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8 Ways To Dig Your Way Out Of A Rut



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I write about leadership, life and my experiences as an executive. [FULL BIO](#) 

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by Molly Cain

For the past several weeks, I've been coaching a good friend as he searches for a new gig in a specialized field (read: it's taking some time). My coaching with him is "lite" really, in that every so often he'll send a text with a question and I'll shoot one back with some advice.



During one of our text conversations the other day, he asked me "How do I address questions around my lack of management experience?" At the start of his job search, this question would have been a simple one for him. But the length of this job search has suddenly forced my amazingly talented friend to doubt himself. Worse still, this repetitious and discouraging process is pushing him to the ledge of a rut.

I didn't think twice before I sent him my personal go-to advice. *Fake it til you make it.*

Yes, friend, you are ready to be a manager. You are qualified. So sit in that interview and you tell them why you're ready and willing to take that on, even if you feel a tiny twinge of nervous in your belly. And when you walk into that office on day one and meet your team, you might have to fake it a little bit more. You do this until that one day you realize you're no longer faking it.

That conversation got me thinking about go-to advice. How we all have a little something in our back pocket that we dish out to our friends at just the right moment and also use ourselves when we need to summon some personal motivation. So I reached out to my network to find out what other people consider their go-to advice.

What I got was an overwhelming (no really, *overwhelming*) response to that question. So much so, you're going to see more of this advice over the coming weeks. But today, I'm sharing just eight pieces of the advice I had the good fortune of receiving...all with the power to break you out of a rut.

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1) About 10 years ago, Bryan Cohen (author of [The Post-College Guide to Happiness](#)) stopped to fill up for gas at a local station. One of the employees happened to be an acquaintance from high school. As they chatted, the acquaintance mentioned the struggle he was having with his college workload at the time. Cohen told him, **“You’ve got to work hard at some point. It might as well be now.”** Fast forward five years and the two run into each other again at a reunion. The acquaintance excitedly reported that he took that advice seriously, graduated college with honors and was in the process of pursuing a graduate degree.

If you have any hope of getting to where you dream of going, you’re going to have to put in the work. Why not start now?

2) There are times when we accidentally slip into auto-pilot and begin coasting in life. In my opinion, if you’re just riding along not putting in any extra effort for yourself or your life – that is classified as a rut. One way to snap out of it, says [eCommerce Strategist Ron Rule](#), is to always **remember what you want**. Want a shiny new toy or exotic vacation? Remember that when you’re splurging on gourmet coffee every morning. Want to be in the best shape of your life for that upcoming college reunion? Remember you want that much more than you want to skip the gym tomorrow morning.

3) **“So often times it happens that we live our lives in chains and we never even know we have the key.”** Sound familiar? Why hello fellow Eagles fan! Yoga instructor, [photographer](#) and mother, Denise Dougherty relies on these wise song lyrics as her go-to advice. At least once a week she finds herself reminding students that they have the strength to change their path. Even though it may take facing a fear or two, and possibly even hurting someone’s feelings (unintentionally of course), one must summon up the strength to break the cycle. Find your key and break the cycle (rut) you’re in.

4) Sometimes you don’t even realize you’re in a rut until you get the feeling you should do something different. Psychotherapist Christine Gutierrez and Founder of the women’s lifestyle company, [CosmicLife.com](#) is a big believer in the advice to **trust your gut**. “A gut feeling is often signaling strong messages that come from deep within,” she says. “Inside of you, you have a strong internal wisdom.”

My gut talks to me when I’m about to make a big decision. I’ve learned to respect it and listen to it and that has served me well so far (not counting the times it hasn’t). Perhaps right now you need to rely less on the opinions of others or waiting for solid facts and instead, get yourself out of that rut by also listening to your intuition.

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5) My personal trainer and Director of Camp Gladiator, Jonathan Pylant, shared with me some advice he got from a mentor long ago. **In areas of giftedness, work on your strength. In areas of character, work on your weaknesses.** He explained to me that this advice has helped him *avoid* getting in a rut and continue growing, both professionally and personally. When you shift your focus to work on areas of strength, you can identify what to delegate so you don't get bogged down in the wrong tasks. Take this message to mean that you should always be working on yourself, just make sure you're focusing on the right kind of "work" or you're just spinning your wheels and therefore, living in a rut.

6) Rosemary Hook, Certified Career Coach COH +0.47% with Hook The Talent begins her client conversations with the question, **"In a year, how do you want to feel?"** If they answer negatively, she knows they're stuck in a rut. She'll then work to help them conquer the emotional immobilization preventing them from moving forward. You're going to be a year older in a year anyways...put in a little elbow grease and you'll end up being one year older and a bit more awesome.

7) Years ago, when Director of Sales for Innovative Medical Solutions, Nolan Welch was just a budding salesman, he took a position that would make most of us cringe (I'm just speaking on your behalf there). Not many people can cut it in a 100% commission-based role, but Welch was motivated. That is until "friends" started getting in his head about this terrible no good very bad job of his by making remarks (mostly centered on his absence at happy hours). In a moment of desperation and near quitting, he mentioned this to his boss. The boss said, **"You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with."** Perhaps your rut is simply caused by the individuals you're choosing to mingle with. You probably already know who the guilty parties are there, so I'll let you mull that over (see #4).

8) Let's face it. If you're not in the right mindset or you fail to set any kind of goal, you're just asking to stay in that rut. If this is you, take the advice of **Lee Runchey, Vice President of Chrome PR**, **"You get what you get ready for."** This is all about preparation, building a foundation through the choices you're making right now. If you suddenly find yourself in a rut, you can rely on the foundation you built, pull yourself right out and keep going. Runchey tells me that their company (as most do) started with just one client. As they grew, they leaned heavily on certain choices they made when they were small but dreaming big. Get ready for something great by acting (and planning) as if you'll arrive there. You will surprise yourself.