

Developing through new experiences

Your attitude to life is probably the crucial starting place, the most important ingredient that will determine what you make of it. I say 'be positive', and by that I mean be highly active and enthusiastic. *Do things!* Engage with life, don't drift across the surface. Initiate things, get involved and take on plenty - plenty of responsibilities and projects, plenty of opportunities and adventures. If we don't improve, we don't grow. If we don't grow, are we really living?

New experiences and ideas are incredibly rewarding, but the problem is they don't come to you - you have to get out there and get involved.

Improvement and growth take place when the individual takes calculated and considered risks and dares to experiment with his or her own way of life.

Life is like a musical instrument: nothing happens until you decide to play it. And the more you do, the more that will happen to you.

As your beliefs about limits change, the limits themselves are pushed back.

By all means make mistakes, but just be sure that you live to fight another day. Never overstretch yourself so that a mistake or failure prevents you from having another go sometime in the future.

We cannot discover new islands unless we have courage to lose sight of the shore.

Be prepared to challenge yourself; challenge your prejudices and your preconceptions about what you enjoy and how you behave.

Develop by experimenting. Try things out in low-cost situations. Innovate. If an idea appeals to you, then do it! You're in a no-lose situation. So what if something doesn't work out. At least you can learn from your mistakes, and if it does work out, then "bingo!"

Calculate risks and reduce risk as far as possible, but don't be afraid of taking them.

Nobel Prize winners very often describe themselves as having a thirst for knowledge, or an exceptional sense of direction, or as being very keenly - even obsessively - interested in the problems they have pursued.

Your needs and ambitions will evolve in the light of new experiences, so it makes sense to regularly re-evaluate and keep ready for change.

You have to keep running fairly hard just to stand still. You learn lessons and then something happens and you realise you've got to learn them all over again. You have to keep at it. It's called living!

The fundamental instinct is for growth, and so one should always aim a bit higher so as to maintain a sense of satisfaction from life.

Very rarely is it money or time that really stops us from doing the things we'd most like to do. It's fear of what other people might say. It's our own inhibitions.

At some stage, try to work with some respected specialists in your chosen field, so you realise that they, too, are flesh and blood, and that you can perhaps keep up with them from time to time, if only for a moment.

The more you progress, the harder it is to go further, or even maintain your present form.

One of the greatest enemies of success is the various pressures on you not to attempt to get up and do things, to rock the boat or change the status quo for those around you, whether that pressure be from friends, family or institutions.

Surprise yourself. Take on new things that you've no idea whether you'll enjoy or not. That doesn't mean drugs, of course, because if you enjoy those, you've only got addiction to look forward to; but if you discover that you enjoy archaeology or hiking, then you've got the whole world ahead of you.

You need to make sacrifices to really excel in one or another area. What are you prepared to sacrifice to make something else to happen? What's more important to you?

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- **Changing direction**
- **Overcoming shyness and building confidence**
- **Your values and priorities**

Travelling & working abroad

If you're taking a year off, put yourself in completely different environment. If you just do something at your dad's office or in your own school, it will almost certainly be too safe.

A year off needs to be well planned and really challenging, something that promises to fill in some of the blanks in your skills and experiences. What a waste if it's just a year-long party before university. It's so easy to get caught up in rushing off to become an adult - to become a chemical engineer or whatever it is you've got your eyes set on. But you'll have 50 years of that. There's so much pressure to do extremely well all of the time, and agonise about which university and which career. Don't be afraid to take time off: 3 months or a year; why not two years if you really know how to use them? You've probably been working for 13 years of schooling, or several years of a job; so have the confidence to step back and take a look.

Try working abroad for at least a few months rather than just travelling, because work exposes you to other cultural ideas on how to live daily life, allows you to experiment with other sides of your personality, and presents you with character-building problems.

A year off is unlikely to be useful or enjoyable unless you specifically plan for it to be so.

Work abroad and learn the language to fluency. These will be two huge assets in your skills-portfolio. You'll become increasingly independent, and be exposed to new cultures and values. All this will make you much more versatile in your working and personal life.

Don't limit your learning in life to learning from those around you in your immediate world. Reach out to learn from as far afield as you can. Books, newspapers, and the web can bring the world to your bedside table. But so can a pair of walking boots and a compass!

If you enjoyed the above section, you might like to take a look at these:

- **Like yourself or change yourself**
- **Deciding what to do for a living**
- **Don't wait to be taught**

Great memories & few regrets

Take advantage of being alive! Dare to ask yourself what you'd like to do today.

It's important to have some sense of the great potential of the world and the number of things to do in it, even if only a fraction of them are presently visible.

Study your life so that its direction is not accidental. You can still take advantage of opportunities, but perhaps you can also create some by your own good navigation.

Seize opportunities while you're still young and have few if any commitments to children or mortgages. Don't wait for some green light. Don't waste your youth with all its energy and possibilities and everything in front of you. Get up and go make things happen for you.

If you want to go into business, try creating the kind of product or service that you *personally* would like to experience.

Invention is problem solving, and the way forward is through invention. Think about what you could invent for the different worlds that you inhabit: the products, the services, the tactics, the techniques.

Find something that really needs to be done, and then set out to persuade the world of it. Good ideas are not rare, getting them done is.

In business and in many other areas of life, it can help to look for the elevators that are going up, then think big and do it quickly. 'Fish up stream' before the best catches have been taken.

Everything seems "*impossible*" until you try it. 18 months before, none of this seemed doable, but you just move forward one step at a time.

The "*yes, but what ifs*" can cut our dreams to shreds.

Go for it! You're likely to lead a more interesting life, to meet more interesting people, and to become a more interesting person yourself.

I wouldn't want to be a concert-level pianist exactly, but I do wish I could play a musical instrument just well enough so that I could express how I felt through playing it, and through singing a few songs. It would also mean I could make a special contribution at parties and get-togethers. I'm always very impressed when someone else can.

Paradoxically, to be too careful can also be dangerous.

Gambling is a compulsion, an addiction. On the other hand, a "calculated risk", is something very different. It is recognising the odds very clearly, and then choosing to accept them.

Never do anything to damage your reputation for being honest and trustworthy. Never do anything that would weaken your sense of self-respect for yourself as a decent person at heart.

Can you make your own luck? Yes, you certainly can! You get up and go find it. The more you try and the harder you practice, the luckier you get.

No one on their deathbed ever wished they'd spent more time at the office, got drunk more often, or had done more drugs.

What 3 skills would you most like to learn? Out of all the people you know, which 3 individuals would you most like to spend a long weekend with? Name 3 activities you would really like to experience? Now ask yourself how you could make some firm plans to do so.

Some real pleasures come from hindsight, even if the journey has been hard.

The most wonderful times are spent with other people on little adventures.

Test out your fears and prejudices. Treat yourself to your dreams and hopes, so that you can move beyond them.

The more you dread something and don't want to do it, the more you will probably learn from it.

One of the worst feelings is walking away from something you wanted to do, but you didn't have the nerve to take on.

Have the courage of your convictions. If it feels right, give it everything you've got while that feeling lasts.

Dare to step out of line and break the mold to do something worthwhile and important to you, because although it feels easier in the short term to be normal and invisible, in the long term you'll only look back and regret it.

If you've got a dream, pursue it. Follow that dream, no matter how wild and hair-brained. You really don't want to wake up and find yourself at 40 not knowing whether you could have been this or that or the other - whether you could have been a striker for Arsenal or played at the Met. Go and try out for the team and find out for yourself. Don't hold back. Give it everything you've got. Chase your dream and find out for sure. Even if there's no hope, at least you will have got it out of your system and you'll know the bottom line. There are few things worse than the regret of not having tried in the first place.

If you enjoyed the above section, you might like to take a look at these:

- **Finding a balance in life**
- **Coping with crises, set-backs, mistakes and regrets**
- **Finding your passion**