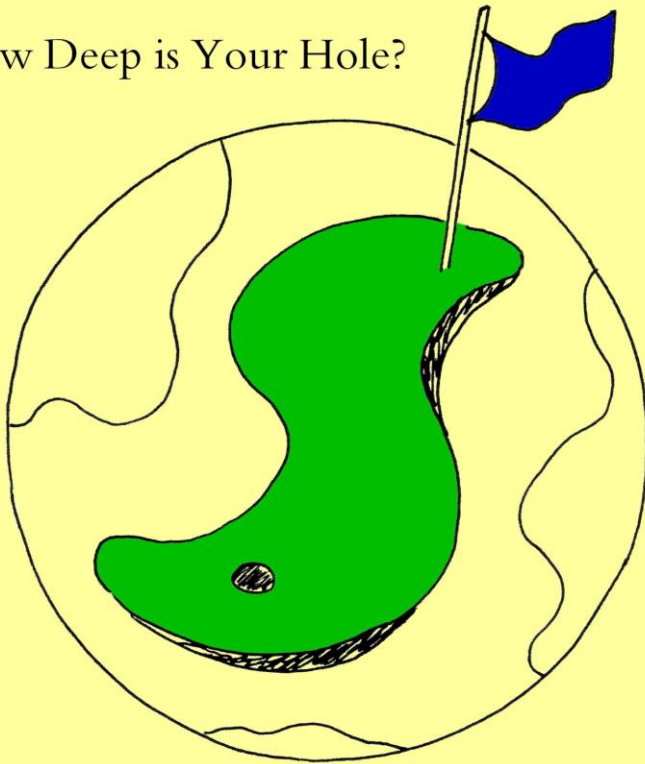


SOUL PLANET

*An Explorer's Guide
to Overcoming Fear*

How Deep is Your Hole?



Written and Illustrated by
Ivee Olivares

www.Pure-Inspirational-Thoughts.com

SOUL PLANET: An Explorer's Guide to Overcoming Fear
How Deep is Your Hole?

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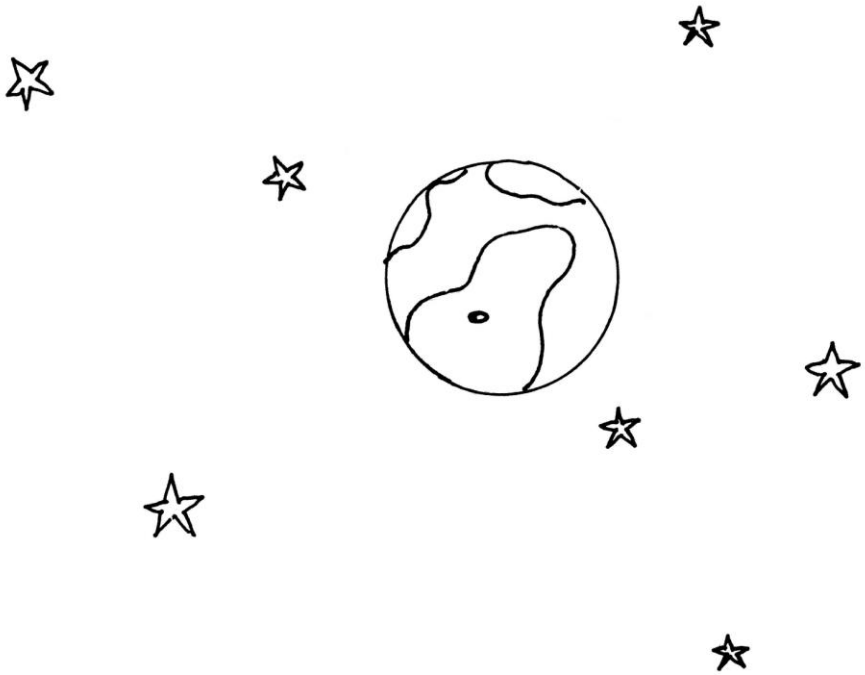
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*For my wonderful parents,
Nena and Totit Olivares,
on what would have been
their golden year together.*





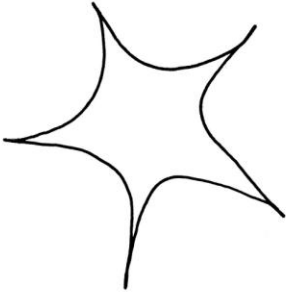
In a galaxy not far away—

In fact, in the system of stars, dust and gas surrounding you right now is a planet.

This is a dynamic planet, teeming with life. It revolves around a sun that gives it heat and light. In this planet, organisms grow and multiply, adapt and create. But for one particular inhabitant, let's name him, Jim, nothing much seems to happen at all. For Jim, minutes turn pleasantly to hours, hours to days and days to years. Each year feels pretty much the same as the one before, except when a new detective series comes on TV or when Apple brings out the latest must-have technology. Jim is a peaceful inhabitant, secure and untroubled. He goes to bed each night to an uninterrupted and dreamless sleep.

“What’s wrong with that?” you might ask.

And my answer would be, “Nothing. Absolutely nothing at all.”



You could even argue that Jim is lucky. He leads a simple and uncomplicated life.

“We all want that, don’t we?” you say.

“But is he really lucky?”

Pause for a moment. This isn’t a trick question. In my opinion, it depends.

“On what?”

“On how comfortable he is in his hole.”

“What’s a HOLE?”

Literally, a hole is a pit or cavity. It can also be an opening, where you push and throw objects in or through. You can make a hole by digging, for example, a rabbit hole. Or you can puncture or wear material out, like a hole in your sock. In any case, a hole is a space. It’s empty. It holds nothing until you put something there—or set yourself in it.

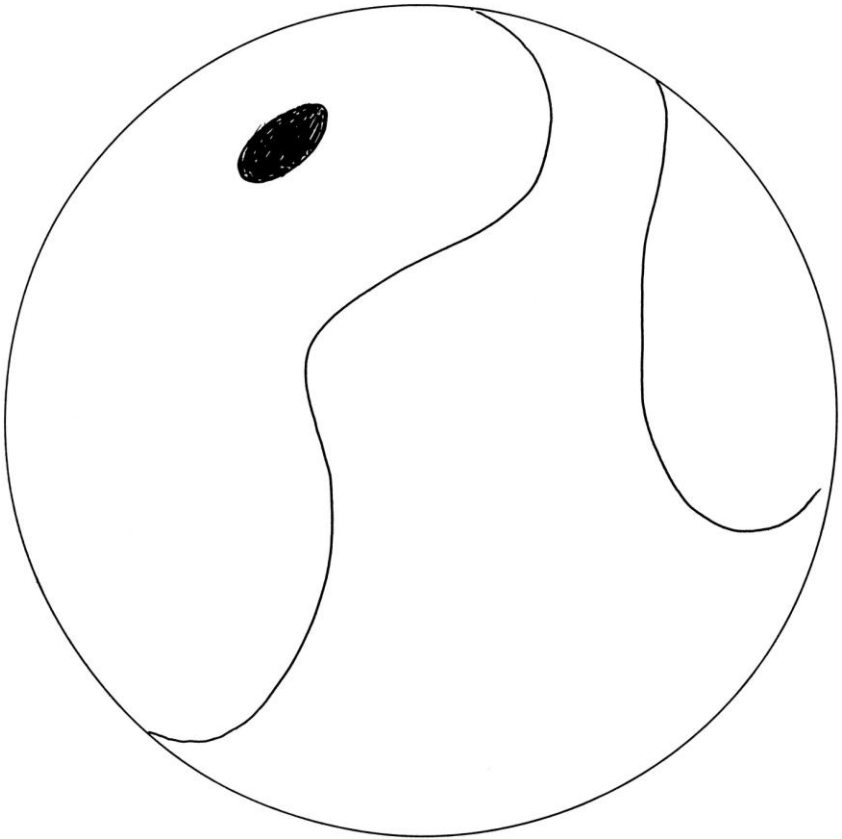
Let’s assume that we all live in our very own holes. Of course, you don’t actually reside in one, unless you’re a rabbit, and, no, I’m not calling your house a dump. Instead, think of your hole as containing the places and things that comprise your everyday life. It could include your home, office or school. It can also consist of your gym, park and shopping mall, plus the vehicles, roads and bridges that take you to and from them. In other words, it’s your territory—the space where you fit in.

For the purpose of this book, refer to this area as your hole. If it helps you to visualize, draw an imaginary circle around it. There’ll be more on imagination later, but for now, pretend this area belongs to you.

Let’s call it your hole of habit. Or your habit hole.

Can you see the hole down there? That's Jim's hole. On the surface it appears so plain, so inoffensive.

Shhhhh. Jim is sleeping. If you are really quiet, you'll be able to hear his breathing.



Tell me, are you lucky like Jim?

Do you sleep as soundly as he does at night?

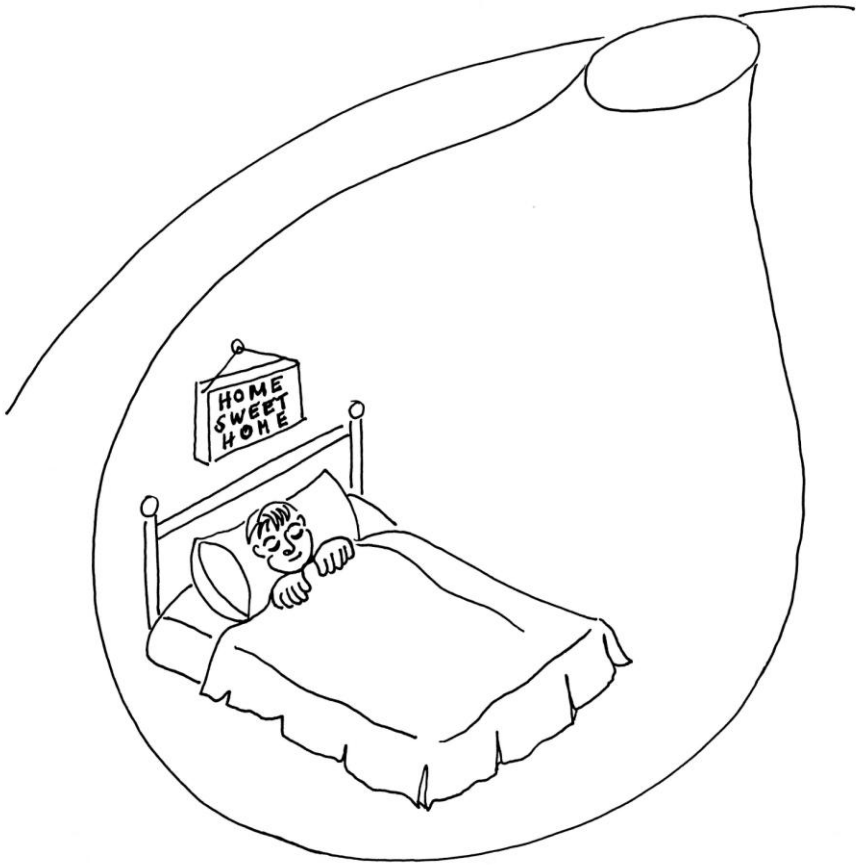
If not, perhaps the question I should be asking you is: how did you get to be where you are?

Take a quick inventory of your habit hole.

Are you satisfied with your position in life? Did you choose to reside in your particular location? Or did you just wake up one morning and suddenly realize that you were, well, there?

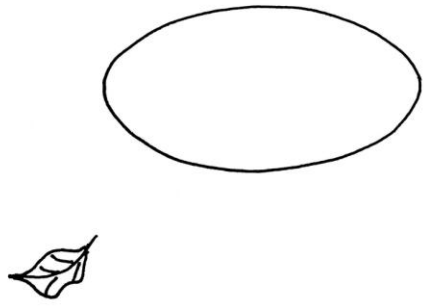
To put it another way, is this hole where you are supposed to be?

I hope I'm not making you too uncomfortable.



If you don't think you are where you're supposed to be, what happened?





This happened.



You mean this?

Not a leaf exactly.

You had a THOUGHT.

Hey, Jim's awake now. Let's include him in the discussion.

A thought is defined as both verb and noun. Thought is the process of thinking that has taken place in a person's mind. The product of such activity is also called a thought which comes in the form of an idea, opinion, intention and so forth. It is said that a normal person averages around 70,000 thoughts a day. With those numbers and from personal experience (you can vouch for yourself), we can deduce that not many are important.

Picture your mind as a raging sea of thoughts. So how does one thought manage to jump up from the flow of thousands, as though to catch its breath, and grab your attention?

It probably didn't start as a big thought, but as a little one. You missed it at first because you weren't looking out for it. Or, maybe, the thought was different from all your other thoughts. It probably leapt up a few times, darted in and out of the water, until you finally acknowledged it.

In our story, the unexpected thought is symbolized by a leaf that drifts softly into the habit hole before entering Jim's consciousness.

"But what difference can one thought make?" you ask.

"Plenty."

Wait and see. Jim is about to find out.

Oh, boy, is he in for a surprise. It might as well have been an explosion.

“What does Jim do about the thought?”

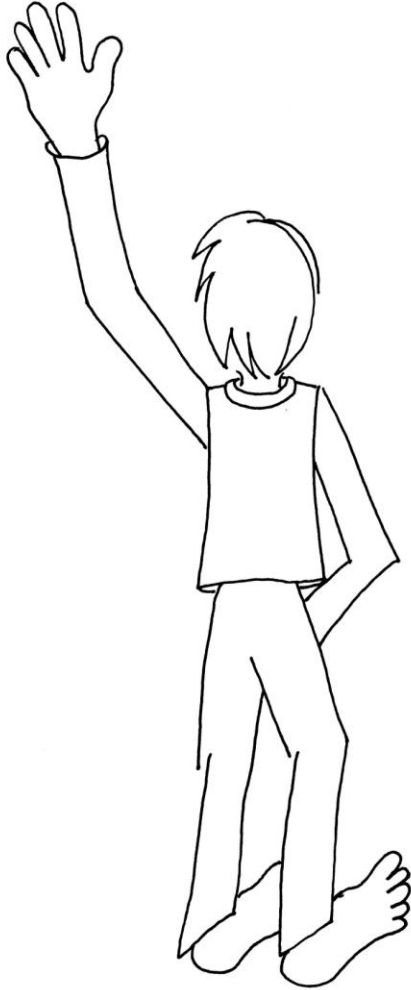
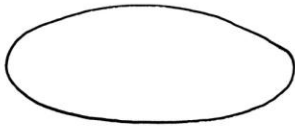
“He takes the first step.”

That’s right. Jim raises one foot and brings it down in front of the other. Now that his curiosity is aroused, he stretches his arm and reaches out to explore the entrance where the leaf had wandered from.

Small actions you might think—even inconsequential—but every journey has to begin at one point.

Jim doesn’t appreciate it yet, but he is only getting started.





It dawns on Jim. Something is out there. He just doesn't know what.

I ask, "When confronted with the unfamiliar, what do you do?"

You answer, "Be careful."

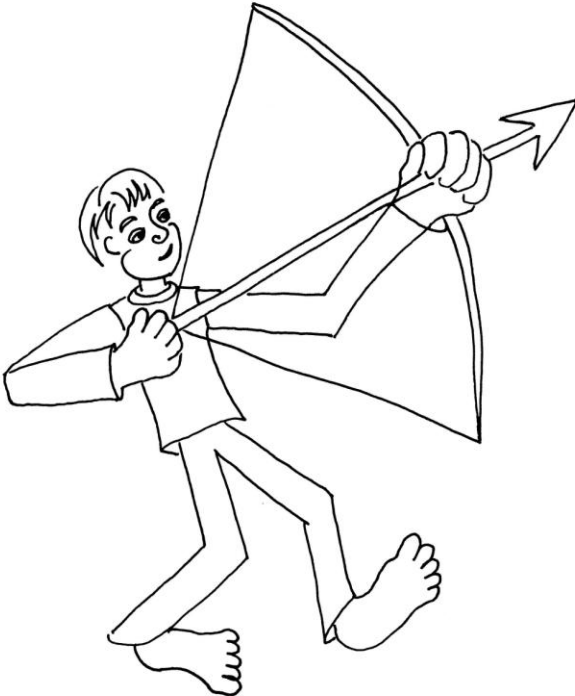
Naturally. It's probably a lesson your parents have drilled into you.

However, everyone reacts differently. While certain situations can be easy for some, for others, the same can be daunting. When faced with a new challenge, a few brave souls plunge headlong without a lot of research or planning. But for many (myself included), such action would be rash.

We all feel fear at one time or another. This book is for the situations where you find yourself faint of heart. It's aimed at those who would be reluctant to put their hand straight into a strange or mysterious space in case a creature appeared and bit it off.

And Jim is just like me.

He pokes.





He hits.

And he kicks.

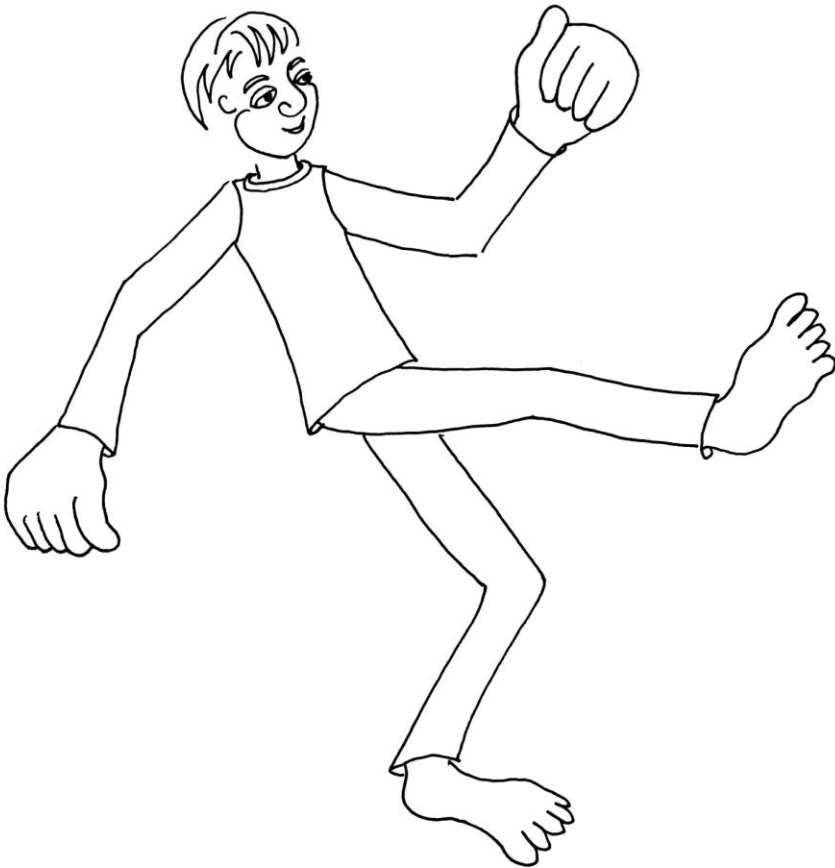
He doesn't engage with the unknown directly.

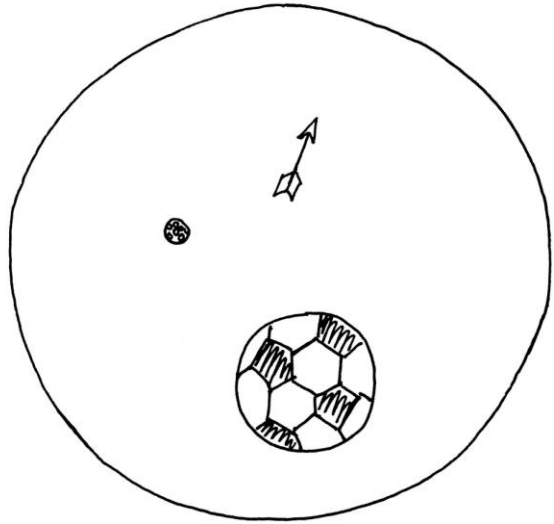
"You mean he doesn't actually touch anything."

"That's correct. He's timid and tentative. It's understandable that he doesn't want to get hurt."

Do you know how to test a thought without taking too many risks? Is there a way of knowing before actually taking the plunge that you will come out all right?

Truthfully, if Jim could get away with it, he'd have someone else check it out for him first.

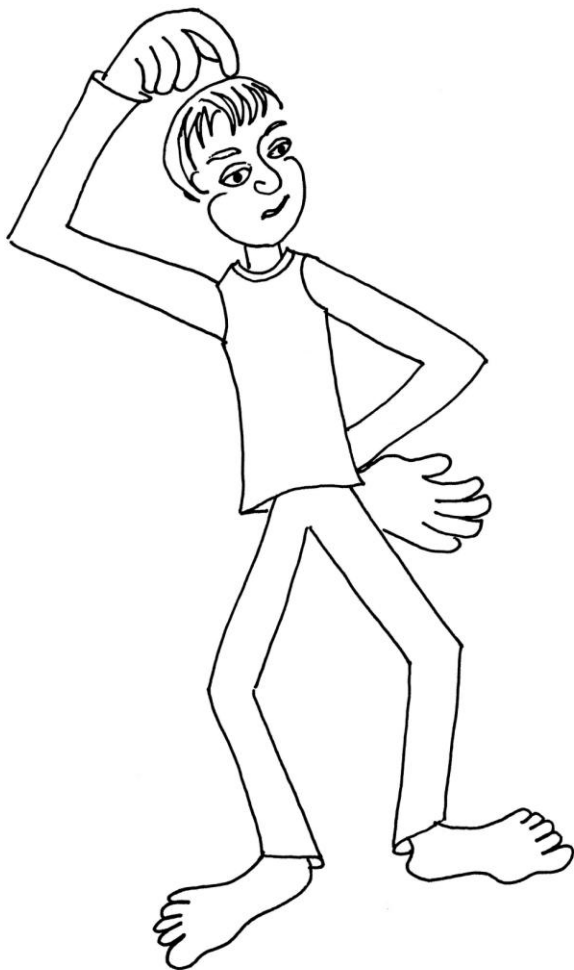




It's no surprise that Jim doesn't learn a great deal from his investigation.

"He's just being careful," you say.

"Maybe Jim is being too careful."



Where did they go?

Understandably, Jim can't help but keep wondering what's outside his hole.

“So what exactly is OUT THERE?”

“At this point, how can anyone tell?”

The realm of out there is unknown. If you had knowledge or experience of it, you wouldn't ask. Also, the thought wouldn't have had the urge to present itself and demand your attention in the first place.

You can guess or infer what's out there from books, the Internet and other media. You can learn and empathize from another person's experience, except your acquaintance of it wouldn't be firsthand. Plus, it doesn't follow that even if you desire to experience what another has before you, your understanding of it would turn out to be precisely the same.

The unknown is unfamiliar. That makes it both tantalizing and uncomfortable at the same time.

“Why?”

“The unknown suggests possibility. Specifically, it's the possibility of MORE.”

Out there, outside the entrance to Jim's hole is the Land of More. And it's waiting to be explored.

“Why should we need more?” you ask. “Why would we risk what we already have to get it?”

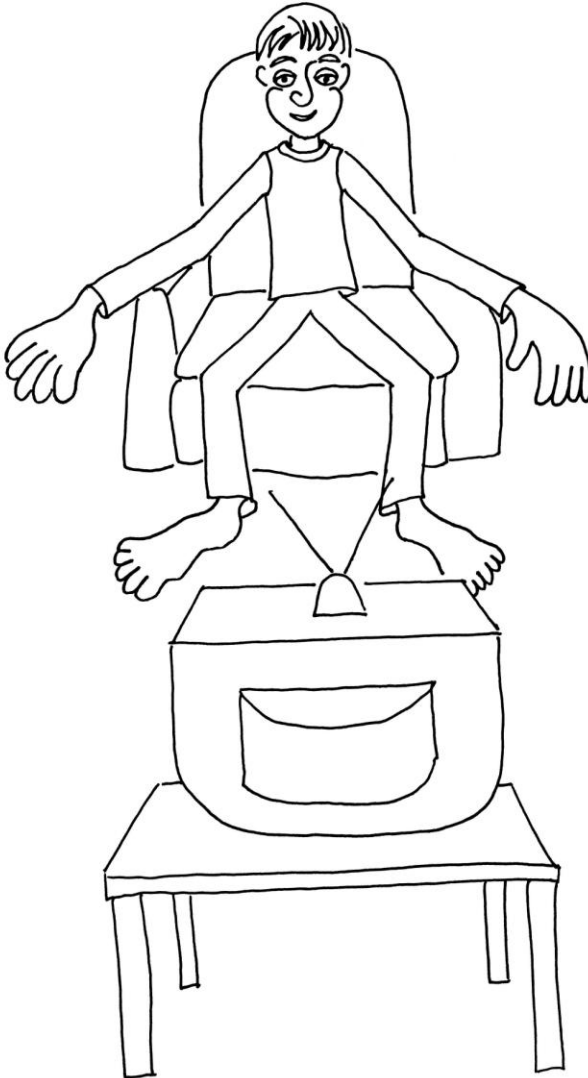
“Simply, more means greater.”

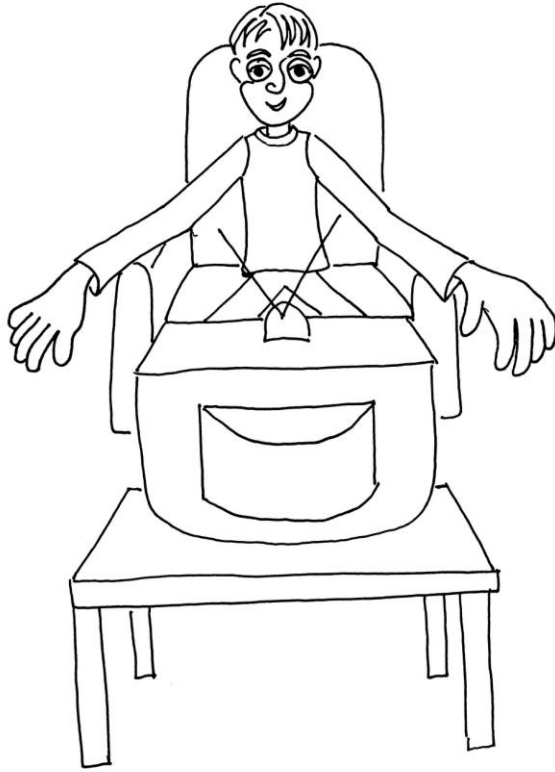
More means to have more than we already have; to be more than we already are. In addition, more carries an implicit promise that if we act, we can have it. Who can resist that?

Unfortunately for Jim, he takes it the wrong way. Instead of pondering on how he can get more and be more, he asks a different question.

Why me?

It's true. He hasn't asked for the thought.
Jim isn't intrigued. He's squirming in his seat.





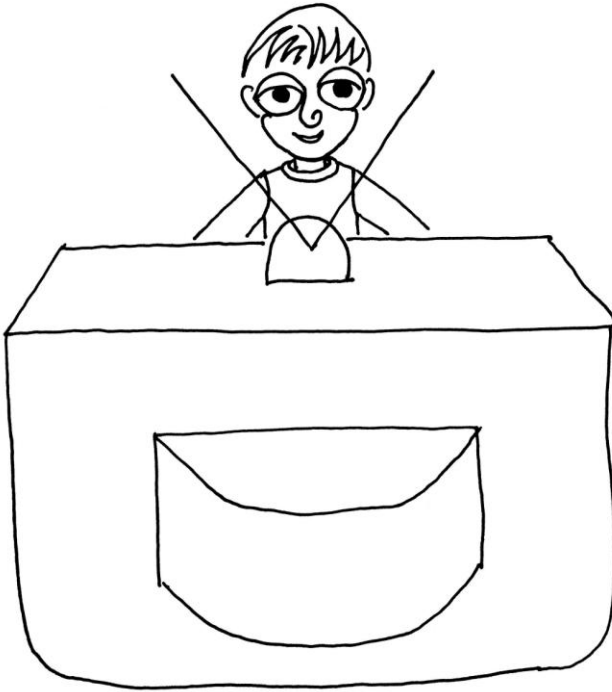
Why now?

It isn't what he thinks he needs. He's too busy watching television.

"Tell me, how much time do you spend in front of the TV?"

"Same as everybody."

I'll be the first to admit it. Sometimes, what's on television is just so entertaining. It can fool you into believing that you're living a full and exciting life just by being in front of it.



What for?

Clearly, Jim distrusts the idea of more.

Can you blame him?

Television offers compelling drama, heroic adventure and nonstop fun—all without him ever being pushed for breath. Why stretch unless it's on the couch?

Jim is not willing to risk that which he can't access by the pressing of a button.

Let's not forget what happens during those ad-breaks. Snacks fill in the gaps nicely.

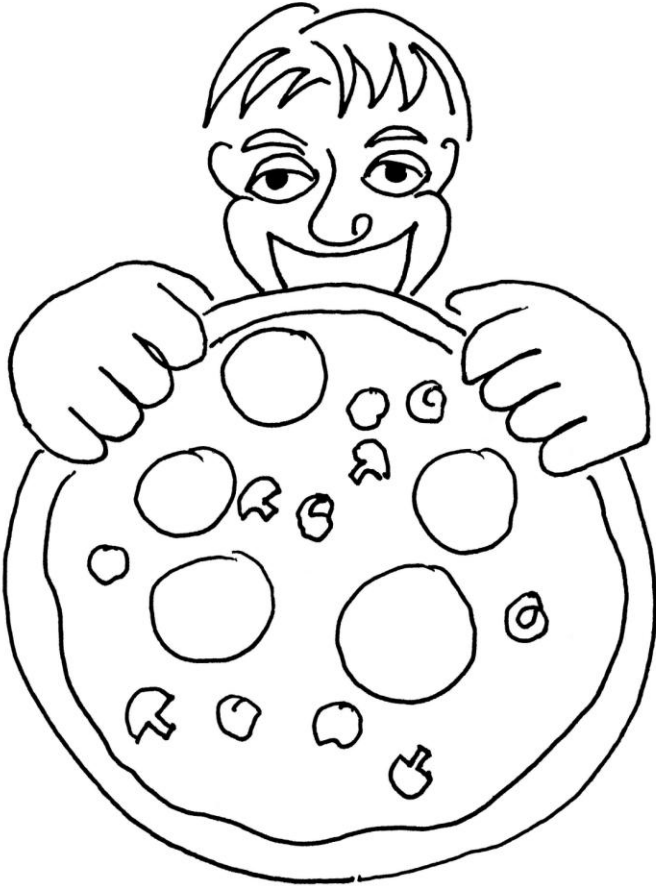


See Jim pack it all in.



And just when you think he's had enough, Jim opens his mouth wider.

There's always room for one more bite.



Until he's well and truly stuck.



Uuuuurp!

What's your problem?
I'm enjoying myself.
Life's supposed to be fun, isn't it?



Jim has a point, doesn't he?

Maybe we should close this book and leave him alone. After all, it's his choice, his decision.

You say, "Perhaps he just doesn't need more."

I reply, "You might be right."

However could it be that, like Jim, you've convinced yourself you're happy and satisfied with your lot in order to quiet those thoughts of more?

"So what?"

"Hey, I'm with you. If you believe you are happy, why would you want more?"

More can be too much of a hassle, and we happen to enjoy being curled up on the sofa in front of the TV. In the grand scheme of things, does having more matter?

"Why should you care?"

"Listen. This is the thing: the moment you become aware of the concept of more, you are no longer the same person. It matters to no one except you."



But why can't things stay the same?

Sameness is an illusion.

What Jim is really saying is that he wants to be safe. For him, being safe is equivalent to doing nothing. Except what this actually means is that he wants to be bored.

Boredom is not doing nothing; boredom is not doing anything exciting. More than that, I say boredom results from stopping yourself from doing what you ought to be doing.

*I don't want to be bored.
Truth is, I just can't be bothered.*



Jim can't be bothered because there are no guarantees more is better. And yet, why does not bothering bother him so much?

Not bothering can be so exhausting.



It just doesn't shut up, does it?

Nope.

But have a little sympathy for Jim. Try as he might, all the TV and pizza in the world won't silence the thought for long. If you've ever had an idea you couldn't shake off, you'll know what I mean.

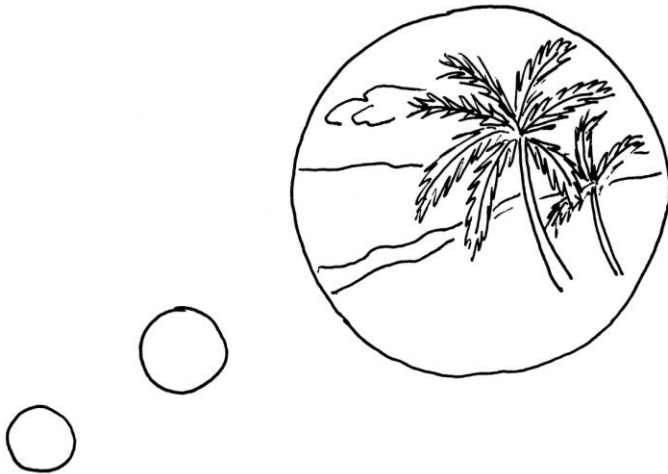
This is where imagination comes in.

In your mind, picture yourself taking the risk. You have traveled to the Land of More. What do you see?

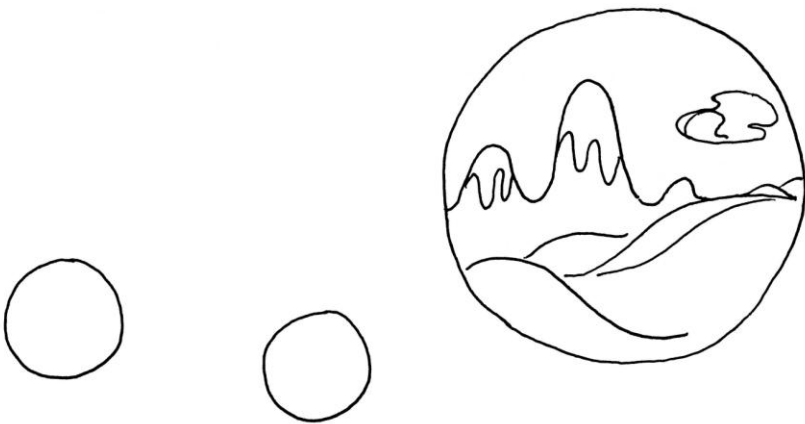
Imagination is the creative ability to conjure up mental images. Imagination can be amazing. Used properly, it's better than television.

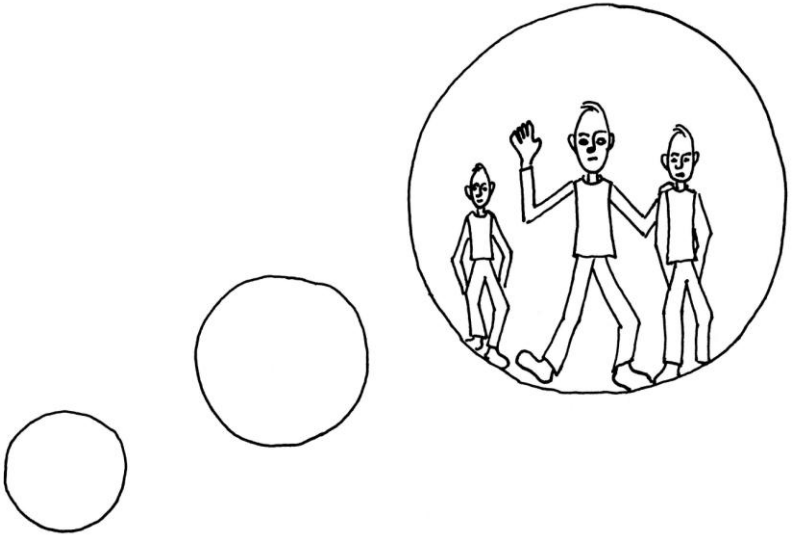
But you have to be aware that there are two kinds: good and bad. Basically, when you imagine good things, it's good.

Like this.



It can take you places.

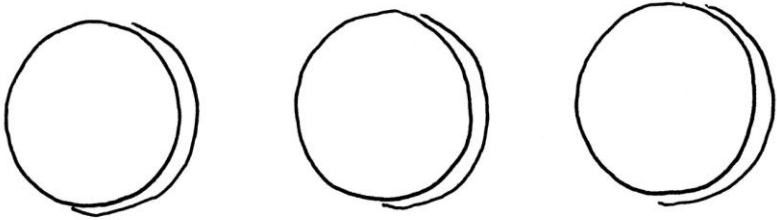




And open up new connections.

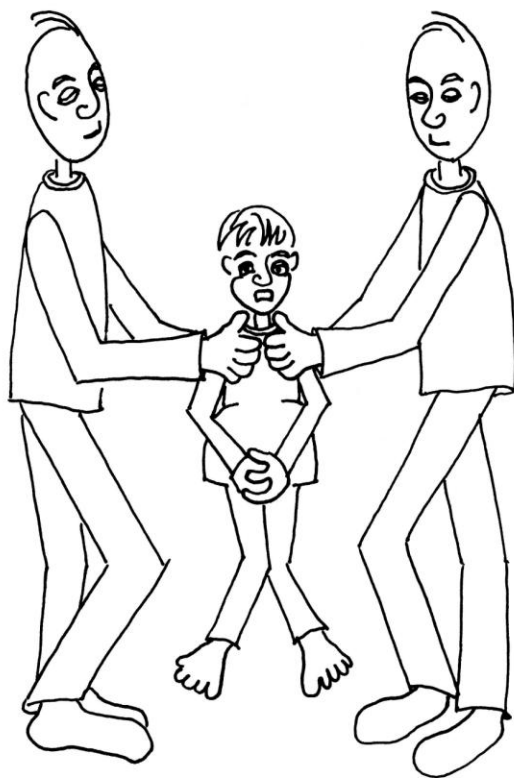
BUT

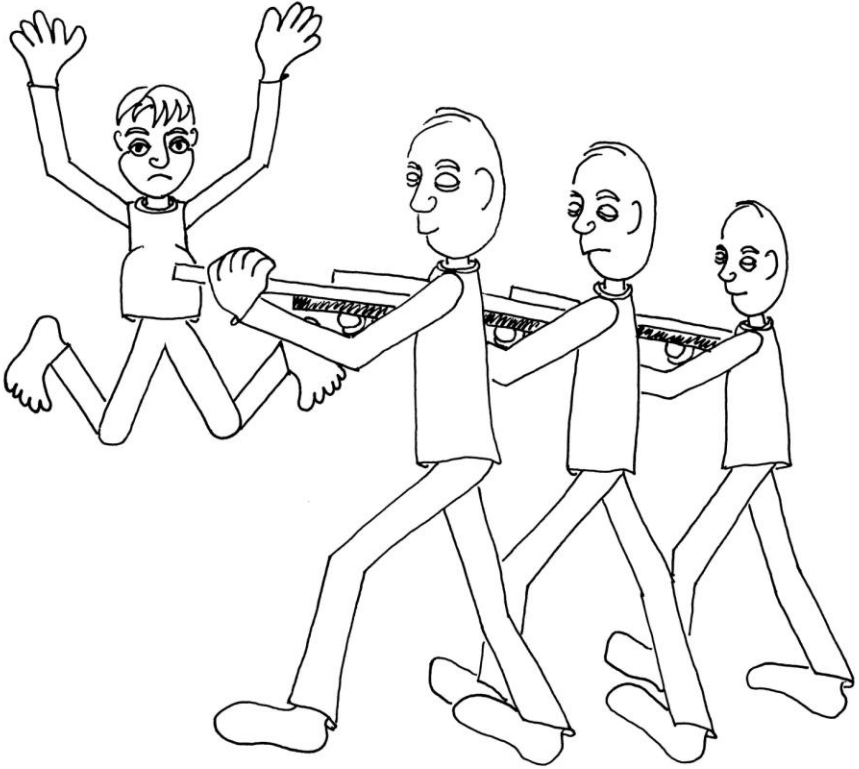
A short word, BUT can stop big ideas in their tracks.



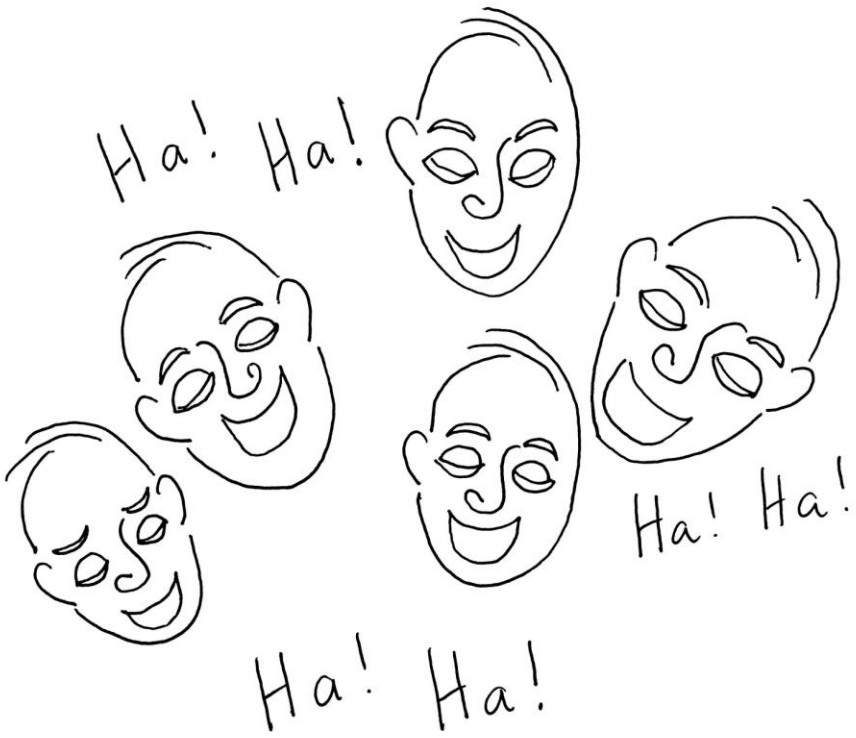
When you imagine bad things, it's bad.
We're about to meet fear, the source of bad imagination.
What is there to fear in the Land of More?

It might be dangerous.





It could be hazardous to your health.



What if I make a mistake?

Yes, you probably will make a mistake.

Except that it's not merely about making a mistake.

"What then?" you ask.

"Jim is more concerned about what people will say."

"Will it stop him from taking a chance?"

Notice, the danger hasn't transpired yet. While loss, injury and humiliation are possibilities in the Land of More, at the moment, they are only anticipated.

Imagination is powerful. And it is Jim's imagined fears that fight tooth and nail to keep him inside. They've created an invisible barrier holding him back. If Jim fails to grasp this, they could probably prevent him from ever getting out of his hole.

Until two words turn his but(t) around.

WHAT IF

These magical words open doors. They shift the focus from fear to the reward. Is the grass greener outside?

Now Jim is gagging to know.

“You do, too, don’t you?”

“Can’t wait.”

There’s only one way to find out.



Consider the question mark that comes at the end of those two words. When we end sentences with a period, there's finality. No invitation for discussion. Question marks are much more open. Curious. Adventurous.

Question marks stand for risk.

Jim is getting ready to take the risk. Before he does, I'm keen to point out to you that it's not his life in his hole that he risks. It's actually what his life outside could be that he takes the risk for.



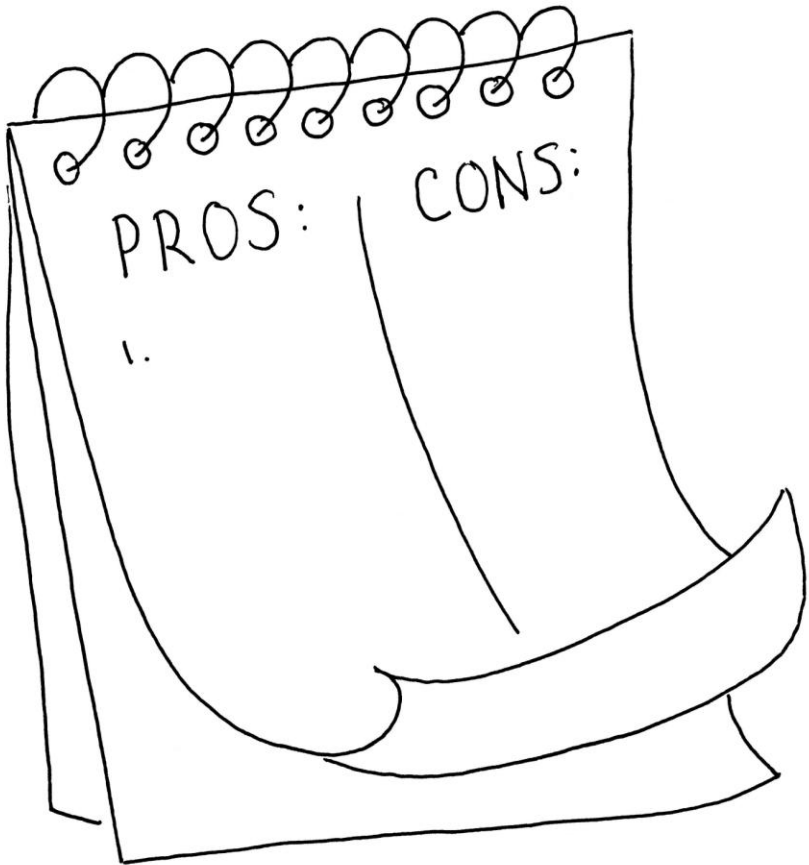
Jim finally decides to take action.

Hang on a second. Jim is still sensible. This makes him exceptionally careful. What does he do?

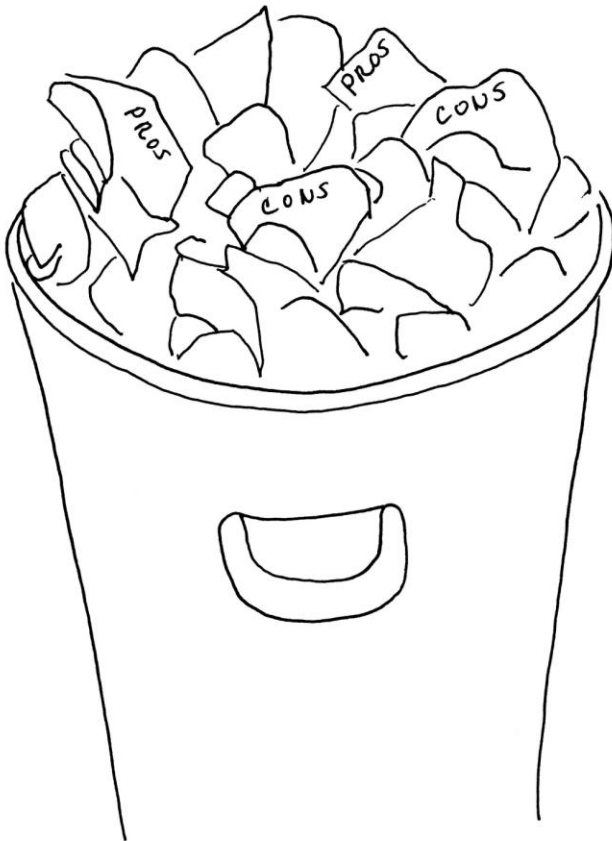
He approaches the problem rationally. He considers his options.

He makes a list.

I told you. If nothing else, Jim is sensible.



He ensures he takes all aspects into account.



Jim is busy. Those lists are certainly keeping him occupied. Funny though, he's nowhere near out there.

But let's not be too hard on him.

The act of making lists has unwittingly served to reinforce the thought. There's something about the process of writing that fixes it in reality. Moreover, by debating the pros and cons, Jim has been learning to care. The more he cares, the more likely he will undertake further action. On the downside, however, the more he cares, the more his fear also grows. Caring is the reason we feel fear.

THUD!

THUD!

THUD!

What is that sound?

Don't you recognize it?

It's the sound of fear.

Conversely, depending on how you perceive it, it could also be the sound of courage. The two go hand in hand. You can't have courage without first encountering fear.

“Are you listening?”

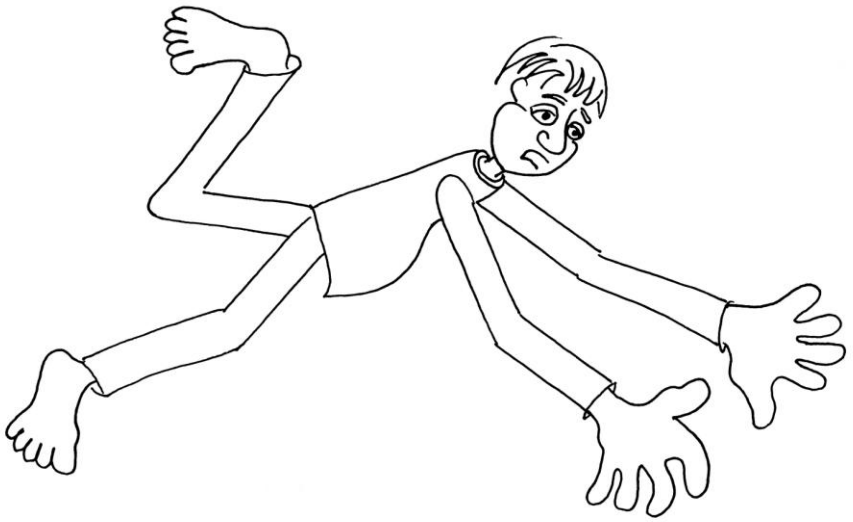
“Yes.”

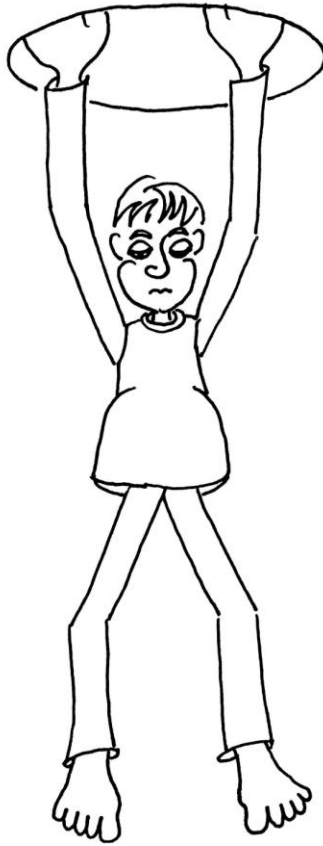
That sound is your personal signal. Acknowledge it. Respect it. Heed its call. It's the sound of life happening. And it's indicating that you should follow it with some form of action.

Here goes.

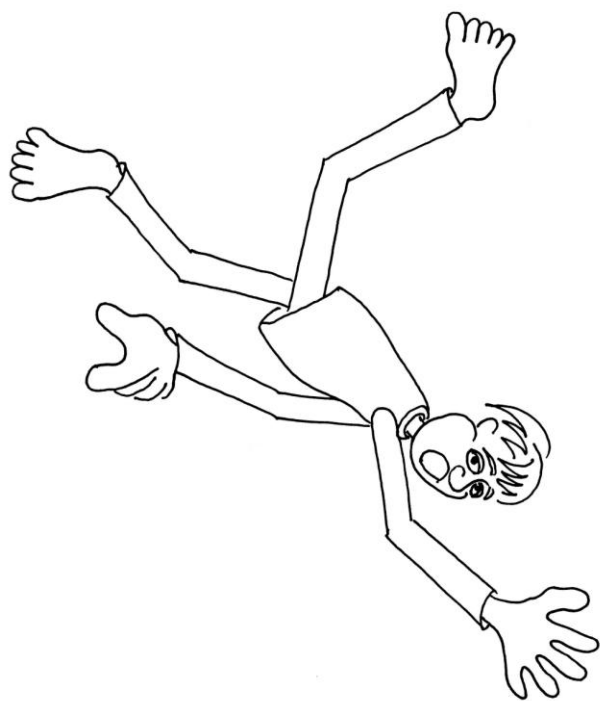
One



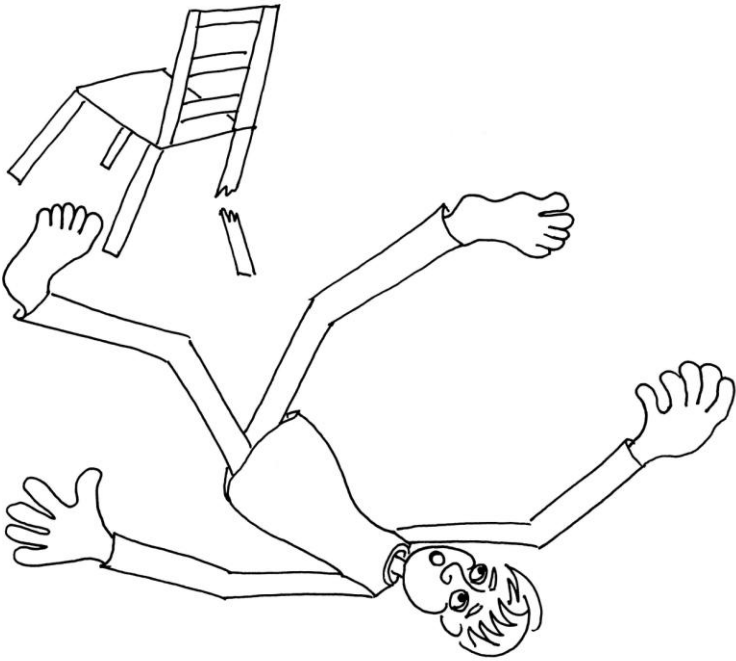




Two



Three



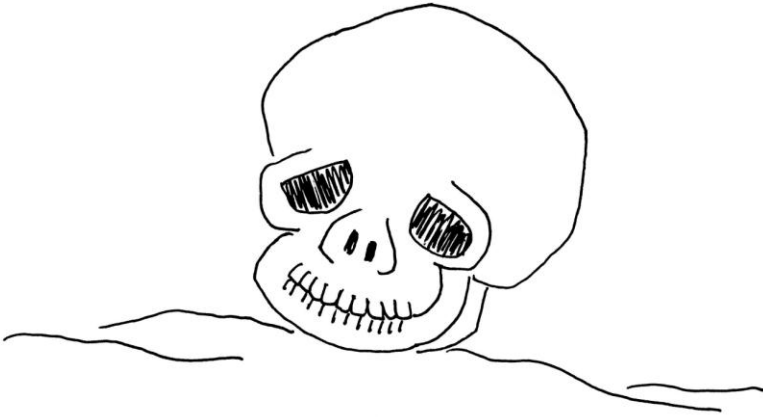
Ouch! Looks like Jim has taken a few nasty falls.

“That’s exactly what he was afraid of.”

“Nobody said that trying wouldn’t hurt.”

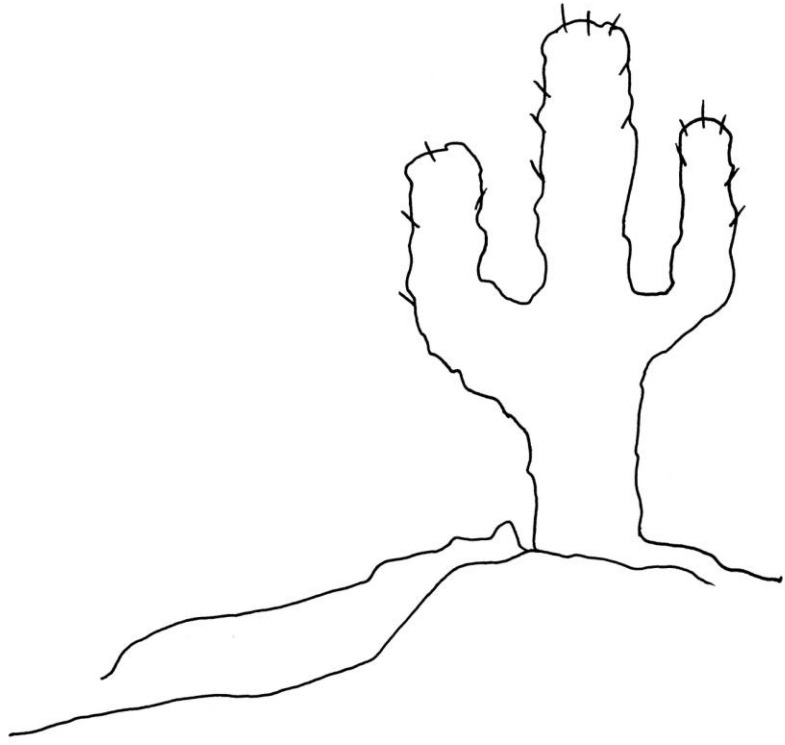
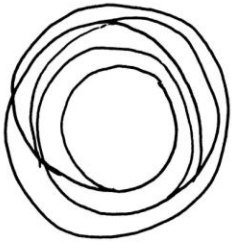
If the prospect of pain puts you off, you might as well let go of the thought now. You have been warned. When you try, it’s likely you won’t get it on the first go. Or the second. Maybe even the third.

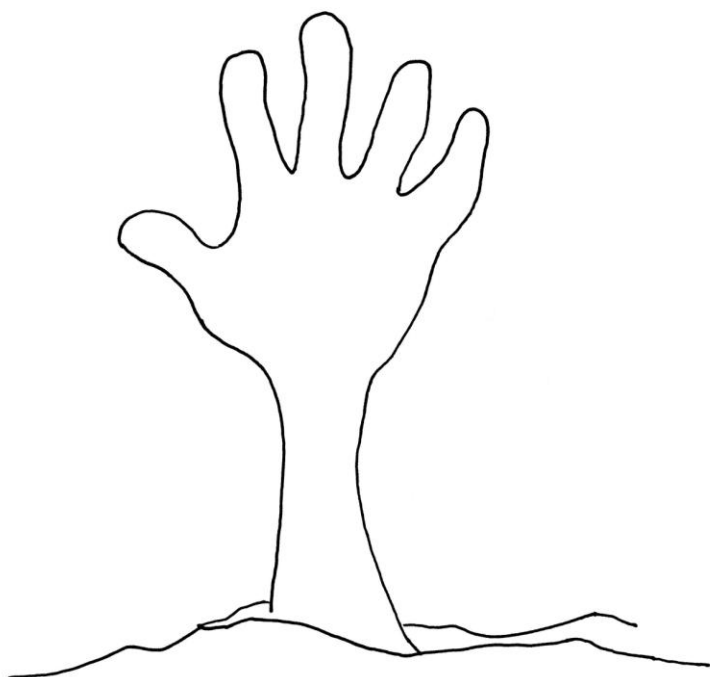
The worst has happened.



Sometimes, failure can feel like this.

If only Jim knew beforehand that he would fail, he would not have attempted it at all.





But he isn't dead yet.

Jim could also choose to regard the experience as a temporary setback.

And what occurs as you turn the page hinges on how desperately he wants to be out there. Only he can decide if his desire is worth the chance of more pain and suffering.

Do you suppose Jim will dare try again?

THUD! THUD! THUD!

There's that sound again.

THUD! THUD!

It's still there.

THUD!

I can't do this.

Jim is really feeling sorry for himself.

If only he could be sure of his success the next time around, then he would try again. I wish there was a way to guarantee it.

“Listen. Can you hear that?”

“Can’t hear anything.”

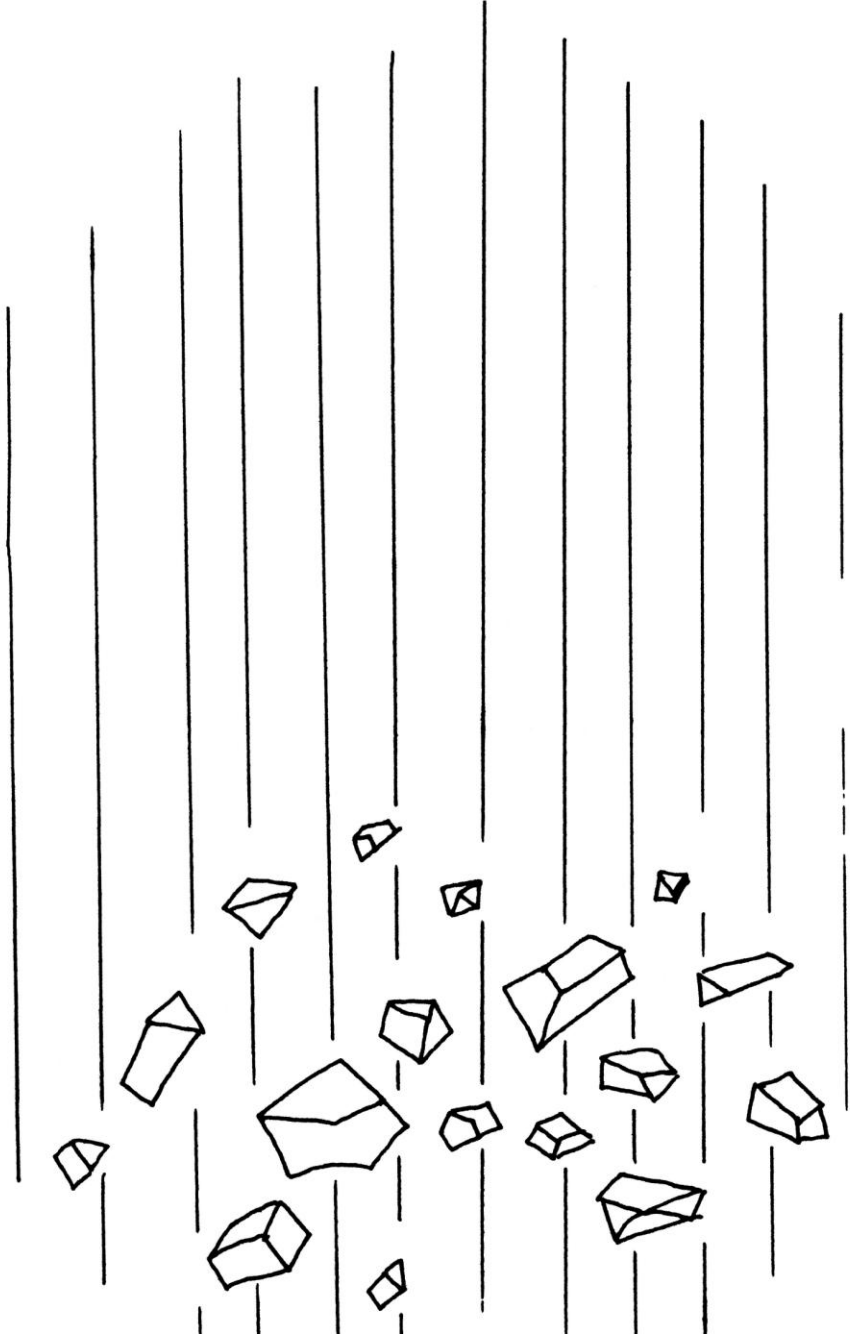
“Precisely.”

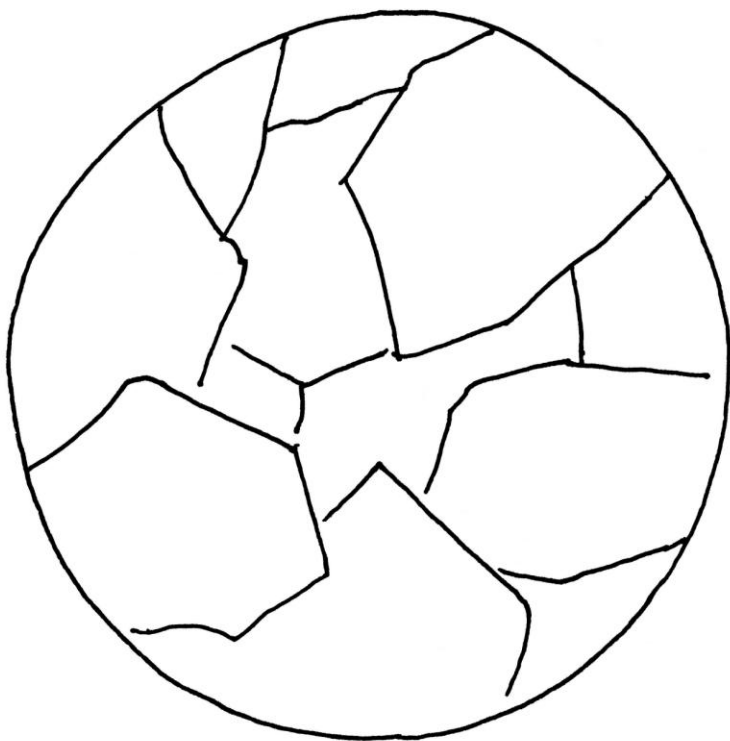
It’s the calm before the storm.



First, the scream.
Then all hell breaks loose.

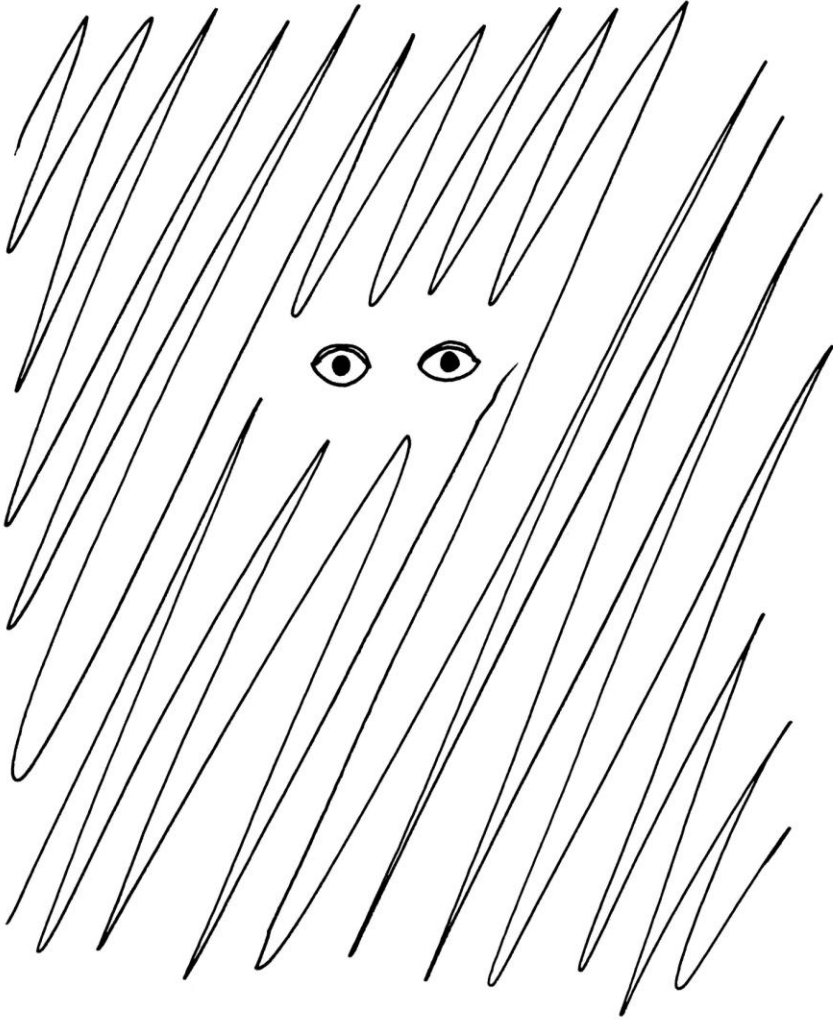






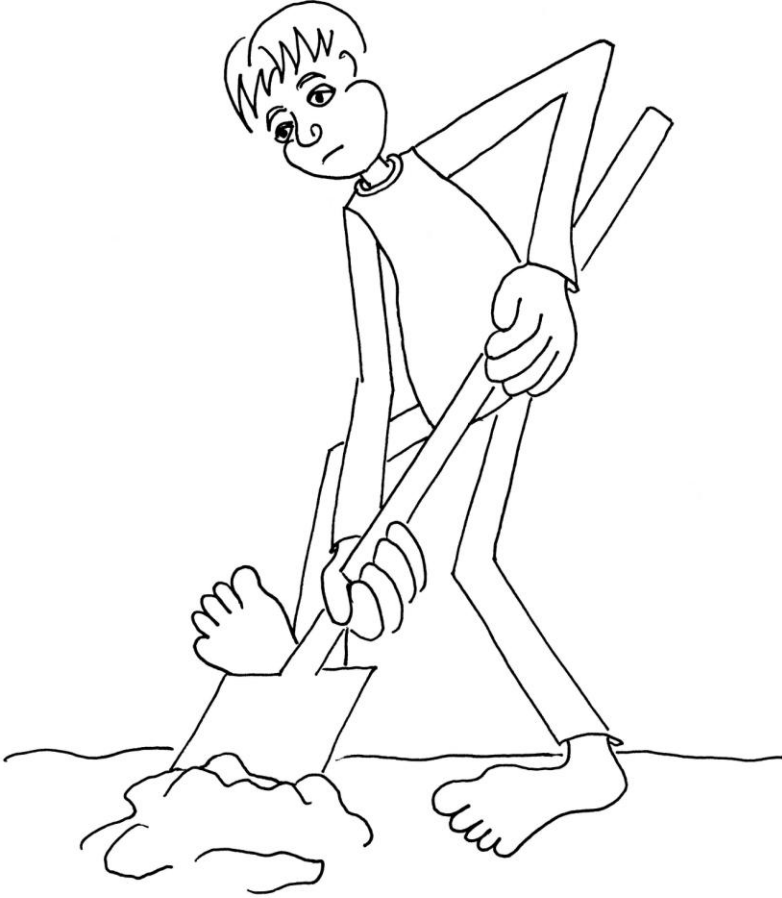
Oops...

Idiot.



What's the use?

What else is there to do?



If I haven't mentioned it before, Jim is nothing if not sensible.

Regrettably, at this critical point in his life, his good sense appears to have deserted him.

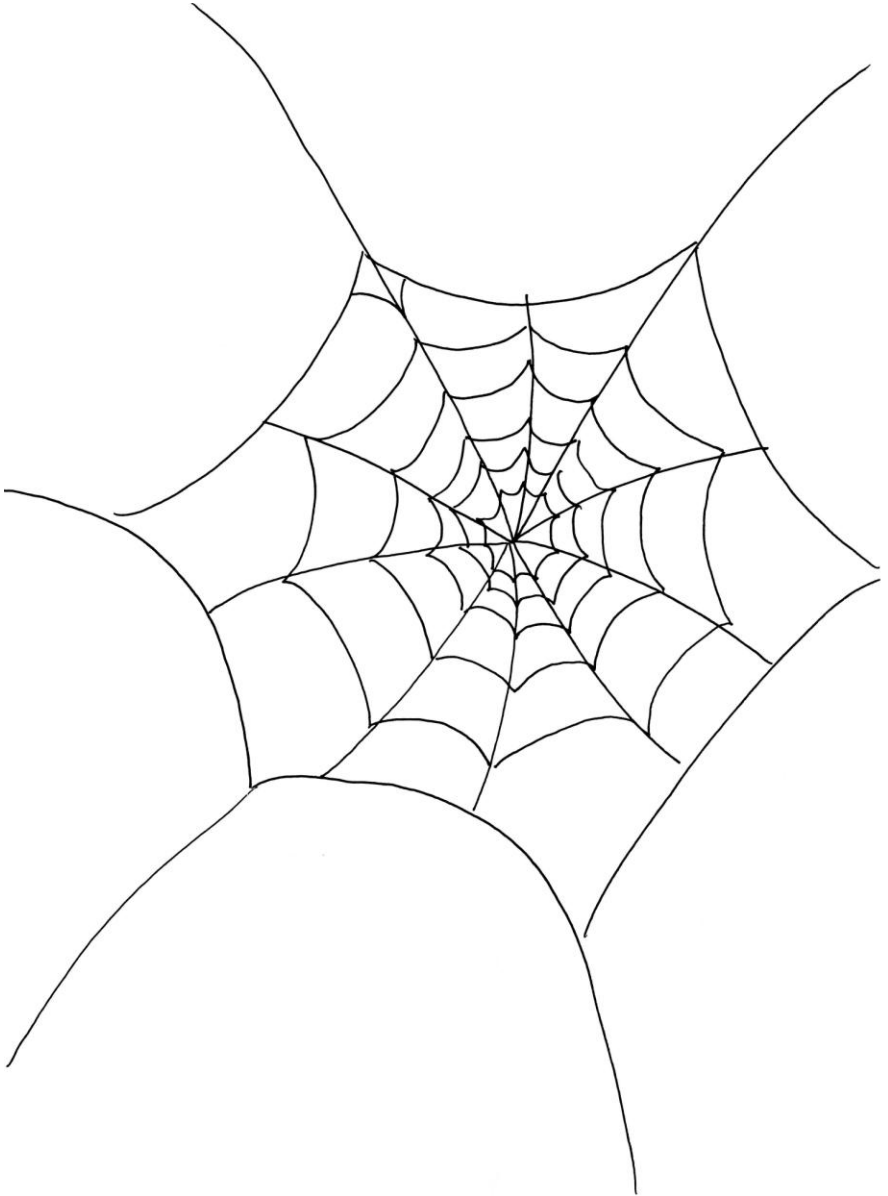
Jim has not only blocked his sole exit, but has also started digging himself an even deeper hole. He'll never get out now.

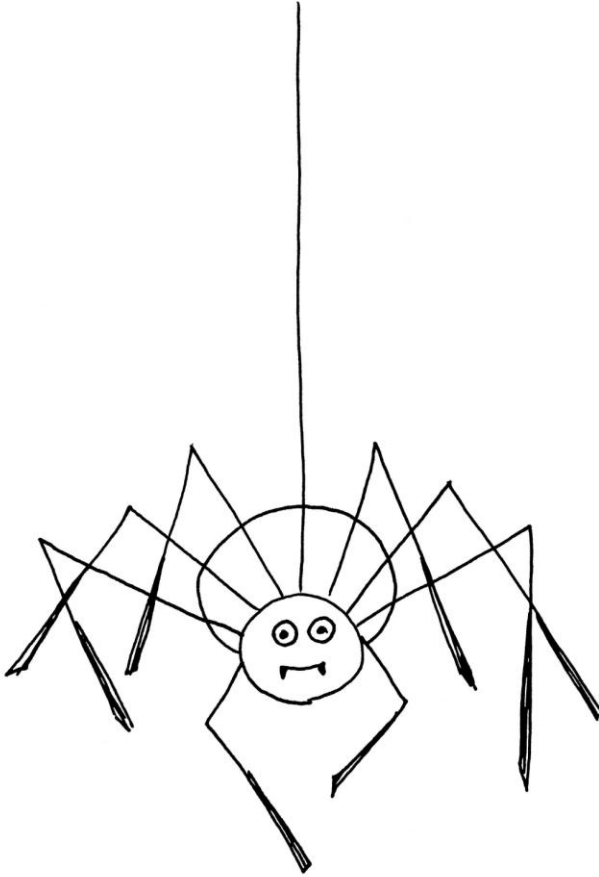




*Maybe, if I keep very still,
the thought will go away.*

Allow me to make a correction, Failure is not worse than death.
Failure is not like death, Failure is not defeat.
Giving up is.





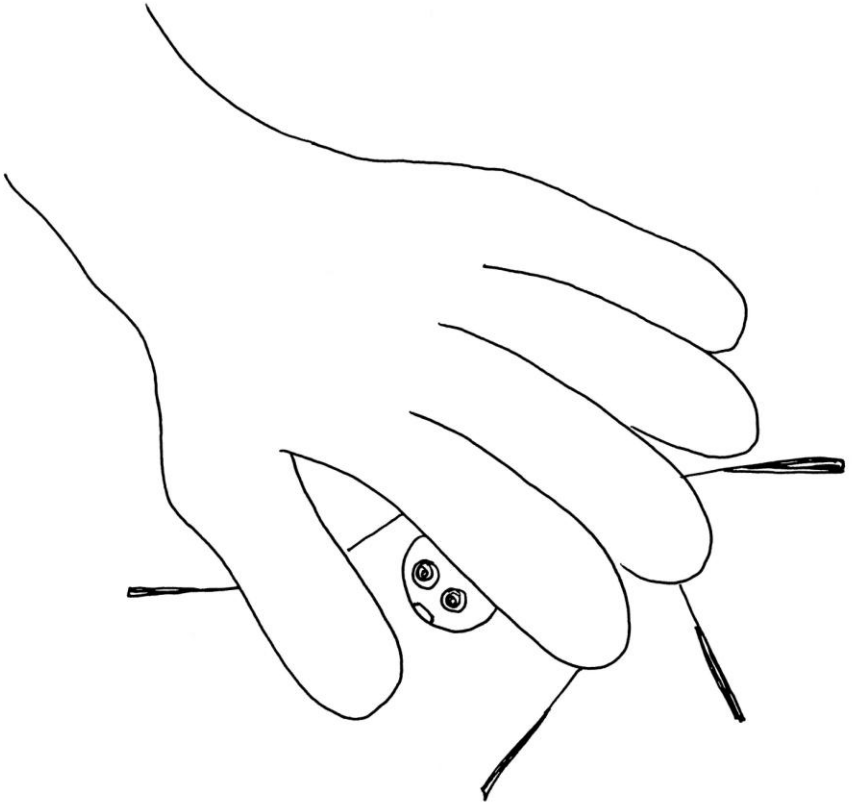
Why won't it just go away?

There is no place to hide.

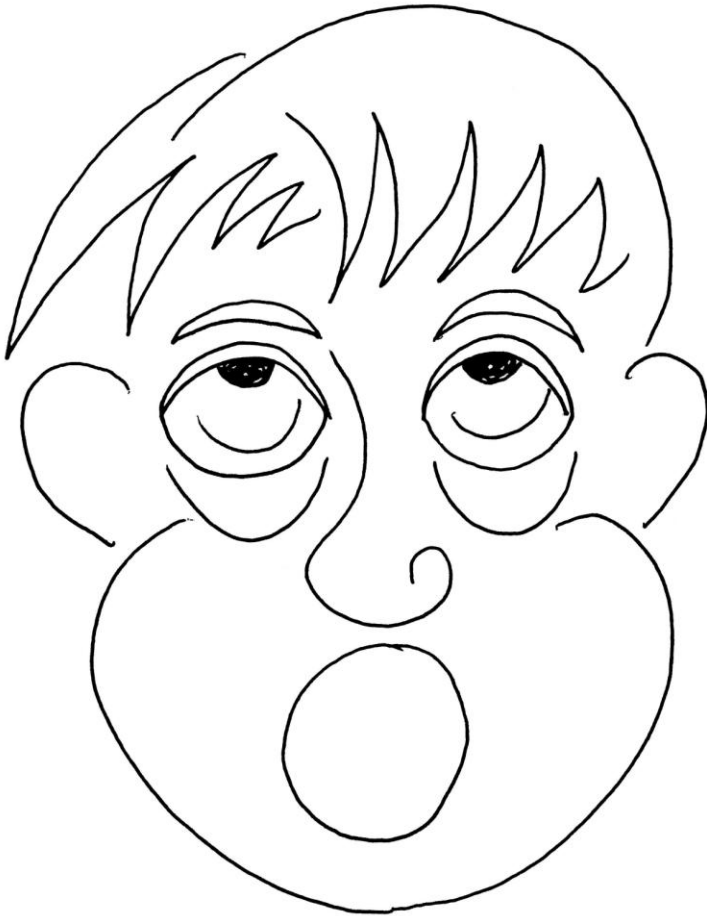
The thought lives inside your head. It will nag you. Admonish you.
Even curse you.

“Why?”

“Because it has already dreamed of what might have been.”



Leave me alone.



“What’s eating him?”

“Take your pick: the fear of the unknown; the fear of failure; or the fear of not being good enough and deserving of it.”

Our greatest battle is the one we wage inside ourselves.

Don't give up. Give in.



Okay.

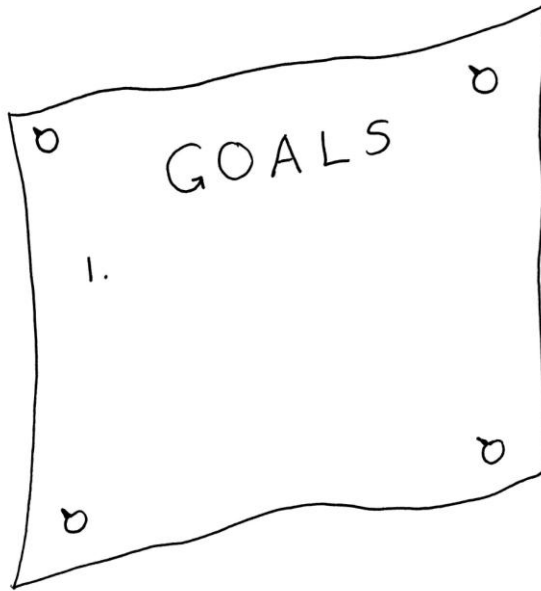
Do I want to put myself through this again?



When faced with this predicament, the question you should ask yourself is: how much do I genuinely want it?

It's your choice. It's your decision. But can you be bothered?

If you're going to be bothered, be bothered to do it right.

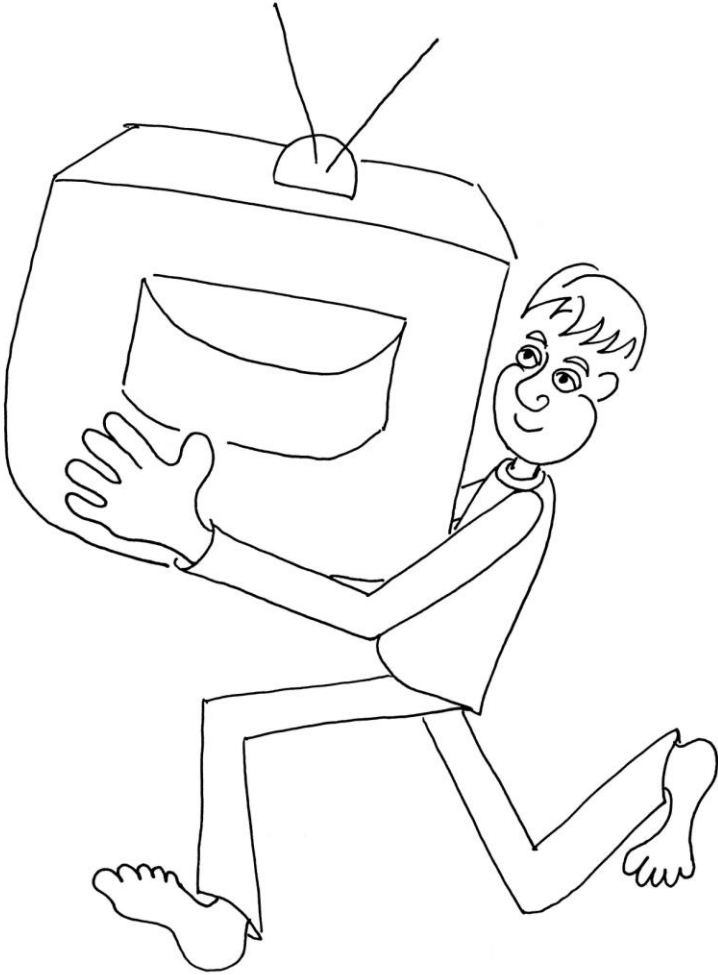


Set a few smart goals. They must be:

- S - Specific
- M - Measurable
- A - Achievable
- R - Relevant
- T - Time-bound

Preparation is the key. Get rid of rubbish.





Concentrate. Eliminate distractions.

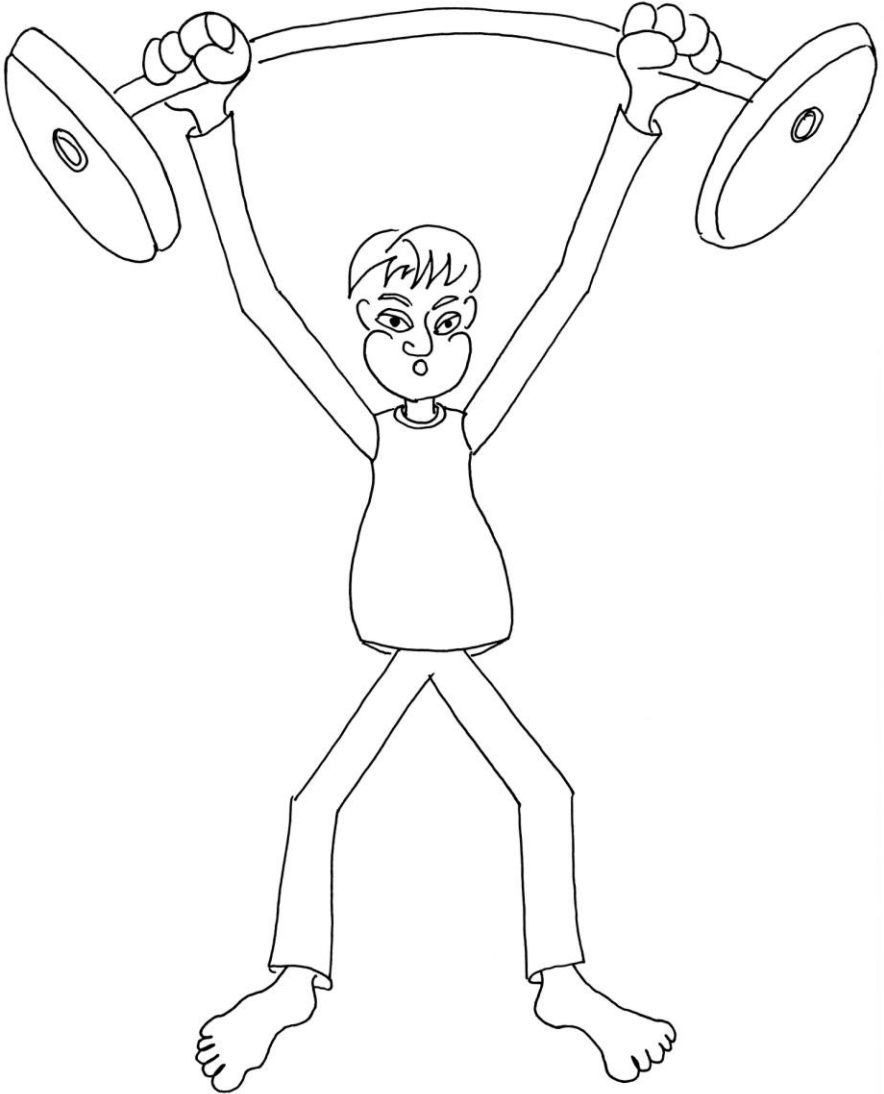


Get fit.

Develop endurance.

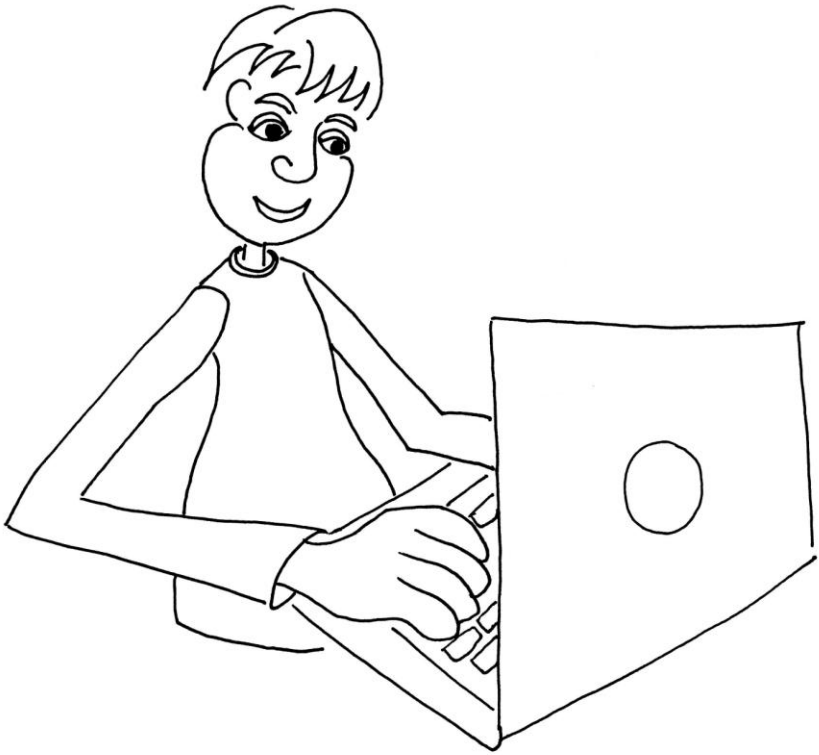


Build strength.



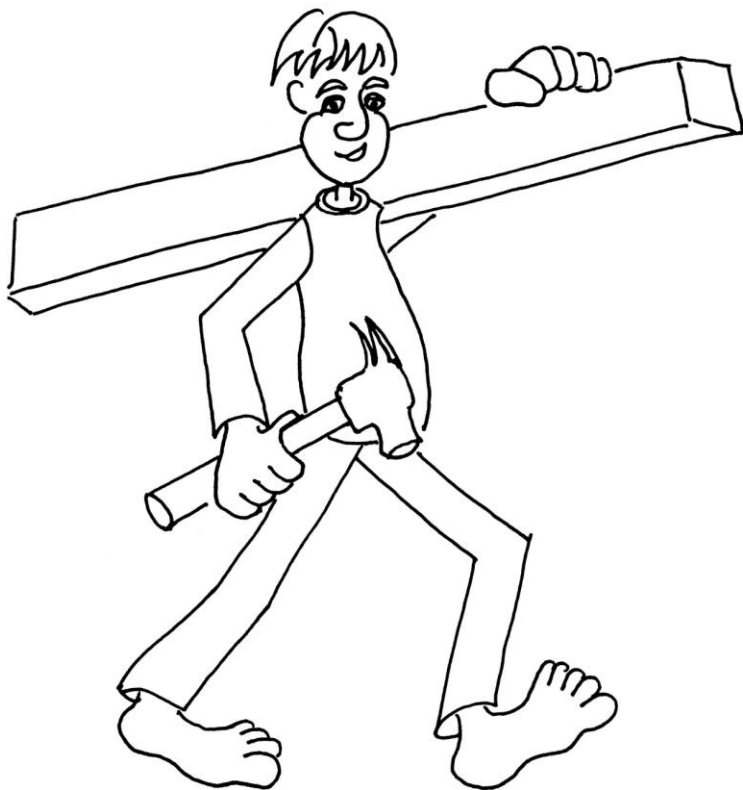
Study and learn.





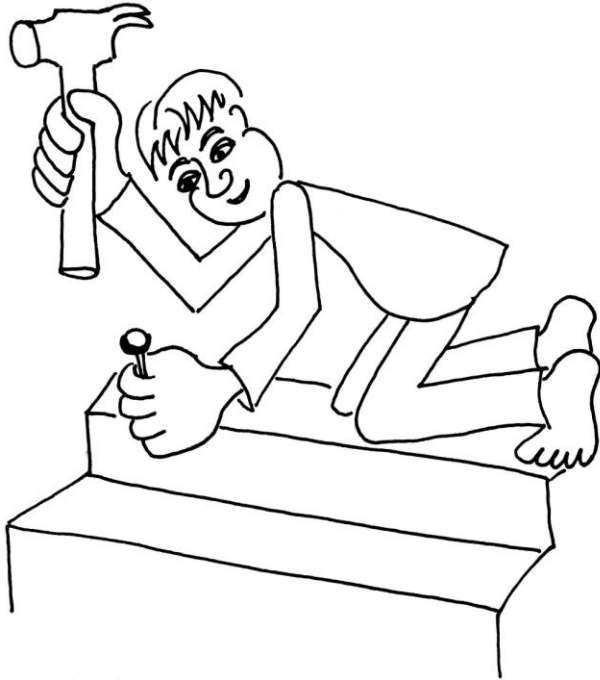
There's such a thing as investing in yourself.

Then apply.

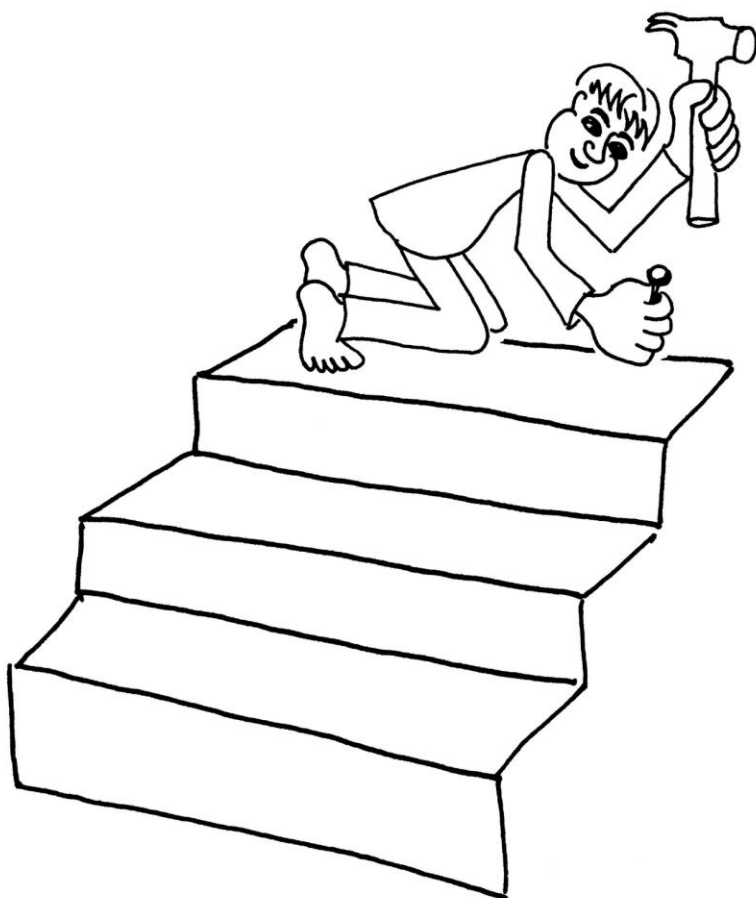


Step by step.

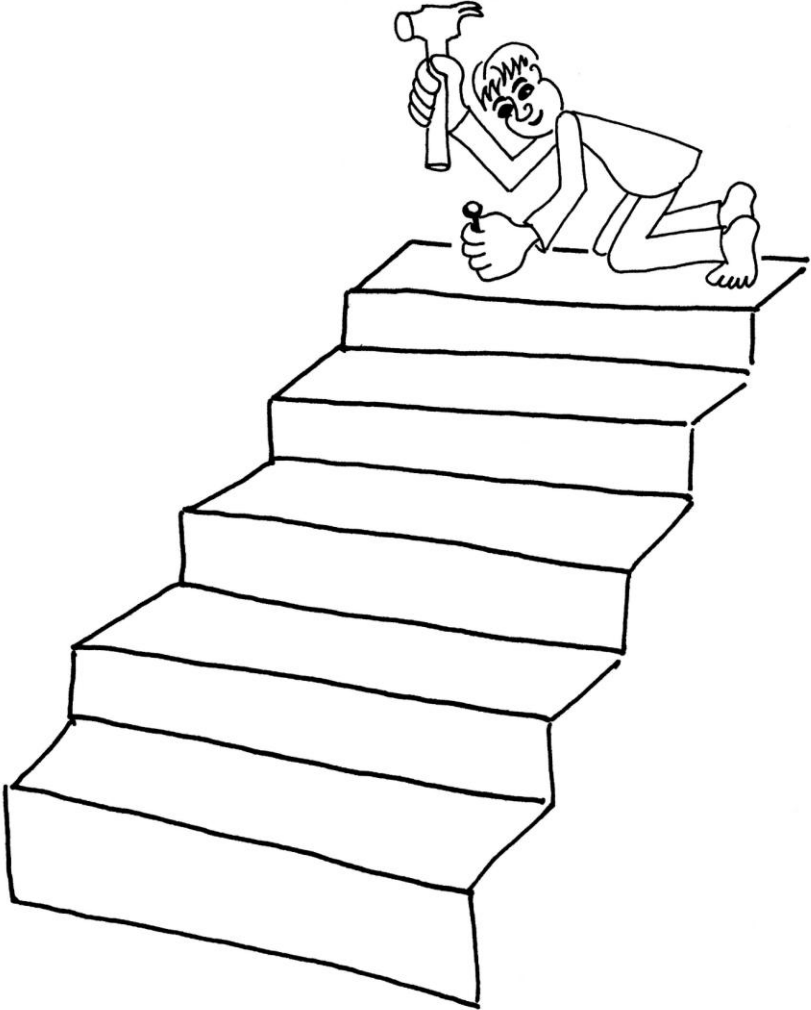
Progress is a series of purposeful steps.



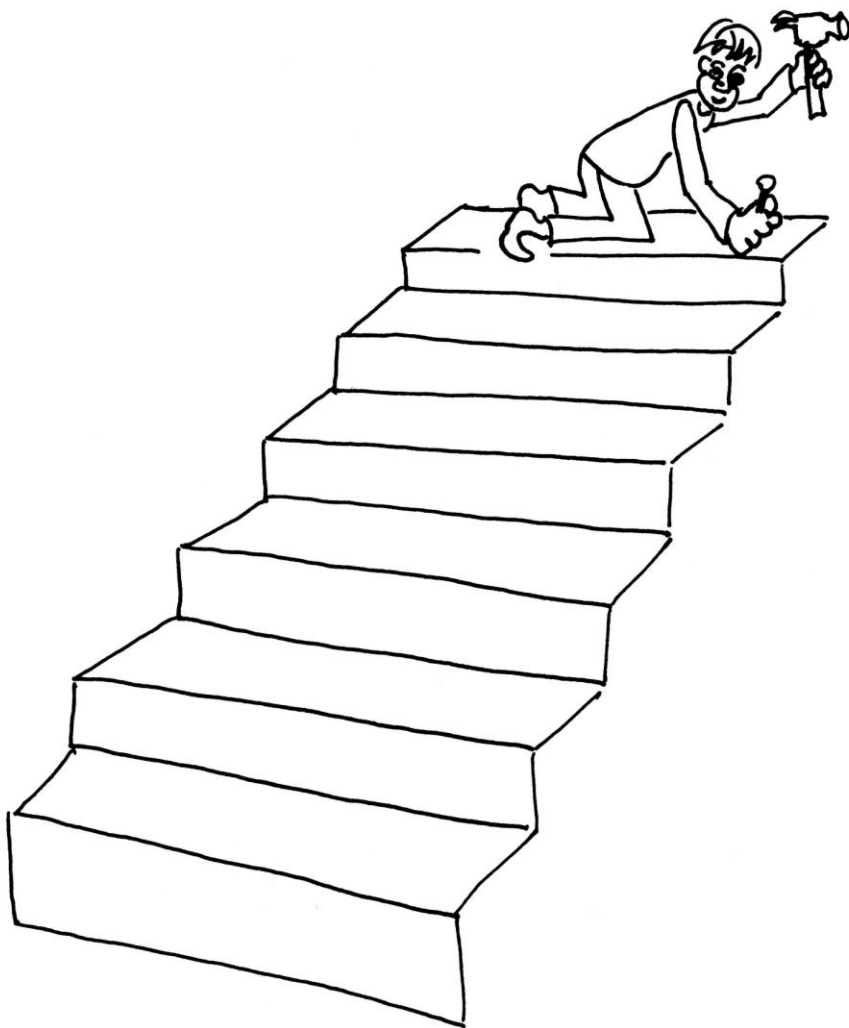
With practice.



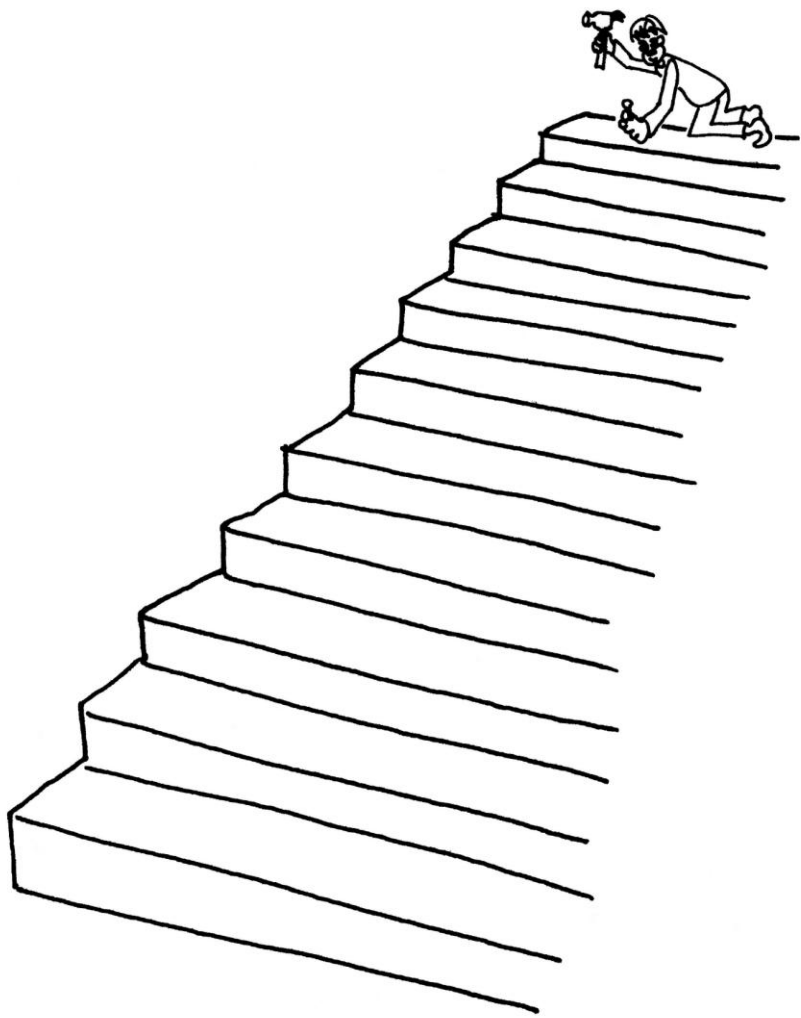
Patience.



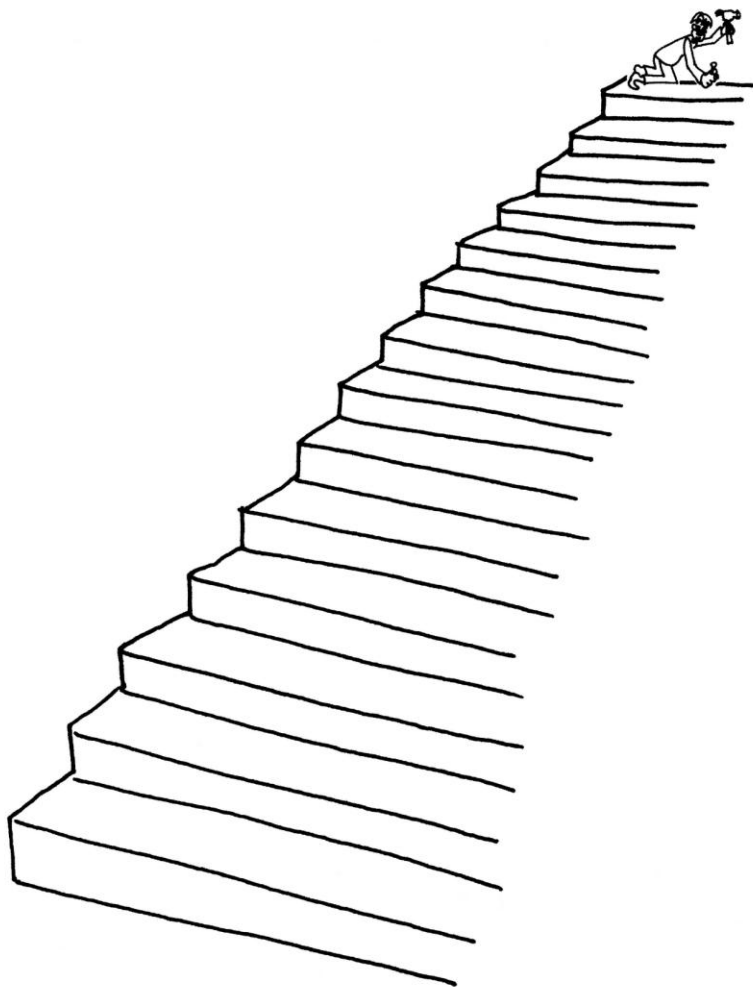
And perseverance.



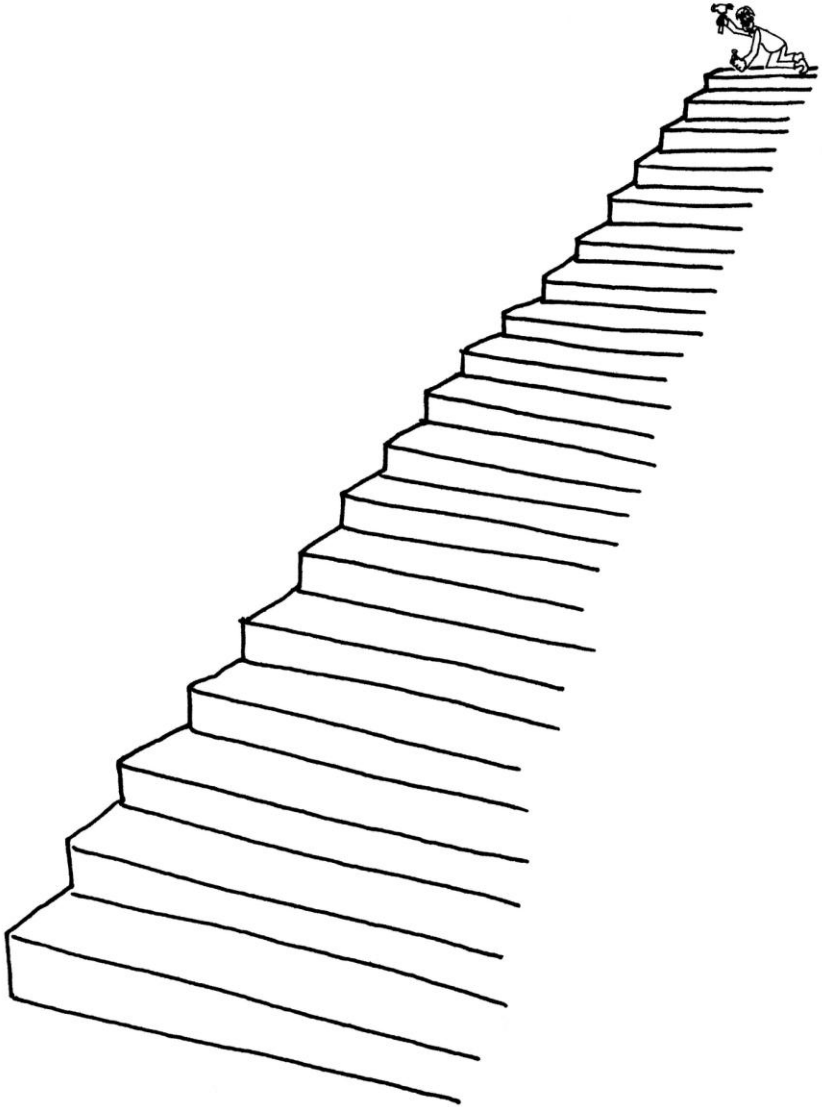
More perseverance.



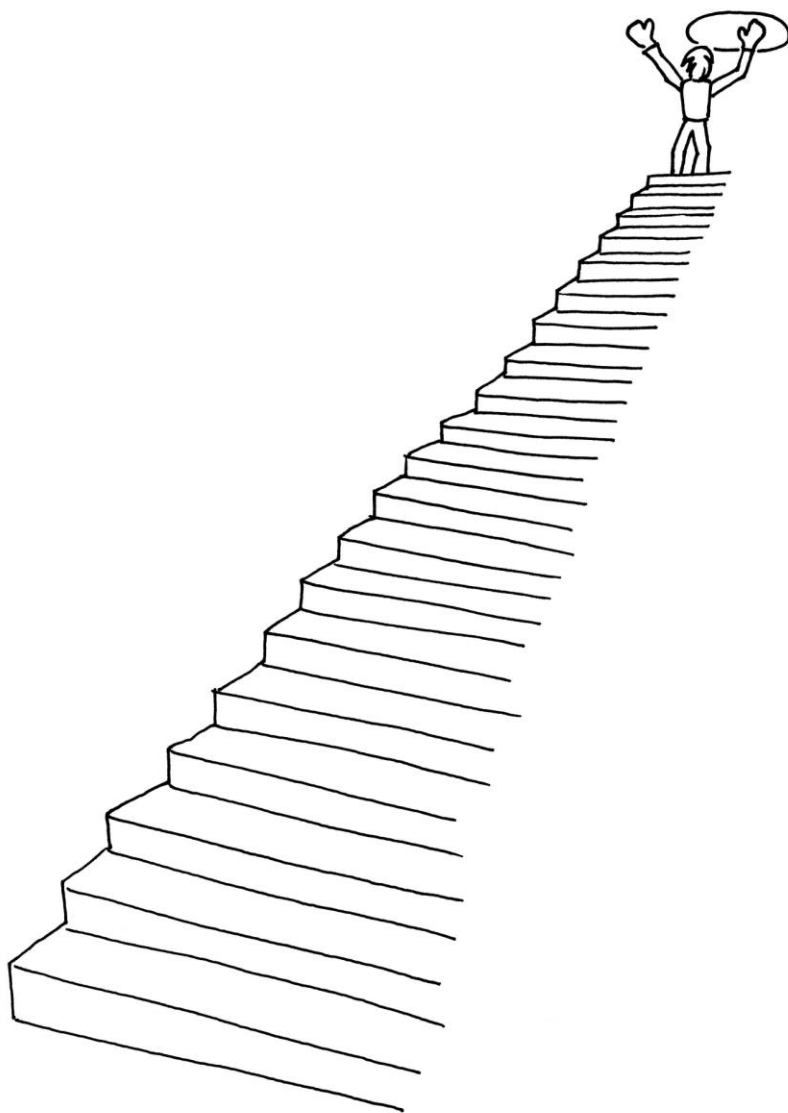
Have I said perseverance?



You get the picture, don't you?



Until one day you're ready.

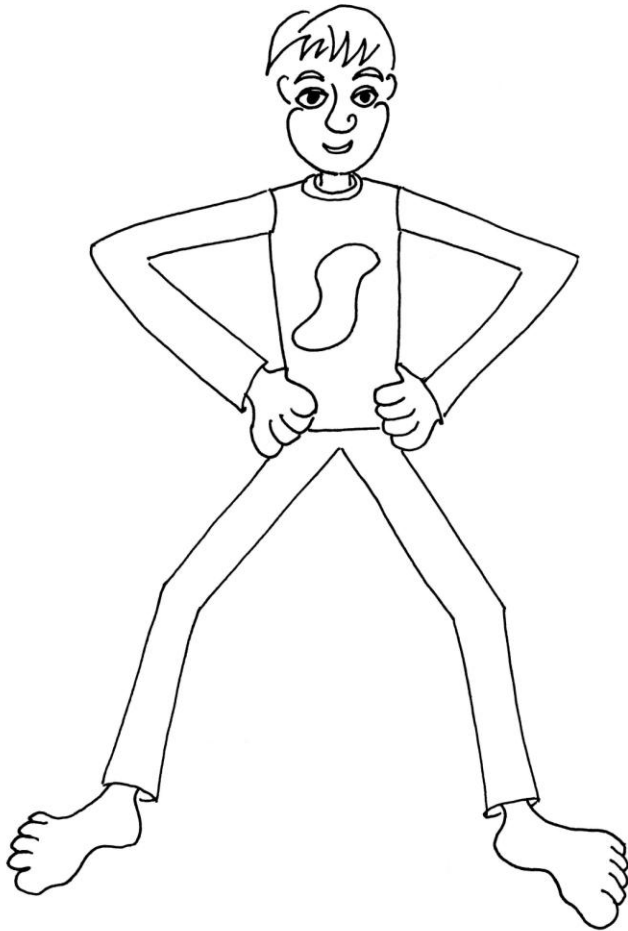


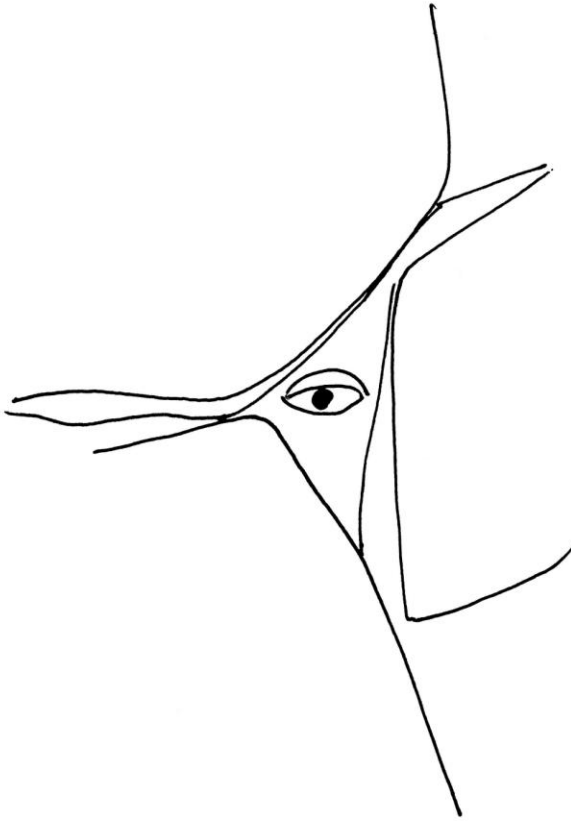
Drum roll, please...

Wait a second.

It's not a bird. It's not a plane. It's—

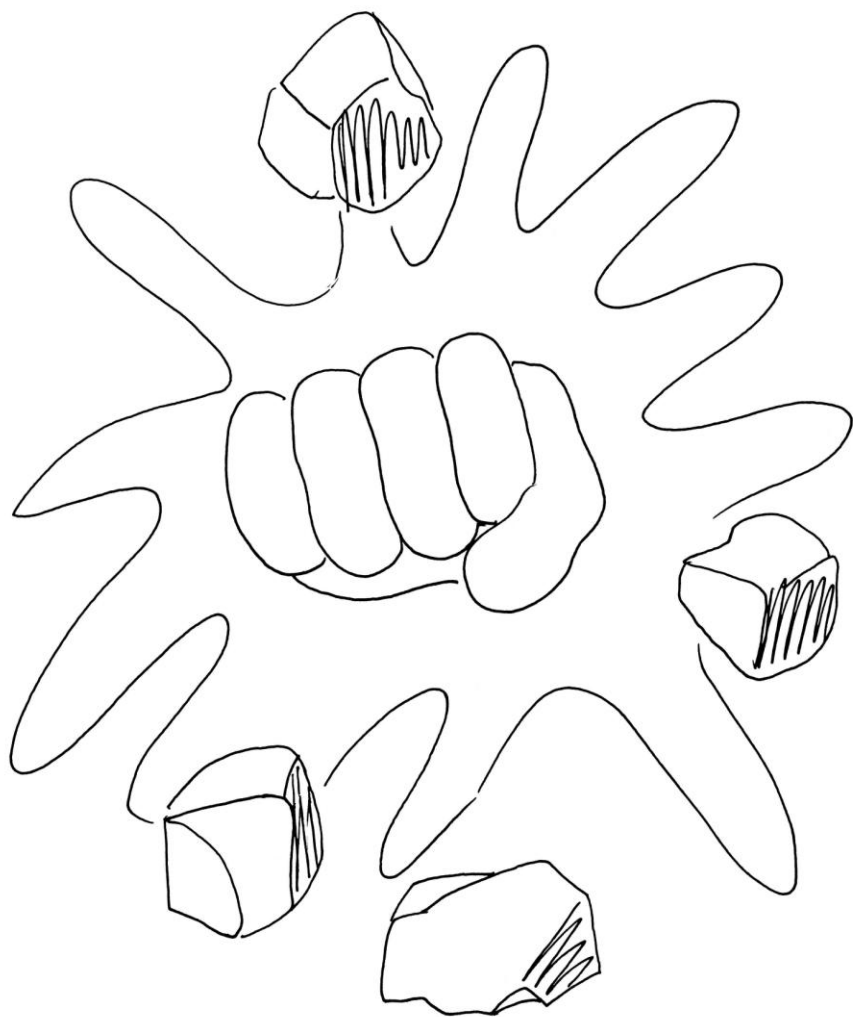
SUPERME!



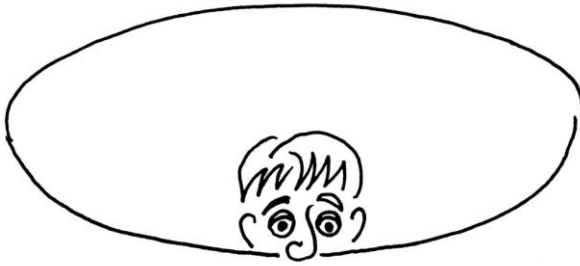


I can do this.

It helps to tell yourself that.



KaBooM!



*How many times should I try
before it's okay to give up?*

If you have to ask that question, then it's over before you start.

THUD!

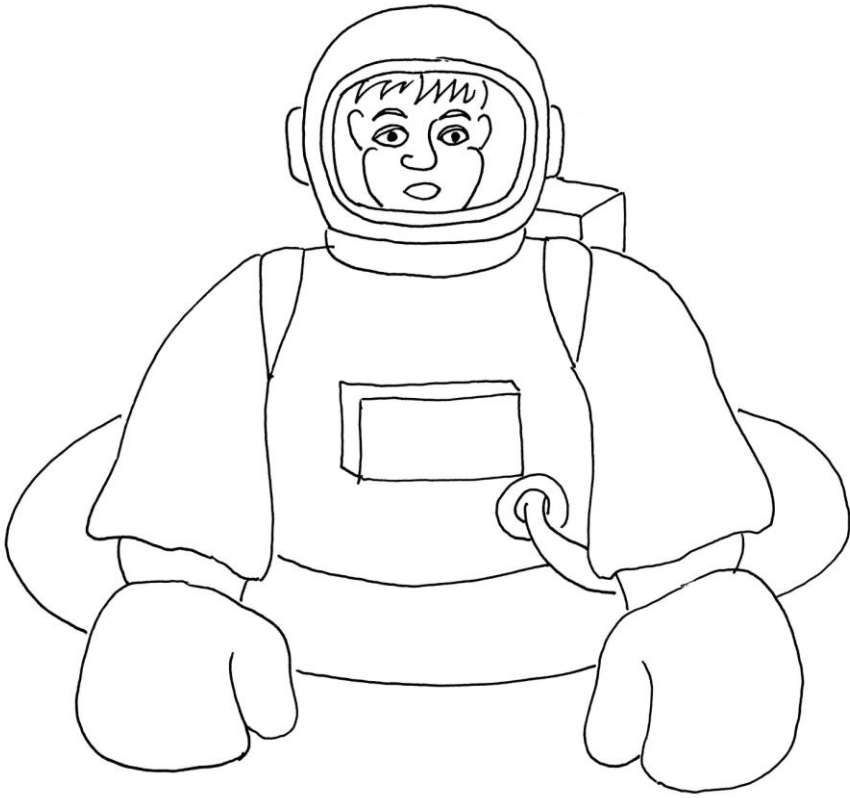
There's that sound again.

THUDI!

THUD!

Does it have to be so loud?

Remember, fear increases in proportion to what you care about.
The more you care, the greater you fear.
Jim cares more than ever before.



That's reassuring.

Here's a trick.

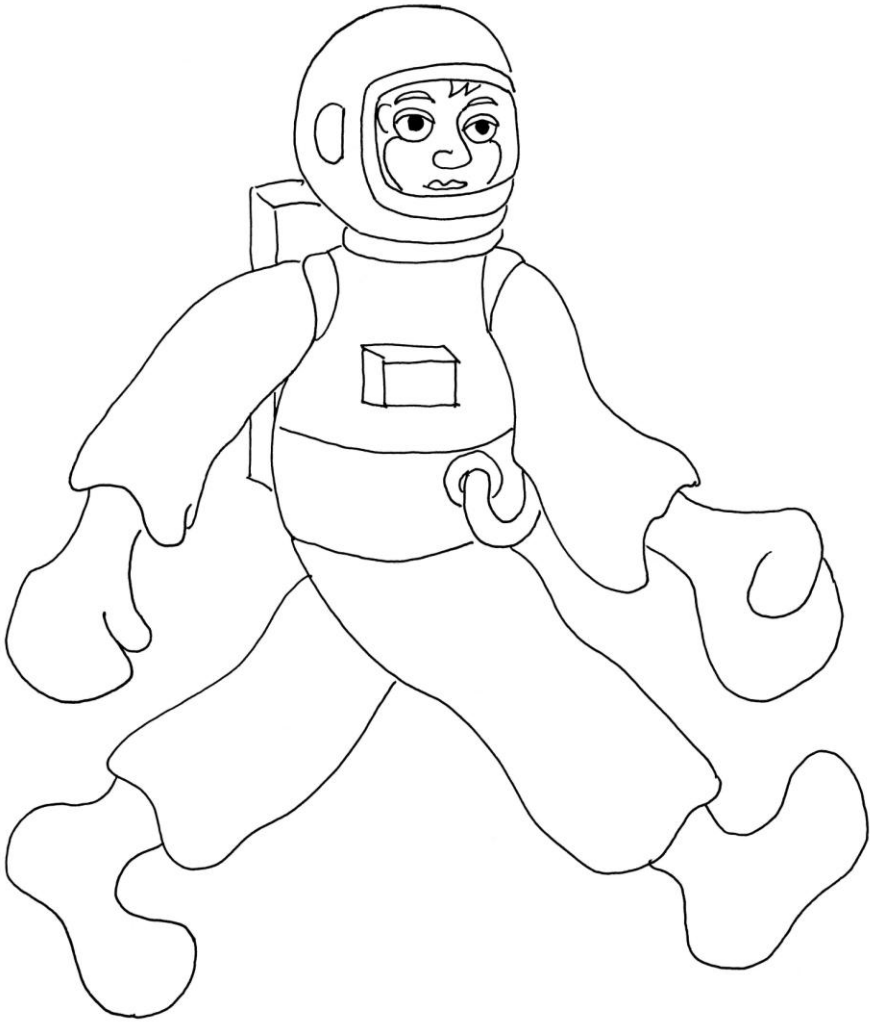
Do you know what will help you get through the fear?

Care about your goal more. Care about it so much until the caring is greater than the fear and overcomes it.



I said I can do this.

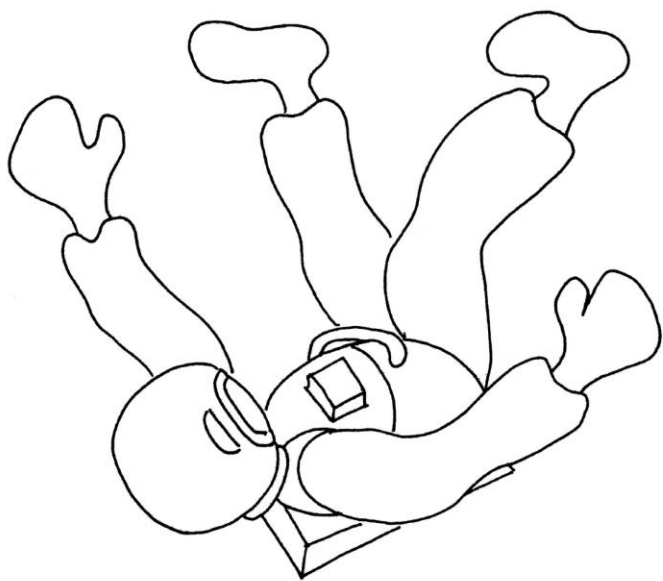
There is no limit to the number of times you can say this.

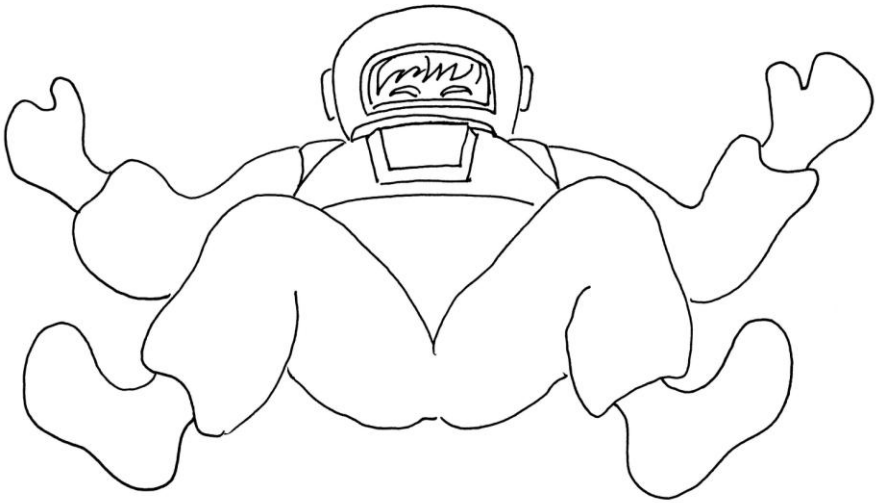


Here goes.

Go on. Raise one foot and bring it down in front of the other.

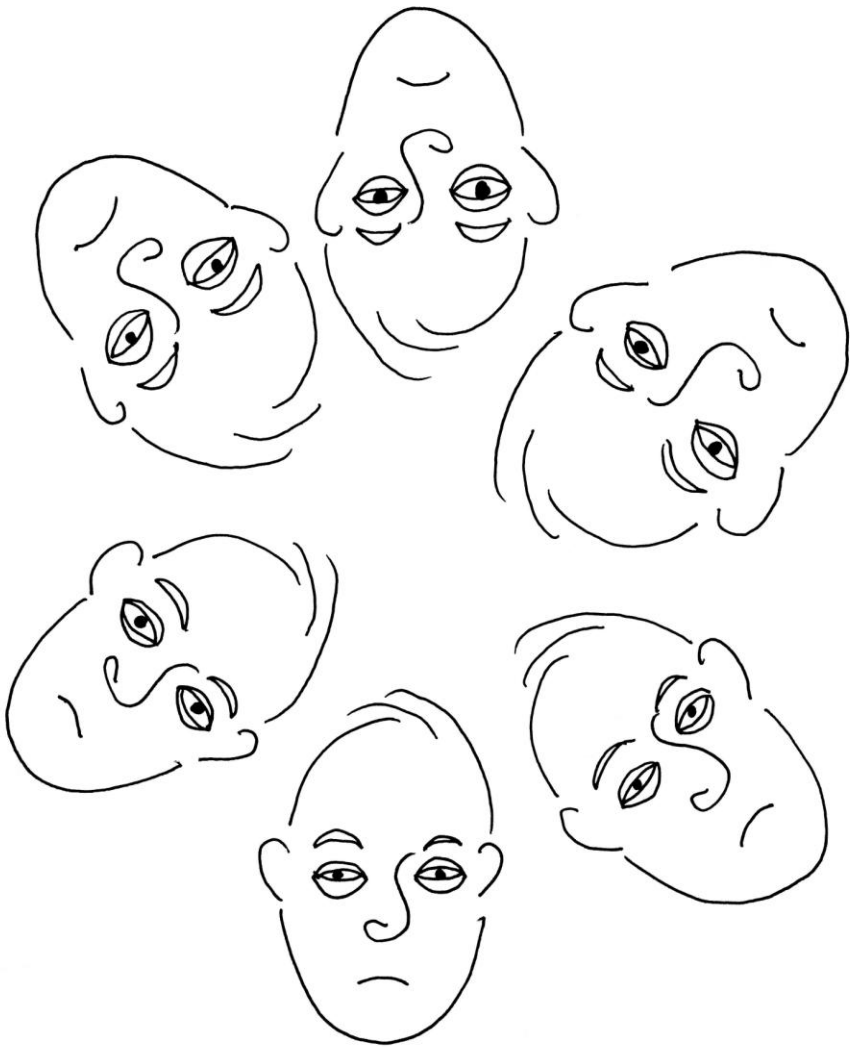
Trust yourself. You can't wait for the fear to go away before you take the first step.

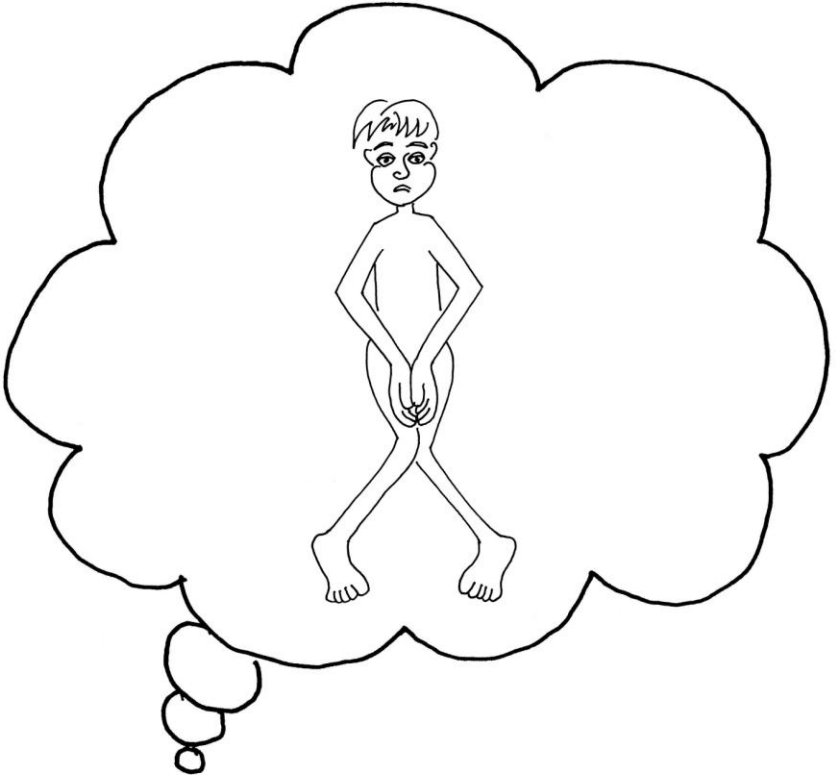




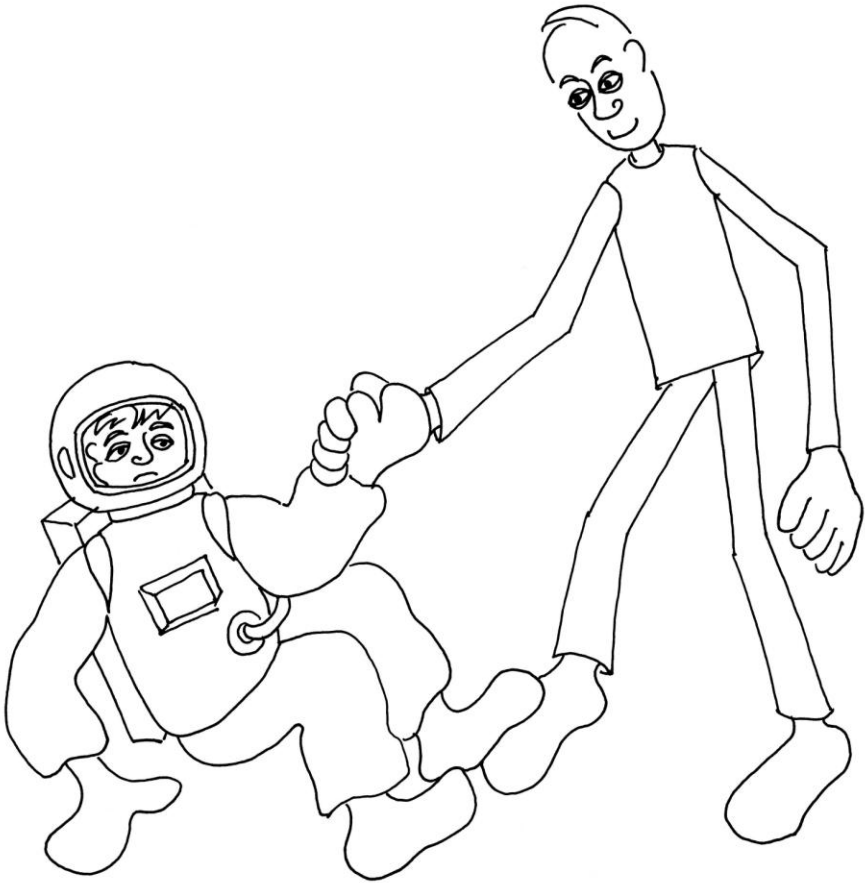
\$#*!

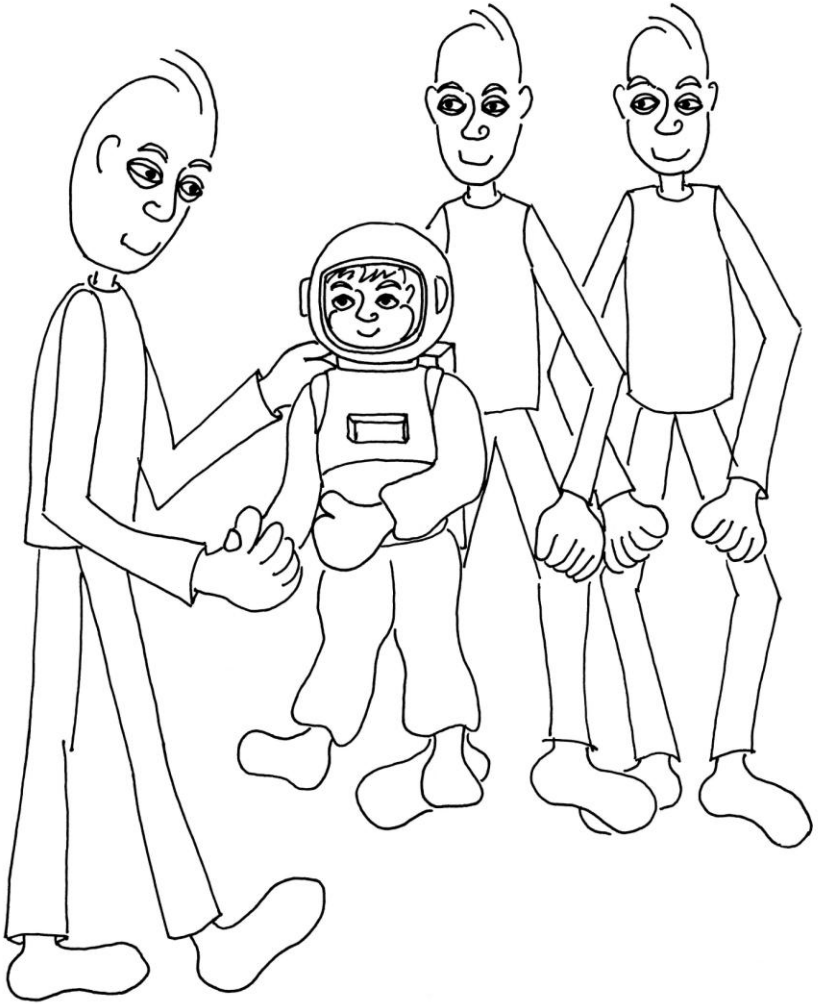






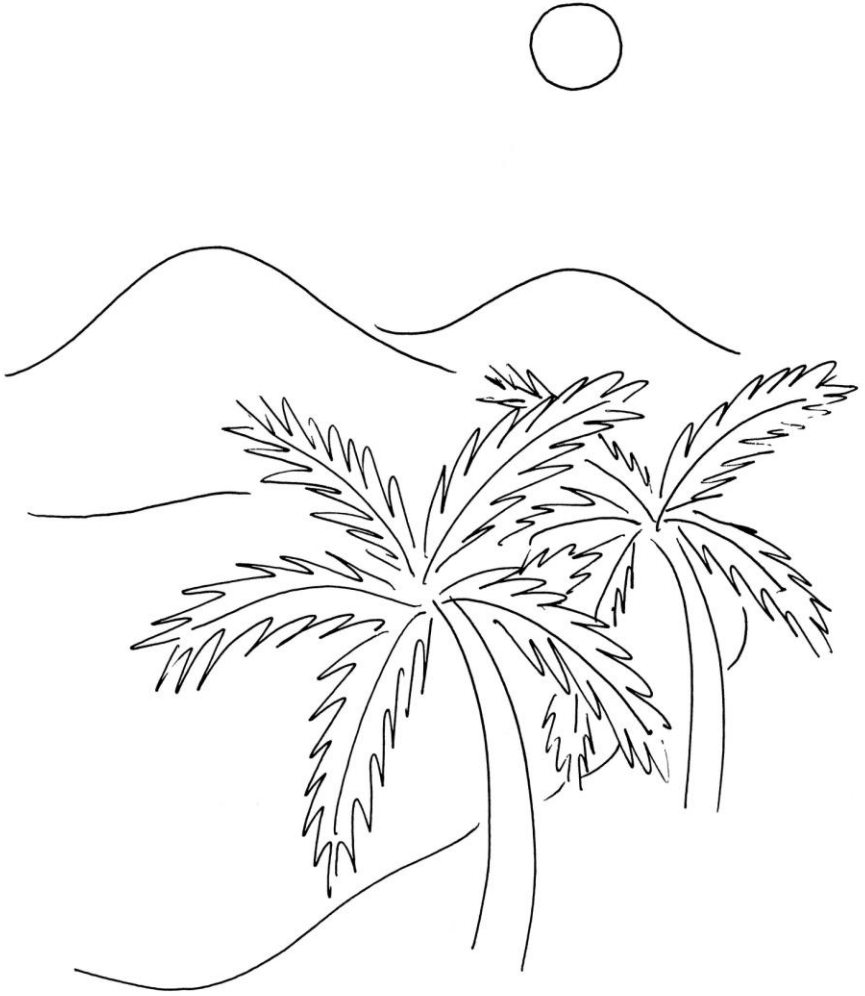
Am I dead?



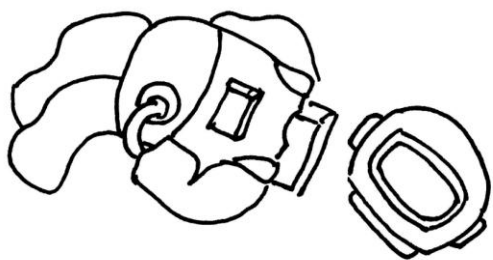


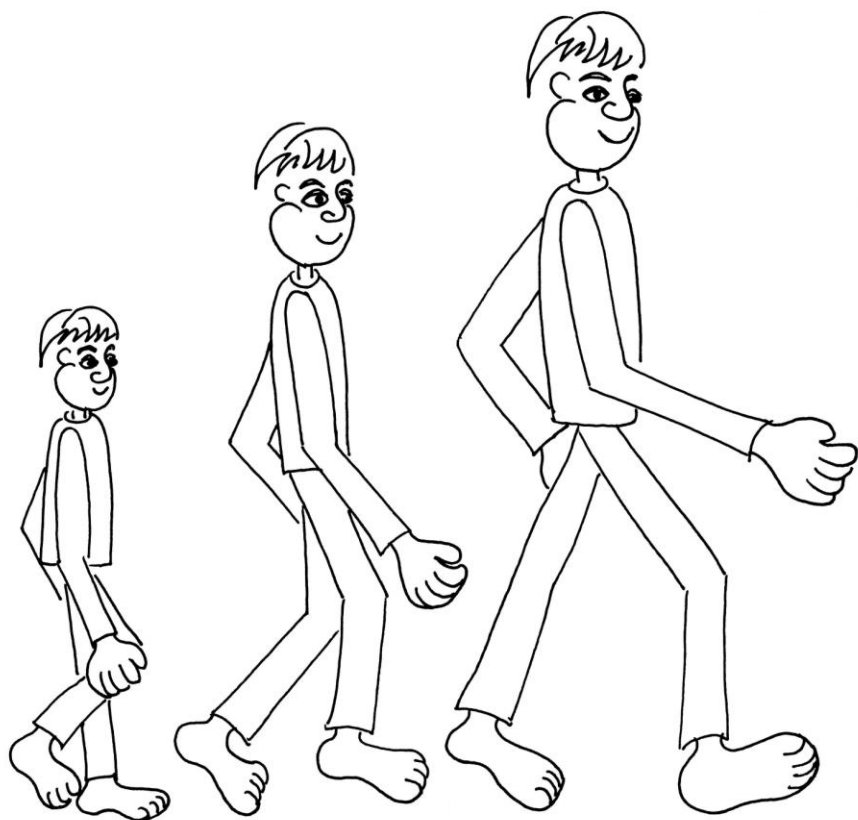
I'm all right.





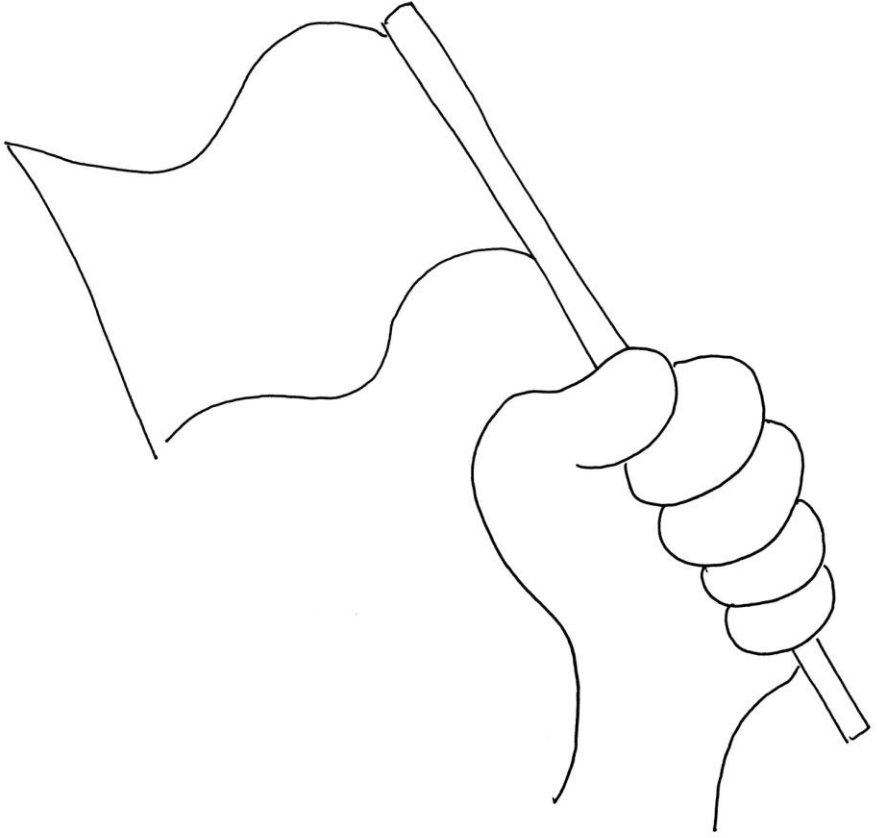
The Land of More!





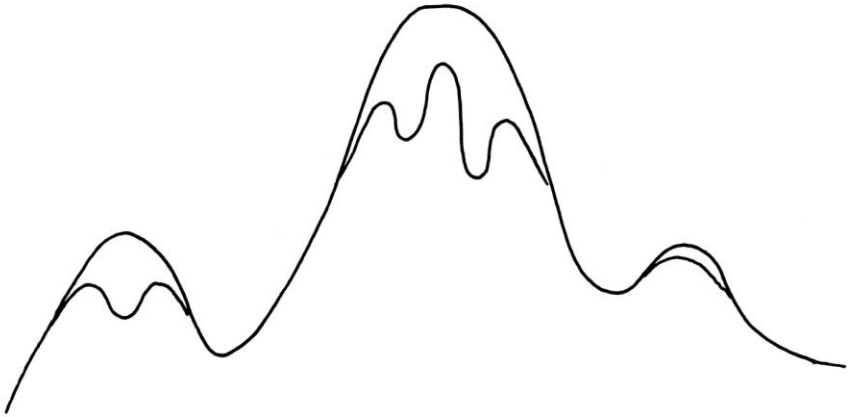
Everything's going to be just fine.





Now that Jim is outside, what do you think he'll do next?
Hmmm.

X marks the spot.



Can he do it?

You bet he can. Even better, Jim knows it, too.

Is he afraid?

If he isn't yet, he certainly will be. But, that's okay. Now Jim understands that when he's scared, it also means he cares. He just has to remember to take it one step at a time especially when fear threatens to overwhelm him. More importantly, Jim also realizes that if he expects to continue to move forward in life, he has to keep taking those steps. Fortunately, with every step comes a bonus, a reward. As he advances, he finds that he is able to leave fear behind. That is, until the next big thought comes around.

Does Jim's journey through fear encourage you?

Or do you still want an uncomplicated life?

By now, you've probably resigned yourself to the idea that a completely straightforward life is highly unlikely. Life isn't simple—everybody says that.

Perhaps instead of simplicity, what you truly desire is to be confident in your capacity to confront, solve and conquer the obstacles that stand between you and achievement. Understanding the mechanics of fear gives you the confidence. When you power through in spite of your fear, you give your talents and abilities the opportunity to shine.

Will fear ever completely disappear?

Perhaps not. Not until your heart stops beating. Honestly, if you're not hearing the THUD, you're not being challenged.

Welcome the thud. Answer its call. It's a sign that life's happening.

For more of Jim's adventures, sign-up for the free inspirational newsletter at: www.Pure-Inspirational-Thoughts.com

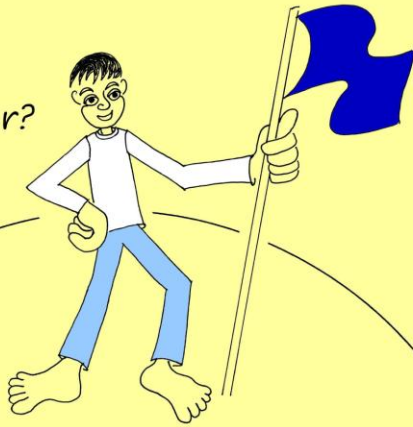
Special thanks to Ian Mellor for his immeasurable support. I am forever grateful.



Ivee Olivares is an artist and writer. She is well-acquainted with fear. Happily, she has discovered the courage to overcome it. In this book, she urges readers to *take the steps*. It's advice she also takes to heart literally.

Taking steps—or walking—not only relaxes her and keeps her fit, but it also allows her mind to wander and come up with great ideas. She especially enjoys evening walks where she can gaze up at the night sky and stare at the moon. *Soul Planet* was an idea that flashed through her mind as she imagined what it would be like to walk on the moon.

Are You a Soul Explorer?



Then travel to the Soul Planet.

Soul Planet is not a mythical planet. It is a real planet, one that you discover inside your soul. The *Soul Planet* series begins with the exploration of fear.

Imagine fear as being stuck in a hole. What do you do to get out of it?

How Deep is Your Hole? is neither a manual nor a handbook on the subject of fear.

It is a story guide that scrutinizes some of the aspects of fear in an informative yet entertaining and sometimes humorous manner.

The *Soul Planet* series intends to take you on a voyage across the mountains, plains and lakes of your heart and mind. It aims to examine and inspire you to conquer the issues that trouble your inner planet and in doing, hopefully, create a more peaceful and comfortable home for your soul.

For more information, visit:
www.Pure-Inspirational-Thoughts.com