THE BIG PICTURE
LAW 1
DO YOUR BEST AND FORGET THE REST

Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment; full effort is full victory.
—— Mahatma Gandhi

My life is filled with challenges—and I like it that way. For example, as I write this book, I’m also in the middle of developing a new workout program, one of my most ambitious yet. I want it to push the boundaries of fitness . . . and that requires me to push my own boundaries, too.

When I was preparing for the Pilates workout, I was nervous. I mean, I’m familiar with the practice and I’ve been doing it on my own for a while, but this was my first time demonstrating the moves on camera. So I did the same thing I do every time I’m faced with something challenging: I put in the legwork (literally, in some cases). I studied. I read. I watched. I trained. I surrounded myself with people who could help me learn. And when the day of the shoot arrived, I stepped onto
that soundstage like I owned it, knowing I had done the best I
could to prepare and would do the best I could to knock it out
of the park.

But it’s taken effort to get to this point. I’ve done my home-
work when it comes to confronting my fears and anxieties.
Thanks to that, I have the tools to get the job done. I wasn’t
feeling nearly as composed leading up to my first on-camera
trainer gig back in 1996—as a spokesman for a product from
NordicTrack called Ab Works. (Feel free to check it out on
YouTube and enjoy the nineties splendor of my belly-button-
level purple tights, midriff-baring shirt, and Flock of Seagulls
haircut.)

The day I got that job, I distinctly remember having two sen-
sations. On one hand, this was my dream, a real acting job (with
lines!). On the other hand, I felt like I was going to throw up. I
was paralyzed with fear—the fear of blowing it. Unfortunately,
that feeling was ten times stronger than the elation of landing the
gig. I couldn’t eat. I couldn’t sleep. I was a wreck. I contemplated
backing out of the whole thing.

Thankfully, by that point in my life, I had a secret
weapon, a mantra playing on a permanent loop in the back
of my mind. That was probably the only reason I didn’t bolt.
Back then I may not have truly believed that mantra the way
I do now, but just saying and thinking it helped me keep my
eye on the prize.

“Do your best and forget the rest.”

Some of you may have heard this one before—maybe because
I say it all the time during my workouts. And with good reason! If
you’re looking for a way to help you turn your life around, to find
success and happiness, you’ll have a hard time finding seven better
words. Let me tell you why.
There’s a reason why Disney hasn’t come out with a Lil Tony Horton cartoon series. It would not be a fun show to watch. As a kid, I wasn’t exactly a go-getter. The only thing I excelled at was excelling at nothing. I didn’t do well in school. I got in trouble. My parents were in and out of the guidance counselor’s office so often that they installed a revolving door with a brass plaque above it reading “For use by the parents of that delinquent Horton kid only.”

My teachers and counselors told my parents time and again that I wasn’t living up to my potential, that I wasn’t willing to put in the work. And they were right. I didn’t want to go anywhere. I didn’t want to study. I didn’t want to do anything. Why did I behave like this, you ask?

Because I was afraid.

I lived in constant fear. Fear of getting beaten up, fear of being made fun of, fear of being picked last for the team, fear of looking stupid, fear of getting a bad grade, fear of having to talk in front of more than two or three people at a time, fear of screwing something up, fear of showing up to school in my underpants.

Okay, I didn’t really fear that underpants thing. But everything I did (or more important, didn’t do) was painted with a sticky, sickly veneer of fear. When I went skiing, I was convinced I’d fall and, sure enough, I always fell. If I tried anything new, I went into it thinking I’d fail. And sure enough . . . thump.

Now, I’m not making excuses, but it’s worth noting that I didn’t have the easiest home life as a kid. I love my parents and I know they did the best they could, but they had a lot of challenges.
to deal with. My dad (Tony Sr.) was an army tank commander until I was five. When he shifted to civilian life, his job had him on the road Monday through Friday, traveling all over New England. So my mom was on her own five days a week raising my two sisters and me. I think she did an amazing job. The three of us turned out pretty darn well, all things considered. At the same time, life was hectic for both my parents—there was a lot of surviving without a lot of thriving going on—and us kids were influenced by that.

Because of my dad’s jobs, we moved around a lot. To be exact: Rhode Island to Kentucky, to Hawaii, back to Rhode Island, to Connecticut, to upstate New York, and back to Connecticut—all before I was ten. Finally, when I was in fifth grade, we settled in Trumbull, Connecticut. By that point, fear had become my default emotion. I’d lived through being the new kid—and all the anxiety that came with it—too many times to remember. Like many new kids, I had the snot knocked out of me by my classmates every time I arrived at a new school (I also had my own revolving door to the nurse’s office).

My senior year of high school, I joined the football team—a rare act of bravery for me. But when those Friday-night lights shone down on the field, I was sitting in the shadows on the bench. I was barely able to get in the game if we were up by twenty-five points. I didn’t know it at the time, but the coaches just kept me around as a practice dummy. (In retrospect, that might have been because I had yet to learn how to do my best when it came to after-school practices.)

My dad, on the other hand, was always a champion sportsman. He was a three-sport captain—football, basketball, and baseball (he was an incredible pitcher)—and his dad, my grandfather, spent a lot of time making sure my father was the best.
Unfortunately his old-school, 1940s technique didn’t leave much room for positive reinforcement. “Throw the ball fast and hard! Stop being an idiot!” As much as my father enjoyed sports and wanted to get better, I don’t think he was a fan of that process. So when he had a son who played sports, he pretty much left me on my own. He tried to help me once in a while but I didn’t respond well to constructive criticism. I know that he was doing the best he could . . . I just was so different from him. I got used to not wanting to be noticed, not wanting to stand out. Not wanting to try because of not wanting to fail.

**THE BIRTH OF A CATCHPHRASE**

My lightbulb moment didn’t come until years later, after I had decided to be a full-time trainer. (More about that in Law 3: Have a Plan. You’re gonna love that chapter.) After that epiphany, I started finding myself in increasingly high-stakes situations—training celebrities, endorsing fitness gear, filming workouts, and pitching those workouts. Life became a constant stream of challenges that required me to get a handle on my fears.

Around that time, I started checking out the occasional self-help book or attending the odd weekend seminar. My life was improving, things were changing, but I knew I didn’t have the tools to make the most of the opportunities that were coming my way. So I read the whole self-improvement canon: Keith Ellis, followed by Wayne Dyer, Gary Zukav, and Tony Robbins. Each and every book, every seminar, every mistake I made during that time helped me look inside myself and identify my fears so that I could build confidence and acquire the tools I needed to succeed.
Then came Don Miguel Ruiz’s *The Four Agreements*, a quick read containing—you guessed it—four simple rules for living an excellent life. The fourth agreement particularly impressed me: “Do your best.” Ruiz’s point is that if you do the best job you can every time, no one—including yourself—can fault you for not trying. I thought this was incredibly wise. At the same time, it felt incomplete. For me, at least, it didn’t clear away the static clouding my brain left behind by life’s haters, the naysayers, and the football coaches. So I added something that made it sing for me.

**Do your best and forget the rest.**

“Do your best” means showing up and doing your best without being attached to the outcome. It means reality is not something you can manipulate. “Forget the rest” means you don’t let the same things that used to get in your way, get in your way. It took years of trial and error, seminars and books, auditions, and, yes, odd jobs to put those two things together. Hopefully, this chapter makes that connection a little easier for you.

As a kid and in my early twenties, I didn’t always take advantage of opportunities because I was afraid I wasn’t ready. Before my lightbulb moment, I would have let the apprehension I feel about shooting a Pilates workout consume me. I probably wouldn’t have had the guts to follow through (and if I had, I would have blown it).

But over the years, I’ve made a point of taking chances and gaining confidence in situations that would have scared me earlier. Equipped with “Do your best and forget the rest,” I’ve come to learn that it doesn’t matter whether you blow it or not. What’s important is that you walk away with the knowledge that you gave it everything you had.

So, if this Pilates workout just doesn’t work out—so what? Years ago, I stopped worrying about failure. I stopped making excuses. I stopped worrying about what people would think.
That’s what got me and my purple spandex tights through that NordicTrack commercial. And today, when I’m faced with a seemingly insurmountable task, I try to do the same thing. Because the challenges are the best part of life. If you’re not doing something scary, it probably isn’t worth doing. Life should be about pushing yourself and moving into new territory.

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**HOW TO PLAY TAG WITH NEW HATERS AND BLOCKERS**

Some people fear change. They always did. If you look through history, there are two constants.

1. Some people fear change.
2. Those who can’t overcome that fear fall by the wayside.

I’m talking about all the poor saps who feared fire, medicine, astronomy, democracy, and technology. If they’d prospered, we’d be living in a dark, flat world without voting rights, penicillin, or Pinterest.

But apparently, the descendants of these people didn’t get the email memo (because they’re scared of the Internet, I’m guessing) so they continue to refuse to adapt to the world as it changes and evolves around them. I called these people “New Haters.”

New Hater /n(y)oo heyt-er/ noun. One who hates anything new.

I used to be a New Hater. I found ways to hate yoga before I tried it. Pilates is another example. Hated it before I had a clue.
what it was. Old dogs don’t like new tricks and that’s why old dogs get old faster than they need to. Although most people have come to terms with the fact that the world is round, New Haters still struggle with technology, fitness programs, nutritional advancements, politics, religion, equality, you name it. They’re unhappy, frustrated, stuck people, so they keep trying to get by with old ideas that no longer serve them. Why take a risk on exotic fitness concepts or eat weird food like quinoa or kale? Why interact with people who might not see the world exactly like you do? Why read a book that might force you to see a new perspective? Why do any of these things when you can stick with the same old things you’ve been doing since before high school?

The answer to all these questions is that New Haters are afraid of change. I don’t want to be completely dismissive of these people. After all, change can be a challenge. At the very least, it’s uncomfortable. At the very most, it’s flat-out terrifying. But still, it’s what we need to embrace to do our best—and New Haters are afraid to do their best and forget the rest because it requires effort and dedication, which also bring the risk of failure. So when they see people adapting to and thriving in the brave new world around them, New Haters often lash out with criticism or dismissal. They judge, they condemn, they revile, they jest—in order to justify their own lack of progress. At this point, a New Hater becomes a “Blocker.”

Block•er /blok-er/ noun. A New Hater who attempts to block your progress in order to justify their own inadequacies.

Odds are you have a Blocker or two in your life: a colleague, a boss, a friend, or a family member. When you make positive
changes, they get uncomfortable—because they have to take a hard look at themselves. You were a certain way for a long time and maybe that Blocker has some of the same issues that you left behind. He or she carries a weight that’s been lifted off your shoulders.

Other Blockers are complete strangers (and certain congressmen) loaded down with their own dogma or, even worse, by their own failure. They can’t tolerate free spirits, productive people, happy people, people who think outside the box, people who want to change. Just like you, I’ve sparred with Blockers my entire life. Take P90X. People I didn’t even know were waiting in line to say, “An extreme fitness program? You’re never going to sell that! Why even bother doing it?”

Luckily, by the time I was developing the program, I had some serious fitness know-how under my belt, so dealing with Blockers wasn’t an issue. In my younger years, the opinions of these people would have stifled me. I was too scared to trust myself. Nowadays it’s different. I simply thank them for their opinion, make like Columbus, and hop on the Niña, Pinta, or Santa María, sailing off to the New World without them. Once you master that, the hard part of dealing with Blockers isn’t ignoring them—it’s not gloating when you prove them completely wrong.

If you listen to those people, odds are that you’re as terrified of the world as they are, so do yourself a huge favor: Ditch the fear. Hate less and explore more. Go to that yoga class, eat that kale salad, smile at a stranger, listen to new ideas without that disapproving look on your face, and maybe, just maybe, life will get more fun and interesting.

And the next time a Blocker negs you, play a little game of TAG.

Do Your Best and Forget the Rest
Take a deep breath. As you exhale, try to release your anger or frustration.

Acknowledge their opinion. If they feel heard, they’ll probably leave you alone. Besides, most people are just looking to feel acknowledged in life—it’s a simple (and free) gift to give them, and it may even help them see your point of view in the long run.

Go do your thing. It’s the only way you’ll discover how great your life can be.

The sad truth is that most people have a hard time learning this lesson—it’s not as easy as it seems. Whether you’re trying to invent an ice cream maker that uses only frozen bananas (It exists! I have one!), or you’re just trying to get fit and healthy, or you’re trying to reconnect with your spouse—it’s your job to shine like some kind of crazy diamond. When you focus on the right direction, there’s a much greater likelihood that you’re going to stay with it—and succeed. You’re bulletproof, as long as you do your best and forget the rest.

Part of my success in the fitness world is that I believe in the stuff I sell and I believe in myself. You can do the same. You may not think of yourself as the front man or front woman for a brand, but you are. You’re the front man or front woman for You™. So forget everything. Forget the noise. Forget the Blockers. Just do your best at being you. You’ll feel better. People will notice. They’ll start coming out of the woodwork, then we’ll all feel better together because misery may love company, but guess what? So do joy and success.

And that, my friends, is how this Big Picture thing works.
Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone’s task is unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it.

—Viktor E. Frankl

We all have goals. They’re a great way to make progress in life and keep moving forward in the right direction. Maybe you want to drop ten pounds, or do that 5K mud run, or get a raise, or get a date with that cute temp in the shipping department. These would qualify as short-term goals. They are all great motivators, but what happens once you reach them? Your short-term goal might be to sail out of the bay, but once you get there, you still have an entire ocean to contend with. And if you want to eventually sail to your favorite island, dock the boat, get out, and kick back with some coconut water (long-term goal), it’s important
that you also put some thought into why you jumped into a boat in the first place, and why you chose that particular island.

In other words, you need to find your purpose.

The French call it *raison d’être*, which loosely translates to “I smell magnificently of cheese.” Okay, not really. It translates to “reason for being.” Purpose is the reason you are. It’s the deeper, driving force behind your goals. It’s what moves you from here to there. How do you find it? Take your goal and look at it as part of the Big Picture, the view from sixty-four thousand feet. You know what you want to do, but why do you want to do it? How will your goal ripple across the rest of your life? Once you answer those questions, you’re on your way to finding your purpose.

“Find my purpose?” you shout. “Tony, I’m lucky to find my car keys in the morning. I lose three socks every time I do laundry and I still have ‘Missing Turtle’ signs posted around the neighborhood in the hope that Mr. Sniffles will come back to his terrarium. And now you expect me to find my purpose?”

I understand. It sounds like a big job—but you can do it. After all, once you find a purpose, finding everything else gets much easier. That includes your keys, your socks, and Mr. Sniffles.

Here’s a hint to help you get started: *Your purpose probably has something to do with having a better life.* For many people, the first “purpose” that comes to mind has to do with money, vanity, reputation, or material stuff. Forget about that garbage! It’s all smoke and mirrors. Looking good in a bathing suit is a nice feeling, and driving a fancy car is fun, and having people think you’re cool is flattering, but the thrill of those things subsides in a nanosecond, and you’re left with nowhere to go. And, besides, when those kinds of goals are your main focus, it becomes destructive. You lose perspective. Maybe you wake up one day and decide there’s no such thing as “too skinny” and you start treating your body in
unhealthy ways. Or you stop caring about your financial commitments in the pursuit of the latest Thing and end up in a pile of credit card debt. No matter how you slice it, a shallow purpose isn’t going to get you from point A to point B. It gets you from point A to point A and ¹/¹₀.

They say that about 3 percent of the people on Earth live in bliss. So what the hell are the other 97 percent doing? Maybe they’re spending too much time on ME, ME, ME! (By “me, me me,” I mean “them, them, them,” of course.) I’m not saying that your purpose should be to save the planet. However, I’m the first to admit that our planet could use a little saving. And one reason is that a big hunk of the human race treats itself horribly. They’re overweight, stressed, depressed, and repressed. When you treat yourself badly, it becomes difficult to survive. And when you’re barely getting by, it’s pretty difficult to identify a sense of purpose larger than putting one foot in front of the other. And it’s even harder to work up the energy to make strides toward your goals.

There’s no doubt that taking care of yourself physically can help you with almost any purpose. When you feel better, you accomplish more—and that’s not just some motto I got from a bumper sticker. A recent study out of Brigham Young University shows that people with poor diets suffered a 66 percent loss of workplace productivity. People who didn’t exercise regularly lost 50 percent of their productivity. The numbers don’t lie: Taking care of yourself enables you to be more productive—and that means you’ll get more out of life.

Your brain, your heart, your lungs, your muscles, they’re all interconnected. When you’re physically healthy, there’s a much greater likelihood that you’ll see the world with more clarity. Which makes it a lot easier to understand your purpose. Once you do, you’ll have a better chance of accomplishing it. Even if
your purpose is Tibetan throat singing, you’ll be able to hold your breath a lot longer when your lungs are working at 100 percent capacity. You see, even if you decide your purpose has nothing to do with fitness, it still has *everything* to do with fitness.

I know this all sounds a little esoteric, so let me give you a concrete example of purpose in action: my friend Jeremy Yost.

When I met Jeremy in 2010, he blew my mind. It was at a Beachbody Coach Summit and he was a Challenge winner, meaning he kicked butt and the company noticed, so he was there to collect his award.

When he first walked up to me, I saw him as just a normal, clean-cut, super-fit dude. (We get a lot of those wandering around at Beachbody gigs.) Then he showed me a photo of how he looked just one year before. My eyes almost popped out of my head, cartoon-cat-style. “Old” Jeremy was the sorriest-looking 370 pounds of humanity I’d ever seen. (Sorry, Jeremy. You know I love you, buddy.) If a picture tells a thousand words, 999 of those words were “miserable.” I was riveted. How the hell did *that* guy turn into *this* guy?

I had to get into Jeremy’s head. I needed to know what made him tick. What could motivate someone back to health after traveling so far down such a dark path? For the rest of the night, I pushed him for intel. Then I invited him to my beach workout the next morning, and we had a second round of interrogation. Still, I needed to know more. It took months of conversations before it clicked. Thanks to Jeremy, I saw firsthand how the Big Picture can pull anyone from the brink of self-destruction, can make even the most strung-out carb tweaker put down the Cheetos. Jeremy Yost turned his life around because he found his purpose.
Jeremy started out as everybody’s all-American. In his Kentucky high school, he played football and baseball and he wrestled. I’m guessing he also had a Camaro and dated the head of the cheerleading squad, but we’ve never really discussed that. Anyway, like many of us, his exercise level slowed down in college and he soon saw signs of his upcoming struggles—a little pudge here, a subtle ache there—but he ignored them. “I kind of had it under control,” he says with a shrug. After all, it was just a couple of pounds, right?

But after he got married and landed a job in corporate America, the wheels fell off completely. “I guess over time I had developed this mind-set that, because of work stress and because I gave it my all each day, I could reward myself through meals and just not being active,” Jeremy explains. “It got way out of hand.”

To make matters worse, Jeremy had broken his ankle playing football in high school. The pounds that his pizza and pasta habit packed onto his frame made it all the harder for him to get around on that ankle, let alone exercise with it. Soon he found himself at 370 pounds. He got to the point where he had to sit and watch his wife mow the lawn and do household chores. (I know, that sounds appealing for some guys, but I’m being serious here.) “I used my sheer size as an excuse,” Jeremy says. “What am I going to do with my ankle and my size? It’s not like I could go out, run a mile, and start doing something.”

His tipping point finally came when he volunteered to help coach his sons Chase and Nolan’s wrestling team. Here’s how he told it to me:
When my boys started wrestling, I couldn't participate, I couldn't help, I couldn't really even coach. My son Chase was a five-year-old 45-pound kid; it’s not like a 370-pound dad can get down on the ground and work with him.

My friend Tim was also coaching the team—he’s in his fifties, in great shape. One day, we were driving to a tournament and he told me just that past week he had buried one of his friends who was only in his forties—the guy had kids. He said, “If you don’t change your ways you’re going to do the same thing to your boys.”

Then he went on to say, “Your wife’s young, your kids are young, they’re going to move on without you. Are you confident that the guy that’s going to replace you is going to do as good a job raising your boys as you would?”

I couldn’t escape that. When I was 370, you can’t be that size and not get in uncomfortable situations all the time. You get stared at. It’s like a constant daze of self-consciousness. I would take my kids to the water park and take my shirt off and I knew everyone was looking at me. Up until this point I was able to run away from all those uncomfortable moments and find my safe haven, my couch. But after he said that, I couldn’t escape, I couldn’t forget it. That hit me right in my heart. It was like a light switch. At that moment, it wasn’t “Am I going to be successful?” It was “I have no option.”

That was when Jeremy found his purpose: his family. Jeremy’s purpose became to make choices and do things that would enable him to be the best father and husband he could be.

“I would think, ‘If I don’t do my workout today I could die...”
tomorrow.’ It just became so black-and-white. Every decision, every time I went to the kitchen, every time my alarm went off at four o’clock in the morning for my workout, it was do it or die,” he says.

A couple of weeks into his journey, Jeremy made a “Why and Why Not” list to help him stay focused on his purpose. “I’d been thinking about all the reasons why I couldn’t be successful but I hadn’t put enough effort into thinking about why I should be successful,” he reasoned.

Here’s his list:

**Why Change:**

For my kids  
For my wife  
For me—I am worth it!  
So I can walk pain-free (ankle)  
To walk in a room and not be self-conscious  
To meet someone new and not think about being overweight  
To be able to take care of things around the house  
To wear clothes that fit right and feel good  
To enjoy buying new clothes and to never go into a big & tall store again  
To take the kids to the pool and enjoy myself  
To set an example to my kids so they won’t have to go through the same pain  
So that I won’t avoid people  
To improve my work life  
To improve my energy  
To know my kids as adults  
To not be a sad story of a father leaving his wife and kids
Why Not Change:

It’s easier
It’s convenient
Eating a big unhealthy meal is something I could look forward to
I deserve it
Everyone else seems to be able to eat what they want

I love this approach. On one side, Jeremy had a beautiful long list of reasons why. On the other side, he had a short, crappy list of reasons why not. (And did you happen to notice what those first two “Why Not” reasons have in common? Here’s a clue: It begins with an / and rhymes with “beer.”) It’s as though the answer was already in his brain. He just needed to take a moment, sit down with pen and paper, and write it all down so he could see it in black and white.

What’s Your Purpose?

I don’t know about you, but looking forward to knowing your kids as adults is a lot more enticing to me than looking forward to a bowl of Penne à la Porky Pig at Olive Garden. The Jeremy I met in 2010, the one living his purpose, agreed with me. “I think where a lot of people miss the boat when they set their goals is they don’t wrap any emotion around it,” he says. “It’s easy to say ‘I want to lose weight’ or ‘I want to get in that dress,’ but they’re missing the whole boat in terms of the emotional side of it. It’s your emotions, your attitude, your deeper purpose, that’s going to drive change.”

Thanks to that mind-set, Jeremy is now more than able to get
down on the mat and pin his two sons regularly; he’s also looking forward to the day that they turn the tables on dad. “I want to see them win state championships.”

In turn, his kids have also been able to adopt a whole new perspective. Before, their friends would hassle them about how fat their dad was. Now they want to hang out with him. They look up to him because of all the cool things he can do. In turn, they talk to their dads—many of them armchair quarterbacks not too far off from the old Jeremy—and say, “Hey, Mr. Yost can do it, how come you’re not doing it?” Just like that, Jeremy has an influence not only on his kids, but also on his kids’ friends, and his kids’ friends’ parents. All because a good friend instilled a little purpose into him when he needed it most.

Whether or not they’re in good physical shape, a lot of people are like the old Jeremy. They’re stuck. They can’t see the forest for the trees because they don’t even know why they’re in the woods or which way they’re headed. So many people suffer from lack of purpose. They’re in survival mode 24/7. From the moment they wake till the second their head hits the pillow, they’re on autopilot, and the idea of changing course is not only scary—it feels impossible.

But flying on autopilot isn’t doing your best—it’s not even taking active control of your journey. It’s sitting back and letting something or someone else make the decisions for you. It’s hiding behind false priorities (I’m too busy) and limitations (my ankle hurts). It’s essential to wake up, take control of the joystick, and keep your eye on the proverbial prize. Your purpose should be your mantra, your mission statement. Think about what your purpose is for a minute—take a look at the “Picking a Purpose Quiz” on page 21 if you need help with that. When you’re done, grab a pen and paper and write your purpose down. In fact, I want you to write it in this very book.
Here’s the perfect space to do that:

![HELLO MY PURPOSE IS]

Now make a copy of that and put it somewhere prominent. Stick it on your fridge. Tape it to your bathroom mirror. Use it as your screen saver. Get it tattooed on your butt. Get T-shirts printed and give them to the people you see every day. I don’t care what you do, as long as it helps you remember your purpose.

Next, I want you to do exactly what Jeremy did: make a pro/con list, or in this case, a list of the reasons why you should take steps to follow your purpose, and a list of reasons why you shouldn’t take those steps. (Go ahead, I’ll wait.)

Now compare those two lists. I’m betting that list 1 is a lot longer and more compelling than list 2 (and if it’s not . . . complete the quiz below immediately). Now look at list 2. How many of those reasons are based on fear? Cross them out. How many are false priorities and perceived limitations? Cross those out, too. How many do you have left? Are any of them actually good, honest, valid reasons to not pursue your purpose?

That’s what I thought.
THE PICKING A PURPOSE QUIZ

Nobody said there’d be a quiz! What the heck?!?
Relax. You’re not getting graded. (You already earned an A+ just by picking up this book!) And while there are no right or wrong answers, there are revealing ones; these questions will help you dig a little deeper and make sure that the purpose you have in mind is the right purpose for you. That it’s the purpose that will lead you somewhere you want to go.

1. How will this purpose serve me? How will this serve the people around me?
2. How will having this purpose impact my life in five years? Ten? Fifteen?
3. How will this purpose empower me to be healthier/happier/stronger/better?
4. Will this purpose serve me for life, or is it a short-term goal?
5. Will this purpose benefit me physically, emotionally, and mentally?
6. Is this my purpose, or a purpose someone else has assigned me?

BABY STEPS ON THE WAY TO WORLD DOMINATION

Purpose is crucial, but your end goal can’t be the only marker you strive for. On your journey, it’s absolutely imperative that you smell the roses. Let’s say that your purpose is world domination. It’ll happen if you really want it to, but it might take a while and
it can get pretty depressing if every morning you wake up and realize you haven’t even dominated the mess in your apartment, let alone the entire planet. Always keep an eye on your purpose, but along the way, take time to appreciate small achievements that indicate progress (maybe you conquered cleaning the kitchen or the guest bedroom?). Doing that makes it much easier to keep moving forward.

Some days, it may seem like you haven’t achieved anything. That’s where Law 1 comes in handy. Ask yourself this: Today, did I do my best and forget the rest? If the answer is yes, then congratulations, my friend; you’ve achieved something.

Appreciating small achievements is especially simple when it comes to health and fitness goals, because most improvements are either quantifiable or tangible. Has your range of motion improved? Has your blood pressure improved? Can you do more reps at the gym? Have you lost inches? Did that guy really just whistle at you? As I said earlier, superficial stuff shouldn’t be your focus, but it can make for a set of convenient benchmarks along the way.

This holds true for any goal you have in life. Maybe you’re working toward a college degree but completion is years away. Every time you finish a course, revel in it. Or pick up the textbooks you had to read when you started. A year ago, they probably read like Latin, right? Now I bet they make complete sense. Nice work! Veni, vidi, vici!

While you’re reveling in your achievements, be careful not to focus too much on any one particular marker at the expense of the Big Picture. For example, I mentioned measuring inches, but sometimes inches can be a huge demotivator when you focus on them too much—and you’re not losing any. Body fat percentages, numbers on the scale, and inches lost don’t always tell the whole
story of a fitness transformation. Maybe you’re gaining muscle mass as you burn fat or maybe the intensity of your workouts has temporarily triggered water weight gain thanks to an annoying (but useful) stress hormone called cortisol, so you’re not seeing progress with your tape measure. Using just one indicator doesn’t always reveal how hard you’re working, not to mention how much better you feel. Same goes with those college courses—maybe you got a B when you wanted an A, or a C when you wanted a B. Of course all of that matters, but grades shouldn’t be your only focus—are you learning a lot? Is doing the coursework fulfilling the criteria for your sense of purpose? Are you enjoying the coursework and the people you meet? Then a B might be just fine.

**FAILURE: THE NEW AWESOME**

There’s nothing wrong with failing. In fact, failure needs a new name. “Failure” should be renamed “awesome.” Everyone loves awesome. I know this because anything of value nowadays is described as awesome! (“Nowadays” is a term that guys like me in their fifties use to distinguish the present from the “olden days,” but I’m getting off topic.) Most folks think of failure as the opposite of success, but I beg to differ.

It’s like what Winston Churchill said: “Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” Failure and success are Siamese twins; they don’t exist without each other. There’s no way around it. The problem with the word “failure” is that it connotes that you’re a loser—and losers don’t succeed or win or get the girl (or guy or pie or pot of gold or whatever it is you want to get). As a result, many people would rather play it safe, not take chances, not explore, and never, ever stick their neck out and actually try.
I was firmly “anti-failure” for half my life, and what did it get me? Not much. No adventures, no experiences, no learning, and no real success. Most people don’t realize that failure is the key to joy, happiness, and growth. If you’re afraid to fail, then you’ll never expose yourself to opportunities for success. On the other hand, if you view failure as awesome, then you’ll be open to trying things—and falling on your face, screwing up, making mistakes, and blowing it once in a while. Sucking at something every once in a while is how you achieve greatness in the long run.

What’s Tony Horton’s purpose?

Why, I thought you’d never ask!

There are a bunch of smaller reasons why I do the things I do: energy, enthusiasm, excitement, joy, mental acuity—the list goes on and on. I want to be fit and healthy so that I can have adventures and meet amazing people. I want several more decades of good use out of this body. (It’s the only one I’ve got!) As a fitness role model, I want to talk my talk and walk my walk.

I could go on all day with those smaller reasons, but that wouldn’t explain my raison d’être. I do what I do because there was a kid once who played college football. He was a huge lineman, whose purpose it was to move other guys out of the way so smaller guys could run around him and gain yards. But when he didn’t make the pros, his purpose was gone. He was just a giant kid in horrible shape.

Then he found P90X and started working out. Recently, I met him at a ski lodge, where he told me he’d lost 130 pounds and
showed me a video on his phone. It was him, a six-foot-six former lineman, doing a front flip off a cat track on a snowboard.

In a way, I’m the guy who helped him do that. I mean, he did it himself, but I got to help. A few decades back, I made the changes I needed to make in order to live a better life. Because I did that, my lineman friend was able to get his life back in order, too. I get to meet a lot of people who have similar stories, and those are the best moments for me, knowing that something I did could help somebody else live up to their potential.

My purpose is to help other people find their purpose.