



Take Back Your Life in Ten Steps

You're smart, hard-working and good at what you do, but the truth is you also too often feel your life is just a relentless set of demands you have to meet, and too rarely a source of satisfaction. You long to feel more in control of your days, but the reality is you're frequently racing just to keep up.



It doesn't have to be this way, and the solution has to do with deeply embedding a series of simple practices into your life.

Here are ten ideas, but it's not realistic to add them all at

once, assuming there are a number you don't currently do. Instead, start now on a journey in which you add them one at a time, over the coming months. You don't have to do all of them for your life to work really well, and even small changes will often deliver remarkably large results. At the same time, it's likely that the more of these you eventually add, the better and more in charge of your life you'll feel.

The suggestions are in order from the most basic and fundamental, to the highest level.

1. Get sufficient sleep every night. Sleep is often the single most undervalued behavior in our lives and the one with the most immediate power to improve our experience in every waking moment. If you sleep in the 6-6½ hour range, like the average American, just one more hour of sleep a night will leave you feeling more physically energized, emotionally resilient, and mentally clear.

2. Move more. It's not only good for your heart's health, but also

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Negotiating Relationships

In any close relationship there can be differences of belief, perspective, opinion and life choices. Creating a balanced space in which to live and to grow in partnership can be a difficult journey, and some of the areas of disagreement that can be worked on include: figuring out where to live, what church to attend (or not), who does daily chores, how to handle finances, taking care of children, when to have sex, what to eat, how to spend weekends and many more.

While these things can be negotiated with relative ease, there might be some areas in a couple's life where compromise is not called for and that involve what family therapists term *Non-Negotiables*. They include:

- * A partner wants to have children while the other does not.
- * One partner wants to have an "open" relationship and wishes to be involved with others outside the partnership in a sexual way, while the other prefers monogamy.
- * One partner wants to end the relationship while the other wants to "work on it."

A relationship might not be doomed to fail even if the "non-negotiables" are part of the situation if each partner is willing to reflect, discuss and make changes. This cannot usually be done without the assistance of a third party, such as a couple's or family therapist. Working with a therapist creates a different kind of partnership - and allows for further discovery and even adventure. EAP is an excellent place to begin this process. A solution might be reached with the EAP counselor's help or the couple may be referred to longer-term counseling where they can utilize their medical insurance to cover the cost.



..is a short term confidential counseling service, provided to you by your employer, that can assist in identifying and resolving issues that may be interfering with your job or personal life. Our experienced counselors are available across the Islands and can be contacted by phoning or emailing our Honolulu office.



*It's Spring... get out and enjoy
..... Hawaii no ka 'oi !!*

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for your mental health. Do some form of exercise that significantly raises your heart rate for 30 minutes at least four times a week and move frequently during the day.

3. Eat less, more often. Food is fuel. Lean proteins and complex carbohydrates are high-octane fuel. You're best off when you keep feeding your internal furnace in small doses throughout the day, beginning with breakfast.

4. Renew more. Human beings aren't designed to work continuously. We're meant instead to move between spending and renewing energy. Ideally, take a break every 90 minutes, even if only to spend a minute or two breathing deeply.

5. Invest in those you love. The greatest gift you can give is your absorbed attention. Better to be fully present with someone for an hour than physically present, but distracted, for multiple hours.

6. Give thanks. We're far quicker to notice what's wrong in our lives than we are what's right. At least once a week tell another person about something they have done that you're grateful for.

7. Do the most important thing first. Early in the morning, you're likely to have the most energy, and the fewest distractions. Start your workday by focusing without interruption, for 60 to 90 minutes, on the most important and/or challenging task you can accomplish that day.

8. Practice reflection. We're so preoccupied with the urgent that we rarely take time to think about what it is we're doing. Set aside 15 to 30 minutes at the end of each work day (or in the evening) to reflect quietly and without interruption on what you learned that day, and what your highest priorities are for the following day.

9. Keep learning. Our brains work better if we challenge them, and life becomes more interesting when we do. Reading books is a simple and sure-fire way to learn and grow, but so is building a daily practice around learning a new language, a sport, a musical instrument, or around how to write code, fix a car, or draw.

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10. Give back. Take at least one hour a week to put your own needs aside and devote that time instead to adding value to the world at large. One hour a week is very little time, but it's a start — and it's also more than most of us regularly give.

*Thanks to Tony Schwartz and the Harvard Business Review Blog Network. Tony Schwartz is the president and CEO of The Energy Project and the author of **Be Excellent at Anything***



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