



Unbusy

[A MANIFESTO]

When exactly did it happen?

That moment...

When did we stop CHOOSING our lives, and begin SURRENDERING to them.

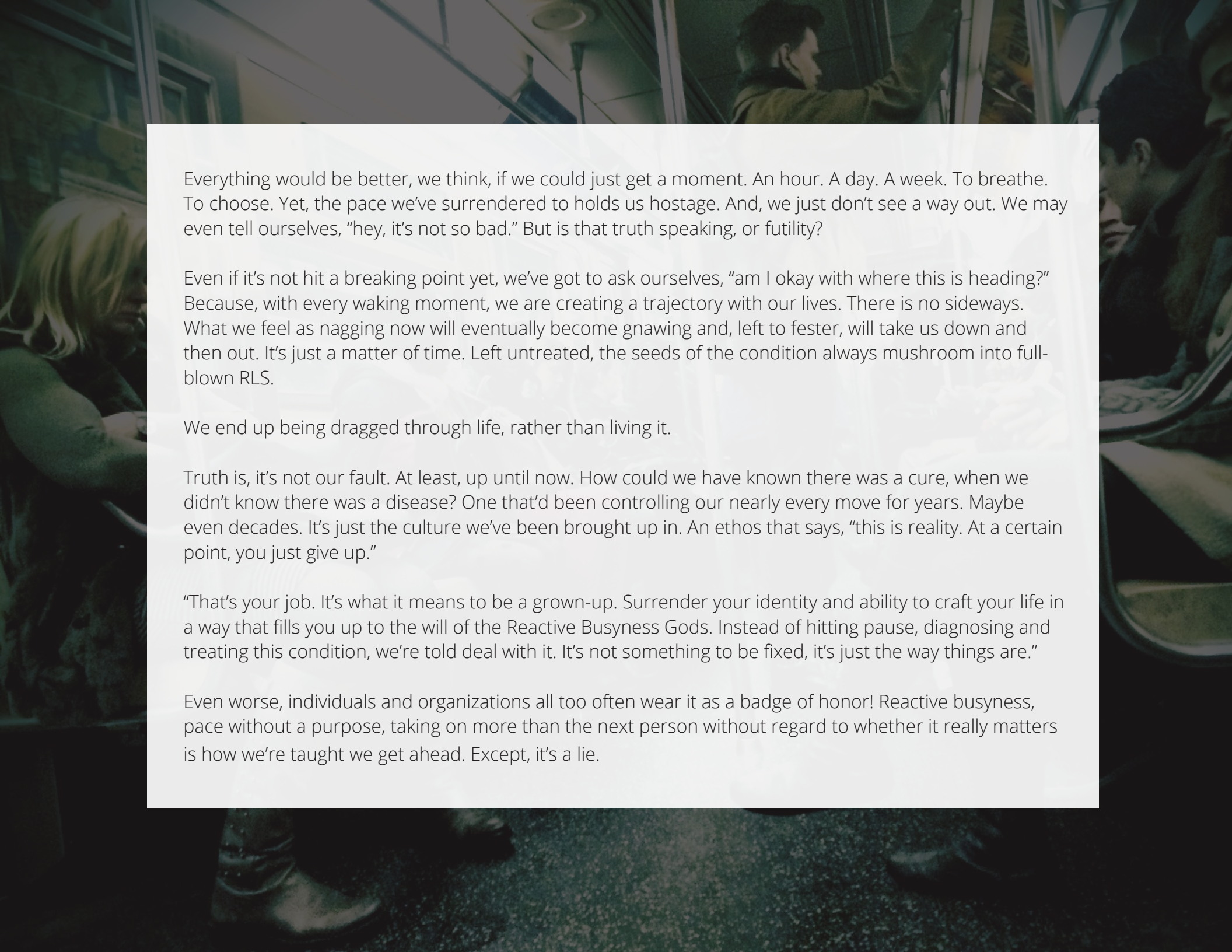
Half-living each day as a reaction to the constant barrage of never-ending to-do lists, social obligations, work functions, status updates, and more? Pummeled by reactive, autopilot busyness, rather than living life as an expression of who we really are. Of what matters most. Of that delicious, brilliant, soulful, sexy and vital part of us that yearns not only to see the light of day, but also to be seen. To be heard. To be relished, loved, embraced, held. Celebrated.

When was the moment...

...when we walked away from what we once dreamed of becoming and the life we once dreamed of living. Ceding the quest to “craft” an existence with intention to breathlessly trying not to crumble, while we do all we can to not fall too far behind. Getting ahead? In our dreams.

Truth is, for most of us, there wasn't a single moment. That's what makes it so insidious. Maybe if there was a big decision, a single happening where we were presented with a choice; to live reactively or intentionally, we'd have seen it coming. And, actually known it was time to choose, rather than what almost always happens.

We relent, and react. We give up control in micro-doses, feeding ourselves to the voracious demands and appetites of pace without purpose, one teeny, seemingly harmless morsel at a time. Until we wake up, years later, IF we wake up, only to discover we are suffering deeply. Breathlessly busy without a pause, without a cause. Not acting with intention, but reacting from the moment we open our eyes to the moment we lay our heads fitfully down on the pillow. Increasingly, we find ourselves wrecked, living with an undiagnosed condition. Reactive Life Syndrome (RLS, for short).



Everything would be better, we think, if we could just get a moment. An hour. A day. A week. To breathe. To choose. Yet, the pace we've surrendered to holds us hostage. And, we just don't see a way out. We may even tell ourselves, "hey, it's not so bad." But is that truth speaking, or futility?

Even if it's not hit a breaking point yet, we've got to ask ourselves, "am I okay with where this is heading?" Because, with every waking moment, we are creating a trajectory with our lives. There is no sideways. What we feel as nagging now will eventually become gnawing and, left to fester, will take us down and then out. It's just a matter of time. Left untreated, the seeds of the condition always mushroom into full-blown RLS.

We end up being dragged through life, rather than living it.

Truth is, it's not our fault. At least, up until now. How could we have known there was a cure, when we didn't know there was a disease? One that'd been controlling our nearly every move for years. Maybe even decades. It's just the culture we've been brought up in. An ethos that says, "this is reality. At a certain point, you just give up."

"That's your job. It's what it means to be a grown-up. Surrender your identity and ability to craft your life in a way that fills you up to the will of the Reactive Busyness Gods. Instead of hitting pause, diagnosing and treating this condition, we're told deal with it. It's not something to be fixed, it's just the way things are."

Even worse, individuals and organizations all too often wear it as a badge of honor! Reactive busyness, pace without a purpose, taking on more than the next person without regard to whether it really matters is how we're taught we get ahead. Except, it's a lie.

When we
surrender intention,
we don't get ahead,
we die alive.

Reactive Life Syndrome is not a badge of honor, it is a symptom of surrender. If you've read this far, it's a safe bet, you've got it. And, it's time for a wake-up call.

If we continue to relent, to react, rather than reclaim, that choice and everything that flows from it--the continued blunting of everything that truly matters--from this moment forward IS entirely on us. The responsibility to step into a place of awareness and intention, to flip the switch from being controlled, to being in control, to free ourselves from the weight of RLS, is now ours.

The Pivot To Possibility

What if, for the first time in a long time, we opened to the possibility of a different reality? One where we reclaimed and crafted each day, rather than reacted and surrendered them to the never-ending demands of others.

What if we bridged the gap from reactive and repressed to intentional and alive?

What if WE chose what mattered. WE set the pace. WE decided who to work with, to play with, to create with, to partner with, to give to, to be in service of? What if WE crafted and celebrated each moment. Not from a place of constantly catching-up frenzy, but of grounded intention. Of lightness. Of joy.

What if we could breathe again?

Not just now. But tomorrow. And the next day. And the next. Moving through life with a sense of not only purpose and connection, but grace and ease.

What if today was the day we rose up and proclaimed to ourselves and the world...

"Oh hell no! I will not surrender the rest of my life to a soul-crushing reactive busyness and a frantic, purposeless pace, only to watch the life I know is possible pass me by, while I remain buried under the weight of 1,000 to-dos that matter to everyone but me!"

The Creed...

There's got to be another way. There IS another way. And, it starts on the deepest level. Belief-deep. Because until we shift our beliefs to support a different reality, we'll never do what's necessary to get there.

Here's what I've come to believe...

GROWING UP DOESN'T MEAN GIVING UP.

BEFORE YOU CAN RISE UP, YOU NEED TO WAKE UP.

YOU ARE NOT A REACTION TO OTHER PEOPLE'S NEEDS.

LIFE BEGINS WHEN YOU ARE UNAPOLOGETICALLY YOU.

BEING OF SERVICE DOESN'T MEAN BEING A DOORMAT.

SELF-CARE IS THE BEATING HEART OF OTHER CARE.

THIS MOMENT SEEDS EVERY MOMENT.

INTENTION OVERRIDES REACTION.

VULNERABILITY IS A VIRTUE.

MEANING MATTERS.

SO DO PEOPLE.

These values. These beliefs. They till the soil of a life well-lived. They anchor the path to a cure. A way back from being busy without a cause, pummeled by pace and ravaged by reactivity.

But in order to manifest it, to inoculate ourselves against reinfection, we need to play a part in our own recovery.

It's not enough to believe. It's not enough to know. We've got to act. To take the first step in our journey back to an intentional, connected, vital, meaningful, lit-up life.





The Origin Story...

How do I know this? Because, in a not too distant past, I was you.

A grown-up, trying to build what I thought was a successful life. Earning a great living, having a power job, on track to big things in one of the most prestigious law-firms in New York. Then, my body gave out, sending me into emergency surgery. My immune system shutdown and a baseball-sized infection ate a hole through my intestines from the outside in.

When your body rejects your career, it's time to listen. It was my wake-up call. The one that eventually sent me out of the law and deep into a blended obsession with human potential and entrepreneurship. Along the way, I became a husband, dad, built and sold several companies, taught yoga to movie-stars and mindfulness to moguls, and grew a career as an award-winning author, speaker and advisor.

At some point, I decided to take what I'd call the "nuclear lifestyle option." I've been deepening into the study of meaning, connection and vitality for decades. But it was time to elevate a lifelong learning quest to the level of vocation. Make it my "J-O-B." This not only accelerated my personal journey into the heart of the human condition, it also birthed mission-driven media and education

venture, Good Life Project, with videos and podcasts that have been viewed and listened to millions of times in more than 150 countries, a global community, programs, events and even an annual summer camp for grown-ups.

Along the way, answers, awakenings and simple, yet practical and powerful models emerged. Steps to be taken that've allowed me to reclaim so much control and sanity. Critical elements of an effective Reactive Life Syndrome intervention and inoculation. All the conversations, fierce experimentation, adventures, models, tools and strategies blended with 50 years of life coalesced into something approaching a "method." I put that word in quotes, by the way, because I still hold it lightly. I am and will always be very much a student.

Do I still sometimes have recurrences? Find myself less than entirely aware and living reactively? Sure. I'm still very much human, and constantly testing my own limits. My kryptonite is now different, though. It's me. Not some other person or player's agenda, but my own passion and unrelenting drive to make big things happen at an unforgivable pace.

And, underneath it, I've now also gained a better, deeper understanding of what a successful, aware and intentional life looks and feels like, along with the ability to zoom the lens out, stop myself sooner when I'm headed

off-the-rails, and reclaim control. I may still find myself in a storm, but it's far more likely to be the result of a deliberate choice, from a place of seeing, knowing and accepting both the upside and the downside, understanding why I'm doing it, how long I will remain and what lies at the end.

At a certain point, I felt called to share whatever it was that'd been coming together in my head, knowing that it'll continue to evolve and improve over time. So, as I always do when it's time to bring everything together, I began to write. It took a few years to get it all down.

What emerged is what I guess I'd consider a simple idea, a way to live it and a modern-day roadmap to not just recovery, but outright flourishing. An integrated, "learn it once, know it for life" approach and set of tools designed to support action. To cultivate awareness, diagnose what's working and what's not, hit reset, then immediately understand where to focus your energy to make the fastest, most powerful journey home to who you really are, to the life you're meant to live, not relinquish.

Step one is to wake up to the truth of our reality. To the level of frenetic, purposeless pace that's ended up guiding so much of each day.

For so many, this "inciting incident" never comes. We just keep on keeping on, driven by a certain willful blindness. Wondering why, when and how things will ever get better.



Waiting, in vain, to breathe. Yet, never doing anything to extract ourselves from the process.

For others, this awakening comes only in the darkest hour. When the weight of relentlessly living for everyone but you finally breaks us, and we're forced to confront the gap between the life we claim to hold dear, and the one we've slipped into.

It is my greatest hope that this manifesto, this conversation, serves as a third option. A wake-up call that triggers a change in behavior, in intention, in direction, long before futility takes the reigns and the years take their toll.

Once, the pattern has been interrupted, though, then what?

Now, it's time to rebuild. But, how?

How do you reassemble the pieces from a place of awareness and intention? How do you reconnect with what matters? How do you know where and when and what to focus your energies on to step back into a place of power and possibility?

This is the very question I've devoted so many of my own waking hours to for years now. Actually, if I'm being honest, for decades, if not my entire adult life. And, what I've discovered is actually a deceptively simple, yet powerful solution.

Step one, cultivate Awareness.

We cannot be intentional, we cannot choose and act in ways that reclaim control and possibility, until we become aware of where and when we're being reactive. As my dear friend, meditation teacher and founder of the Open Heart Project, Susan Piver, recently offered, "unless you feel your own heart, you won't know which gesture is kindness."

Without awareness, there can be no intention. Without intention, you lose the ability to choose what matters, and refuse what does not.

This manifesto is designed to be your awareness wake up call. An inciting incident that shakes you from living by default into owning the possibility and responsibility to choose your behavior from this moment forward. To remove yourself from the weight of Reactive Life Syndrome.

But, the manifesto, alone, is not enough. Decades of autopilot life leaves deep grooves in your brain. It takes effort to change the patterns, to lay down and deepen new, more intentional pathways. This happens over time by cultivating a sustained awareness "practice." One that gives us ability to consistently "zoom the lens out" throughout the day and notice when we're relenting, rather than intending, then choose differently.

How do you cultivate sustained awareness?

Without
awareness,
there can be
no intention.

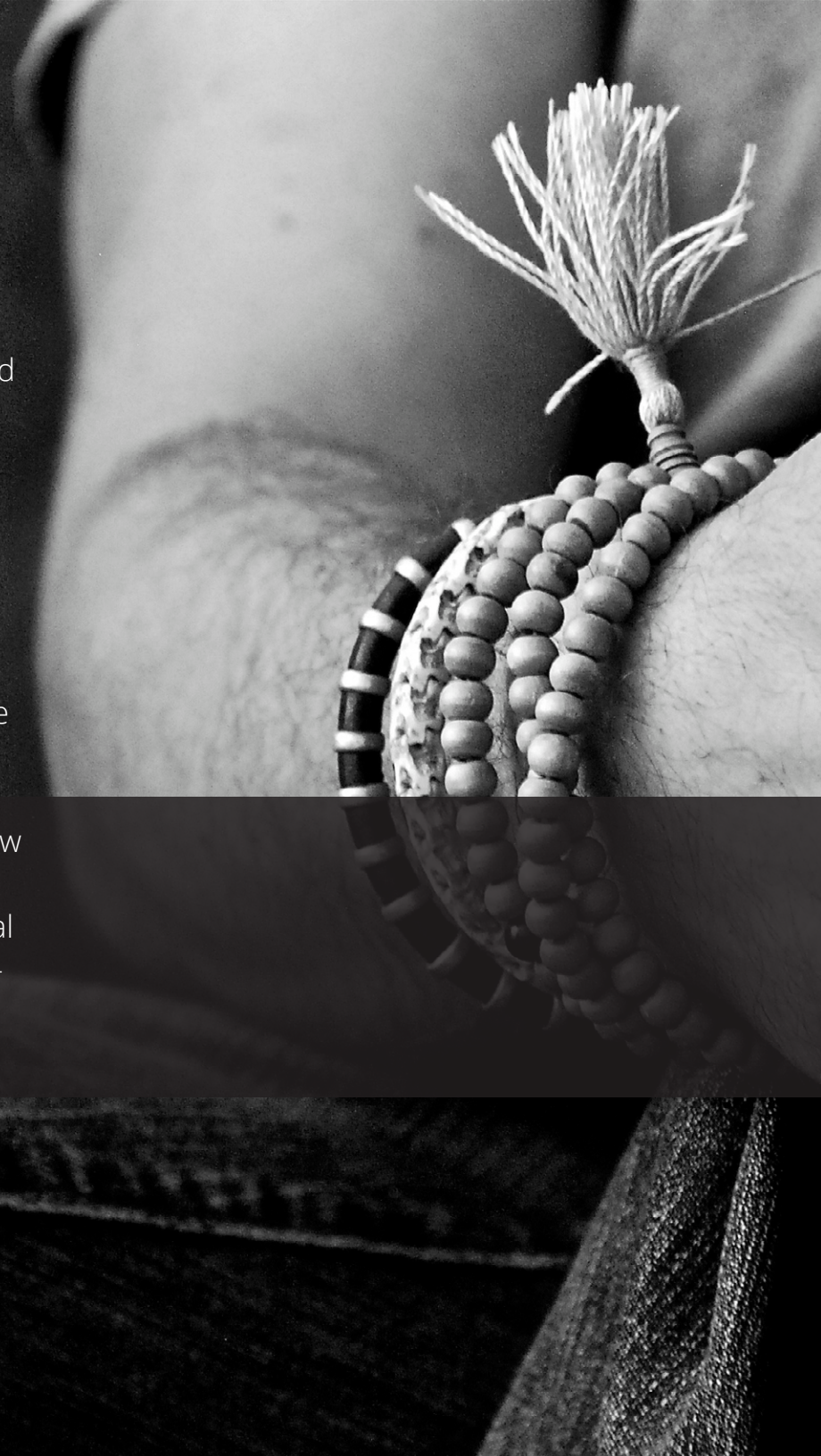
Here are two big awareness levers:

Cultivate a daily mindfulness practice.

You've likely heard or read about this practice. It's been all over the media over the last five years. And, there's a reason. Actually, two. The crippling symptoms of Reactive Life Syndrome have led to pervasive and deep suffering, and it's only getting worse as life gets busier and technology makes it harder to step away and be aware and intentional. Two, it works. A simple daily mindfulness practice is "doable" by anyone, yes, even you.

It's simple, though not always easy. And, over time, it rewires your brain to become more consistently mindful and aware of both your circumstances and the thoughts and stories you're telling yourself about those circumstances. That lays the foundation for intention.

There are tomes written about this practice, but if you'd like to learn how to begin quickly and easily, you can find simple instructions in my book, *How to Live a Good Life: Soulful Stories, Surprising Science and Practical Wisdom*. You'll also find a link to free downloadable guided audio mindfulness practices there as well, to help you get started with ease.



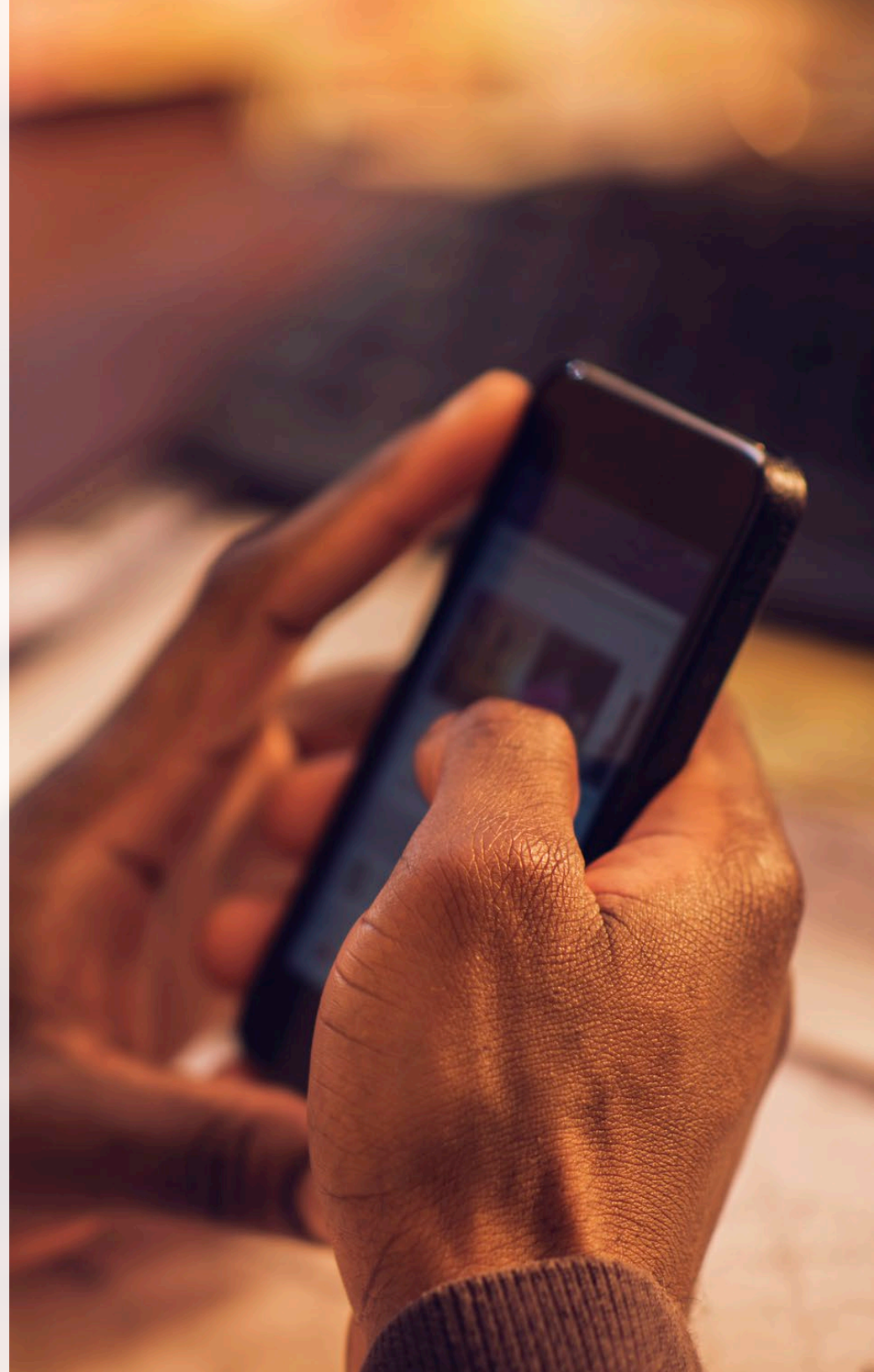
Create Awareness Triggers.

Leverage technology to deliver intermittent awareness prompts. This is fun and even a bit counterintuitive. We've seen so much about how technology is making us less mindful. Well, by getting a bit creative, we can actually harness it to train our brains to become more mindful and aware.

How? Simple. Grab your smart-mobile device. If you happen to use a wearable tracking device, or any mobile device that is programmable, that can do. Find the timer/alarm function and set it to vibrate at set times throughout the day. You can either do it once an hour or at random times. Just be sure you set at least 12 alerts/day, and of course, only during waking hours. It may take a few minutes to set that up, but once you're done, just set the alerts to recur every day, and you're good to go.

Then, every time you feel the vibrate alert, take a moment to focus your awareness on that moment, get present. Notice where you are and what you're doing. Really drink it all in. The motion, the scene, the scent, the sound, the feel. This will begin to train your brain to keep going back to this place of mindful awareness over time, without the need of the vibrate alert. Eventually, you can just turn off the alerts and know you'll be consistently more aware throughout the day.

Now, the question is, what do you do with your newfound awareness? That's where we're going next.



Step two, cultivate intention.

Ever end up in a conversation that turns into an argument and, somewhere in the middle, an awareness lightbulb flickers on and you realize, “oh wow, I’m being a complete idiot and just arguing for the sake of arguing?” That’s what your awareness practice allows you to do. Snap out of the trance of mindlessness and choose your behavior, rather than default into it numbly.

That moment where you realize that YOU get to choose, that’s where intention steps in. Where you get to decide to go left or right, to hold or fold, to love or leave, to say yes or no. This what it means to be intentional. To own the responsibility for the state of your life and meet any opportunity to allocate your time, energy and attention with a deliberate choice, rather than a surrender of will.

When it comes to eliminating RLS and it’s pernicious symptoms from your life, a simple rule applies. You choose or you lose. So, being intentional is all about choosing choice as your default and owning the outcomes, good or bad. It’s about taking an “artisanal” approach to life, weaving it into a tapestry that tells a story that makes you say, “this is my good life.”

Awareness and intention lay a powerful good life foundation, but there’s still one big missing piece of the puzzle. The final ingredient of the cure for Reactive Life Syndrome.



A chalk drawing of two large, colorful wings on asphalt. The wings are drawn with concentric, overlapping bands of blue, green, yellow, and red, giving them a textured, feather-like appearance. The drawing is positioned in the upper left and center of the frame. In the top left corner, the words "Spread your wings" are written in chalk, with "Spread" in blue, "your" in pink, and "WINGS" in red.

Spread
your
WINGS

Step three, follow a proven model of behavior!

Now that you've become more aware of how you're spending your time and energy and cultivated the ability to be intentional, the question beckons, what do you actually DO?

How do you know what things will make the biggest difference, allow you to reclaim control and choice and proactively craft a deeply vital, connected, meaningful and intention life?

You need a simple model that guides your behavior. One that helps you quickly understand what to actually do, day in and day out, in order to step back into a life of presence and possibility.

Which brings us to the Good Life Buckets™.

I've now shared this deceptively simple, yet powerful model with thousands of people. It is detailed in my book, [*How to Live a Good Life: Soulful Stories, Surprising Science and Practical Wisdom*](#). The beautiful thing is, you hear it once, and remember it for life and it guides your actions. Think of your life at three buckets:

VITALITY



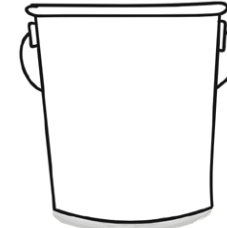
This is about your mind and your body. It's about cultivating stillness, peace, focus, intention, gratitude, resilience. It's also about making your physical body as strong, healthy, pain and disease-free as possible. Your mind and body are a seamless feedback loop. Your mind can take down or enliven your body as easily as your body can affect your mind.

CONNECTION



This is about your relationships. It's about what happens between you and friends, lovers, family, colleagues, your community, and, if it's meaningful to you, a sense of Source or something bigger than just you. It's primarily about cultivating love and belonging, friendship and attachment, community and cooperation.

CONTRIBUTION



This is about how you contribute to the world. It may be the thing you get paid for, but it's not always. It's about self-discovery, identifying your strengths, sparks, values, beliefs and gifts, then optimizing for meaning and aligned action, so that you feel fully-expressed, fully-engaged, fully-utilized and utterly lit-up.

The goal with the Good Life Buckets is simple. Do something everyday to fill each one. Keep all three as close to full as possible. The nearer any one bucket gets to empty, the more pain you feel. All three run dry, you die. Figuratively, and literally. This model, simple as it sounds, is fiercely effective, practical and powerful.

Time to Get Intentional & Full...

It's not enough to nod your head along with everything you've just learned and say, "Yes! I get it. I want it! I'm ready!"

A good life is lived, not dreamed.

Teaching, mentoring and working with thousands of people, I've learned a simple truth. The first step is the hardest, going from stuck to in-motion. Once you're on the move, it's easier to build on the momentum and bridge the gap from reactive and empty to intentional and full. That's our mission.

Let's take that first step together with a single "bucket-filling" challenge. It's fun and feel-good. It helps you be more present and intentional. And, it fills your Vitality, Connection and Contribution Buckets all at the same time.

It's called the "#Give30." I write about why it is so powerful in [How to Live a Good Life](#). For now, let's just focus on taking action and building momentum. You'll find the directions to the right. These will let you dive right in, experience the "giver's glow" and add a little good to the world.

This simple, yet powerful challenge is your first step. But not your last. Commit to building on the #Give30. Do a little something new everyday to cultivate awareness, intention and fill your Good Life Buckets! Over time, something cool will happen. A little thing called...your good life.

The #GIVE30

On the surface, this is just a fun challenge that is all about being kind. Underneath, there's powerful science at work. It has the added benefit of helping you fill your Good Life Buckets, boosting your mood, connecting you with people and being of service. It's what an old friend calls a "zillion-sum game," everyone wins, even those who have no idea it's going on.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Simple - for today, every time you have an opportunity to give, to offer an act of kindness that would take you less than 30 seconds or cost you less than a dollar, do it, up to 30 times before the end of the day. At the end of the day, share one moment or story online, along with the hashtag #give30.

Maximum investment in time and money is 15 minutes and/or \$15. If money is tight, just focus on the actions. This simple challenge often leads to amazing outcomes. You feel lit-up walking through each day looking for chances to be generous. Then there is the giver's glow that comes from the 30 smiles, thanks, and hugs, or just the inner glow of knowing you have done something kind. Now it's your turn. Make today a #Give30 day.



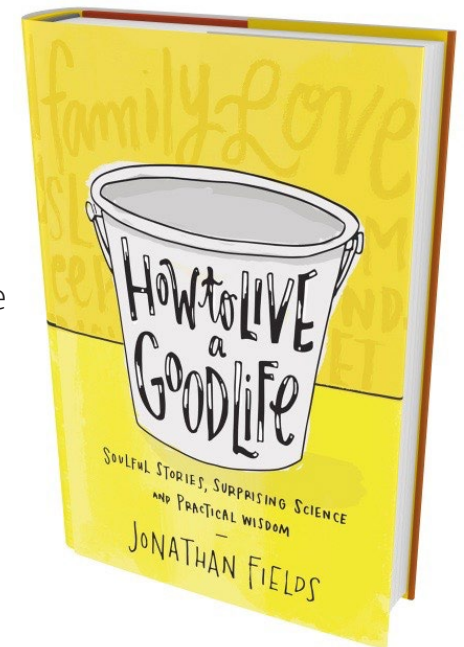
About Jonathan Fields

Jonathan Fields is on a quest to inspire possibility. A New York City dad, husband, entrepreneur and author, he founded mission-driven media and education venture, [Good Life Project®](#), where he and his team lead a global community in the quest to live more meaningful, connected and vital lives, produce a [top-rated podcast](#) and video series with millions of downloads/views, and offer a growing catalog of events and courses.

Jonathan regularly speaks at events of all sizes and has been featured widely in the media, including *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *O Magazine*, *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Yoga Journal*, *SELF*, *Allure*, *Wall Street Journal*, *FastCompany, Inc.*, *Entrepreneur* and thousands of other places that sound cool, but don't impress his daughter. When not writing, teaching, building things or telling stories, he can be found dancing around his living room with his wife and daughter.

His new book, [How to Live a Good Life: Soulful Stories, Surprising Science and Practical Wisdom](#), offers a “doable” path to a life of intention, meaning, connection and vitality with 30-powerful ways to fill your Good Life Buckets and keep filling them for life.

Download the first chapter free at [GoodLifeProject.com/book](#).



©2016 Jonathan Fields. All rights reserved.