly makes you happy, but don't do it just because you feel obliged to. You won't be much help to anyone if that's your main motivation. You'll end up resenting those very people you made sacrifices for because you never got to live the life of your dreams.

To quote Howard Thurman:

**Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.**



# Doing work you're passionate about

Too many people have resigned themselves to mediocre performance in jobs they don't like. They are cogs in the machine. One could die tomorrow and there would be somebody new and equally unmotivated taking their place within a week.

Those who break free have found a way to express themselves through their work. They love what they do, and they do it to the best of their ability. They see their work as an exciting challenge, they often lose all sense of time while engrossed in it, and they deliver lots of value to others.

How do you find work like this? You already know the answer: follow your passion. If there's something you love to do, focus your attention there, and find the sweet spot where you can do that and provide value to other people. (And as long as you can provide value, the money will come.)

If you have yet to find your passion, below are some discussion points that might help. Journal your answers and see what you come up with.

- What have been the proudest moments of your life? Try doing more of the things that got you there.
- What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail (and you didn't work for BP)?
- What disturbs you most about the world? How can you be part of the solution?
- What do you like to do on holiday or in your free time?
- What kind of work do your heroes do?
- What scares and excites you at the same time?

Please don't write off any idea because it might take lots of time and effort for it to come to fruition. That time will pass anyway so you might as well invest it, and if you're on the right track and keep a positive attitude you'll find that you enjoy the hard work required to get where you want to be.

Related blog post: [Finding your life purpose](#)

# Achieving complete autonomy

This will be much easier to do if you're self-employed.

You may not feel ready for self-employment right now, just like I wasn't ready for it three years ago, but keep it in mind as a long term ideal. When you're completely autonomous in your work, you get to spend more time on projects that excite you, and you can put more of your own personality into your work. It's also much easier to build a personal brand, which eventually can lead to you getting paid just to be yourself. You'll have more freedom to experiment and to structure your days in such a way that you can do your work when you're feeling most productive.

Just be careful to check that you're ready before diving headlong into self-employment. You may want to refer back to [How to know if you're ready](#) before taking the leap.

**"I think when people say they dread going into work on Monday morning, it's because they know they are leaving a piece of themselves at home." - Tony Hsieh**

Society will tell you that you need a job. But you really don't. You do need to work, but you don't need a job. A typical job involves buying into the morals and values of a larger entity and abiding by a whole set of rules so you'll get a regular paycheck. This can be fine, but more often than not people have to compromise some part of themselves at their job. They can't just be who they are. They may have to dress a certain way, bend over backwards for mean people, work an inflexible schedule, feel constantly rushed and suffer repeated interruptions.

Society will tell you that the popular alternative to having a job, that being self-employed, is inherently risky. You need lots of business experience, plenty of investment capital and plans out the wahzoo. All that was once true (maybe), but not anymore. Thanks to the Internet, you can now start a very small, low-risk, low-overhead business in a matter of weeks and build it up steadily whenever you have time to spare. You don't even need to be an Internet wiz to make it work. You just need a good dose of passion and persistence.

How exactly do you go about creating your own small online business? I can't tell you, because it's something I'm still working on myself. I'm not going to pretend to be an expert, but I can tell you that there are lots of people out there doing it, people just like you and me. They don't have anything that you or I don't have or can't learn.

As I'm writing this paragraph, I've been working for myself for over a month now. I saved up a whole bunch of money (minimalism and house-sitting helped in this regard), quit my job and took the plunge. I've gone all in to see if I can make a living working for myself online. Other people prefer to keep their day job and try build something on the side. That's fine, too. You're the best person to decide which approach is right for you.



This manifesto is part of my business. The idea is to provide a helpful guide to people who are unsatisfied with their current situation and know there must be more to life than just swimming along with the current of status quo and feeling unfulfilled at the end of

every day. I'm offering this guide free in the hope that it will spread far and wide. A month after this is published, I'll publish a helpful non-free product and hopefully readers will feel inclined to check it out, based on how helpful they found this guide.

I also have several other ideas for income generation. I'm trying lots of different things and seeing what works. My approach is two-fold:

1. Do work I love to do and help others in the process.
2. Solve my own problems and monetize the solutions.

I'll be reporting frequently on [the blog](#) how these strategies are working for me. I'll also be posting regular interviews with people who are already making a living online, picking their brains to see what I can learn from them.

## Letting your art out

Go find your inner artist and set him (or her) free. Don't consider yourself an artist? Well, you are. Believe it.

Art can be many things. Writing, conversation, flirting, yoga, surfing, investment banking... all those things can be considered art because you can use those outlets to express your true self. For me, art is writing an epic blog post or building a kick-ass website. For my brother, art is building a masterful staircase. For someone else, art might be coaching a great basketball game, delivering a great speech, or cooking an enjoyable meal.

It's possible to develop an autotelic personality (read [Flow](#) for more on this) and learn to enjoy even the most mundane of tasks, but to really achieve that flow state you also need to immerse yourself in whatever art resonates with you, whatever it is that you're passionate about.

Related blog post: [Cultivating Flow \(or, How to Let Your Art Out\)](#)

## Helping people

The tricky part about doing work you're passionate about is finding that sweet spot where people are willing to pay real money for the value you provide. I believe there is a point of convergence, that you don't have to choose between helping people and doing what you love. In fact, anything other than a healthy balance of those two things is unsustainable.

That's not to say that everything you create needs to earn you money. Not everything you do has to provide value to someone else either. Art for art's sake or as a means of private self-expression is fine, knock yourself out.

But to succeed in this new world we live in, you're going to want to provide as much value to other people as possible. Give them the best of you. Solve their problems. Strive to leave every single person better off than you found them. (Note: that last bit isn't actually possible, since the world is full of self-destructing zombies. Still, hold that intention and do the best you can.)

**“You will get all you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want.” -- Zig Ziglar**

# Epilogue (even though there's more after this)

I see too many people these days waiting for a miracle. They want to be handed the perfect job. They want their perfect partner to come over and tap them on the shoulder. They want to buy a cheap ticket and win a million.

While such people wait passively for their prayers to be answered, they sit back and accept whatever the world throws at them, rarely questioning authority, suppressing their own genius, going with the flow. They become property of the Rabblement, mired in mediocrity, stuck on automatic.

These people are wasting their lives. I can't say for sure if they die filled with regret and wishing for a do-over, but I know I would if I lived such a life. Since you're reading this, I assume you would, too.

The world does not reward those who sit idly by. The spoils go to those few crazy heretics who dare to think for themselves. They dig deep and find the guts to chase their dreams. They abandon the safe, secure and ultimately forgettable route, opting instead to take that road less traveled, the one that's a little more difficult and uncertain, but promises adventure and fulfillment. That's where the best memories come from.

I wish you all the best on your uncertain adventure. Please keep thinking for yourself, chasing after your dreams, and pissing off dem zombies.

**"Nobody succeeds beyond his or her wildest expectations unless he or she begins with some wild expectations" - Ralph Charell**

# The bit where I acknowledge people

First, I'd like to acknowledge you, the reader. Thank you for taking the time. I hope this manifesto has positively affected your life in some way.

I'd also like to make note of several people who have helped me immensely over the years, whether they know it or not. They are listed in the right column.

And finally, thank you to Tim of [Hazy Sun Images Ltd.](#) for providing the cover image of the kids and the pigeons. It's a metaphor, see.

- [Everett Bogue](#), for introducing me to the concept of minimalism and for demonstrating how a regular guy can break free of the 9-to-5 shackles and make a living doing work that matters.
- Tim Ferriss, for igniting within me an entrepreneurial spark I never knew existed. I read [The 4-Hour Workweek](#) back in the Summer of 2008 and nothing has been the same since.
- Chris Guillebeau, for being one of the nicest guys on the Internet, and letting me know that I don't have to live my life the way other people expect me to. For any aspiring online entrepreneurs out there, I highly recommend reading through the archives over at [The Art of Non-Conformity blog](#) for some free-but-priceless education.
- [Steve Pavlina](#), for opening my mind to a whole range of new ideas and showing me the benefits of experimental living. I'm also grateful for the amazing weekend I spent in Las Vegas attending his Conscious Growth Workshop, and all the legendary people I met there.



# Resources (or how to make me rich)

I've linked to several resources throughout this manifesto. I'm careful to only recommend material that I've personally read and have found to be of significant value. Where possible, I've used affiliate links for those resources, so if you buy anything via my links, know that some of the proceeds will go towards supporting my work. That said, I urge you to think long and hard before buying anything. Don't just spend money aimlessly. Consider what return you're likely to get for each investment. Do you believe it's worth it?

For your convenience, to the right you'll find a list of the affiliate links contained in this manifesto. If you don't live in the United States, you should be able to find the Amazon.com books I have listed on your regional Amazon site or in a local bookstore.

For more recommended reading, please [follow this link](#).

- [The Leader who had No Title](#) by Robin Sharma (Amazon.com)
- [The Art of Being Minimalist](#) by Everett Bogue (no longer available online; [contact me](#) for a free copy)
- [Unautomate Your Finances](#) by Adam Baker
- [Man's Search for Meaning](#) by Viktor Frankl (Amazon.com)
- [People of the Lie](#) by M. Scott Peck (Amazon.com)
- [Language Hacking Guide](#) by Benny Lewis
- [Flow](#) by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- [The 4-Hour Workweek](#) by Tim Ferriss (Amazon.com)

# Disclaimer thingy

I wish to make something very clear:

Everything you've read in this manifesto is up for discussion. I am not any kind of expert or guru, I don't have all the answers, and I'm sure I'll be proven wrong on many of the points I make in these pages (probably by myself, given enough time). If you take exception to anything I have written, please consider the advice of Bruce Lee:

**"Absorb what is useful, discard what is not, add what is uniquely your own."**

I write these words not because I lack confidence in the information contained in these pages, but because I've come to realize that nobody can decide what is right for you better than you can. You are ultimately responsible for your own life. There's no way around it.

Think for yourself, trust your gut, do the best you can.

# How to be my best friend

If you enjoyed this manifesto, I'd love if you could three things for me...

1. **Spread the word** – Share the link to [the download page](#) on Facebook, Twitter, or anywhere else you think it might find appreciative eyes. Also feel free to email copies to your friends, enemies and indifferents.
2. **Get in touch** – [Contact me via this page](#). Let me know your thoughts on the manifesto. I'd love to hear which points you found to be especially helpful, which need clarification, and what else I might be able to help you with.
3. **Take action** – I'd rather not have a passive audience, so please put the information you read here to good use. Go do something remarkable. Everything else can wait.

# And finally...

If you've enjoyed this manifesto, you may want to check out the online course I put together. It's all about leveling up your self-confidence and personal empowerment. For the price of one cup of coffee per week, you get access to everything I know about kicking fear's ass. There's also a 100% money-back guarantee, so you've got nothing to lose by giving it a shot.

Check it out by clicking the banner below...

