

## **drewswan**

*The great aim  
of education is  
not knowledge  
but action.*



# Do you see everything through such rose colored glasses?

Posted on [February 26, 2013](#)



Perspective

The clank of iron banged over the sound of music in my headphones. I glanced at my watch, 8:15am. Like many others, I have gotten in the habit of starting everyday at the gym since the New

Year. Now, well into February, what used to be a packed playground of sweaty bodies was now slimming to the devoted few. I felt proud for a moment and smiled. As I did, I looked down out into the parking lot and saw a guy I had met the week before dancing in front of a car. “What a clown,” I thought as he pretended to jog with the car as it drove away. I glanced up and saw another regular who had been watching with me.

“Did you just see that?” he implored.

“Yea, I know that guy. Don’t worry about it, he’s just goofy, that was probably his friend”

“I guess so...” the man trailed off as he shook his head, unconvinced, and walked away to finish his workout.

I didn’t think again about it until fifteen minutes later when I saw a policeman downstairs. I looked back at the parking lot and three squad cars *and* an undercover Charger pulling up to the gym. To my surprise, it was my dancing friend who was taken aside and questioned by three officers on the curb. I ran over to the man who had watched with me to find out what I had missed.

“What happened?” I said incredulously.

“I was going to find you,” he said, catching his breath, “That car almost hit your friend so he started yelling threats at the driver. When it pulled away, he ran after it banging on the side with his hand.

The driver must have called the cops.” My mouth dropped open without me meaning it to. He smiled.

“Do you always see the world through such *rose colored glasses*? Good for you.”

“I don’t know. I guess so.” I chuckled as I snapped back to reality and I walked away. *Do I really see things differently than other people?*

This small instance kept me thinking the rest of the day. A man and I had seen the exact same thing but at the same time, we saw two completely different realities. The true one is easy to see but I kept asking myself *which view really matters?* My own ‘*rose colored glasses*’ version or his ‘guilty until proven innocent.’ Maybe I’m being too harsh but do you see the stark contrast? In other words, does the *reality* of the situation hold more weight than the *interpretation*? Or is it really vice versa? Take the constellation of the Big Dipper for instance. A four star grouping that can be seen from anyone in the Northern hemisphere on a clear night. However; a kid sees a spoon, a traveler sees an arrow to the North Star, an adult sees a constellation, and a scientist with a telescope sees remnants of light from burning gasses years old already. What changed? The Big Dipper didn’t. The *lens* of the observer did. So which lens is right? I’ll leave that up to you to decide; not only with the stars but in the way you view the world around you.

Technically, we are all creatures of selfish ambition. Our daily decisions are governed by self-serving motives between 99.9 and 100% of the time. This even goes for those who give large amounts to charities. These people still want recognition in the same way a donated community baseball field is sometimes named after the donor. With this in mind we can assume that the vast majority of people

you and I come in contact with are thinking about themselves. This is the *lens* through which we inherently look through ourselves. Yes, I do mean inherently as in we're born with it. Don't believe me? Take the principle of fairness.

I remember one Christmas when I was very young. My younger brother and I were digging through our stockings early Christmas morning as my father filmed from our VHS video recorder. Yes, VHS. My brother pulled out a small grey box and in his absolutely adorable, 4 year old voice exclaimed, "Look Drew, I got a Swiss Army knife!" Naturally I got even more excited because being similar in age, we typically got the same stuff, sometimes in a different color. With the camera still rolling, my fingers clawed at my stockings bottom and until I found something that felt similar in size to what Jack had just revealed. I started to say, even before my arm was out of my stocking, "Look Jack....soap!" I smiled, look dead at the camera and held out the small blue, whale shaped soap as if it were my greatest treasure. When I watch the video, my acting at age five could have won an Oscar and yet, I felt defeated. It wasn't fair. I looked through the rest of my presents but nothing 'matched' the quality of my brother's pocketknife. The funny thing is that, two decades later, I still remember *exactly* how I felt when this happened. The point is that I never thought of how great it was that my brother had gotten such an amazing present. I never shared in his happiness or gratitude. I thought only of myself and no one taught me to do that, it was the inherent *lens* I had known since birth.

I'll try to salvage a point from my tangent here. It's not about the *rose colored glasses* as much as it's about the way you view the world. I provide examples of how different observers or my younger self sees circumstances for one reason. The best, most profitable way for you to walk through this life is to *view the world in the way others see it*. Lets break this down quickly into two assumptions:

1. It profits you ZERO to try and get others to see things from your perspective. You are literally wasting emotional and physical energy half the time you attempt to explain ‘where you’re coming from.’ If someone *does* want to know why your tired or upset, then by all means tell them because they are trying to practice this principle. But realize the majority of people care more about the way a pimple on their forehead looks than your grandpa’s near-death experience in the past week.
2. It profits you MASSIVELY to try and see things from other people’s shoes. I love to ask people how their day is going. It’s so simple and yet so few people do it that I often get wide-eyed surprise or, at times, a monologue of the worries and frustrations. Either way, it makes them like me more and I typically deal with less friction in getting the thing that I want in the end. See? Selfish motivation still applies here. People don’t realize the most selfish thing you can do in a conversation is to *listen*.

When you listen, you are only gathering information to add to your own wealth of knowledge. Believe me, because I listen to people, I see what motivates them. I am able to understand them better. Now, in a conversation, I will often hear things that the person doesn’t even say. I know that sounds confusing. For example, I had a friend talking to me about his dad. He went on and on about how he is irresponsible, bad with money, and is always doing nice things to try and win his mom back (divorced) while she just spits on any kindness he shows. He shook his head and said, “My Dad is such an idiot.” I looked at him and said, “No, it’s very clear that you love and care about him quite a bit. You want the best for him, get frustrated when he wastes his time on your mom, and want a better relationship with him.” He agreed with me but was a little surprised at how I got to that conclusion. It’s simple. I *listened*. I tried to see his dad from his shoes and paid attention to the *why* behind the *what*. Our culture could use a lot less *what* and a lot more *why*. This is my opinion of course and you are welcome to disagree with it. But *why*? Ok, now I’m being silly.

I've given up on making a point. My point could be that everyone is selfish. The point could be that listening only helps the listener. The point could be the glass is half full. I guess the main point is just ME encouraging YOU to look at things *differently*. Look at your own actions. What motivates you? Look at others and what motivates them. In college I took a Criminal Justice class that focused on conspiracy theory. I'm not big on the subject itself but I loved the professor. I'll never forget what he said about his goal for the class. "In this class, I do not purpose to answer or prove any of these theories right or wrong. I only purpose to keep asking questions."

Are you asking questions? Why *not*?

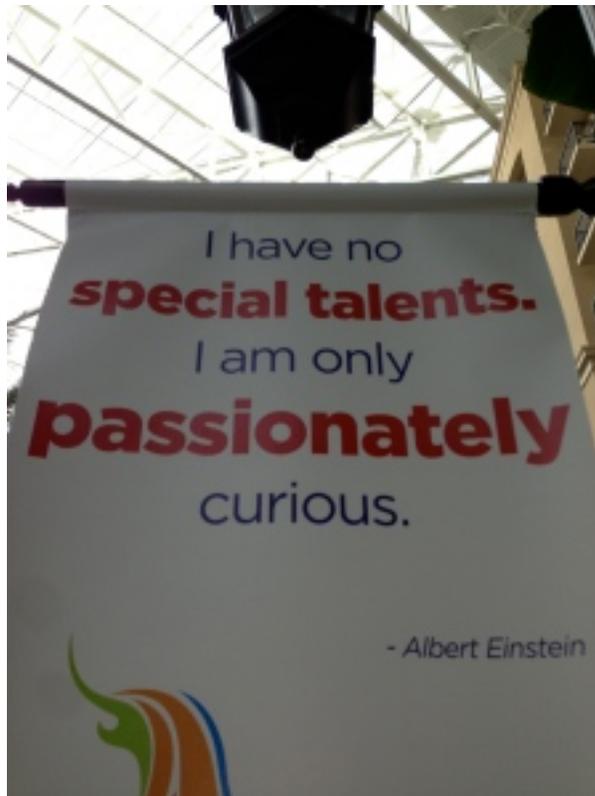
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## 3 Things I've learned about Blogging

Posted on [February 11, 2013](#)

1

I started Blogging as a hobby because I love to learn, I love to create, and I love to share. I was that kid that ran home from school and followed mom around telling her everything that happened at school that day. In doing so, I've learned a few interesting things in the Bloggersphere that weren't immediately obvious to me from the get go. Lets get to it.



1) Ya'll don't like to read that much.

I've already had people tell me that, although they like my blog, it's too long at times. Did I say people? I meant *friends*. Those strong supporters of what I'm trying to do in my life cannot seem to take the time to read something that is supposed to encourage them in theirs. See that sentence above?^^^^ It has 29 words in it. The average reader has the attention span 7-10 words. True friends tell you how it is. Same point- six words. Lesson learned. I'll shoot for shorter. Alliteration intentional.

## 2) Writing is meant for the readers not for the authors

As much as I LOVE to write exactly what my opinions on certain topics are, that's not necessarily what you like. Most of the time I'm trying to share a cool insight or something I learned that day. So although I have the reader in mind, my writing may not show it. It's kind of like a doctor who spews medical jargon at you just to hear himself talk. I need to convert it into layman terms or just something that you will find valuable.

I had a Creative Writing teacher who taught me a great lesson. I wrote a story about a suicide (maybe I'll share later) and allowed the class to give me real time editorial feedback. I got torn apart. They kept doubting that this could *really* happen and said the story was not believable. "Believable?!", I fumed, "This is my life! This happened to me!" After class the teacher took me aside and explained why the class poked holes in my **true** story. Believability, she explained, has little to do with the facts, and a lot to do with the reader's perspective. This is how writing fiction is different from journalism. Also, when a reader can relate to something they feel they know, they are quick to see any discrepancy. For example, I write about having coffee with a friend at midnight when an earthquake hit. You may be interested in hearing about what happens next. What if I rewrote the first sentence like this, "I was with a friend at a Starbucks around midnight when an earthquake hit." Some of you say, 'wait a second. Starbucks isn't open at midnight. I know because I've been there often and sometimes as late as 11 but never midnight.' My credibility as a story teller is gone, your interest is elsewhere, and the earthquake, in your mind, probably never happened. In the first scenario, I allowed you (the reader) to decide *where* I was having coffee. Once I state a fact, it's open to argument and especially if it's something you're familiar with. I hope that makes sense to any writers out there. Write for your reader, not yourself and definitely not like a journalist.

### 3) People respond to pain more than passion

The largest response to my blog has come from the post *People are going to let you down*. It's not just the title either. Friends and strangers have messaged me saying how encouraging it was to hear that perspective. It's always comforting to know that your *not the only one*. And, by the way, people **are** going to let you down and people **are** going to screw up. This includes you. I look at the greatest business leaders, athletes, and critical thinkers in our society today, wondering how they got there. All have different paths to success but many have one thing in common. Many of them have hit a rock bottom or low point that has given them that hunger to do more for their life. For myself, I've got a couple low points that I may eventually get to share with you. However, I would NOT be who I am today if I had not come from and **through** everything in my past. I believe that with 100% of my being. So passion and pain are more alike that we may think. Passion, in many instances, stems *from* pain. Rappers talk about their hunger, athletes say sports is a 'ticket out of the hood,' and poor Irish immigrant orphans who rise to make a way in this world. I'm referring to Andrew Carnegie, steel king who amassed millions he never spent and did not know much about steel either.

SOOOOOOO... In posts to come, I will try to shorten my topics and posts. I will look for feedback on what *you* as a reader, like to get out of my blog. Hopefully we can build a community because I truly love people. I will provide resources and links to podcasts, speakers, books, TED talks, and anything else that I believe you can benefit from. I also know that we all are struggling with something. I have a long list of struggles...believe me. Try starting a conversation like that, "What do you struggle with." Probably get some weird looks but you can find out a lot about someone. Be vulnerable. I will try and do the same. Thank you for all of your support. Happy Valentines Day!

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## An easy way to build self-confidence

Posted on [February 7, 2013](#)

Most of us will never attend an Ivy League school. I didn't. I waited until my senior summer to apply for college, took the placement test with a hangover, and ended up at a small state school close to home. That's another story though. The prestigious *Ivy League* sets itself apart and promises a quality education and higher paying jobs. That's how we view these schools like Stanford, Harvard, and Yale; but how do they view themselves? A speaker at Harvard asked individuals of a freshman class which of them thought that they're the one 'mistake' the admissions board made. Two thirds of the room immediately raised their hands. A lack of self-confidence is responsible for 80% of the 'why' people don't act. So where does confidence come from and how can you easily build some this week?

I am not rich nor am I at a job that is utilizing my expensive college degree. I do not have a car and I ride the bus multiple times a day. I recently quit a management job without a backup plan and now perform, at times, janitorial duties at work. Others possess what I do not and yet, I am told I display confidence. If circumstances don't generate confidence than what does? **Attitude**? Yes, I do think

that attitude has a lot to do with this confidence problem but not all of it. I've heard that it's your *attitude, not your aptitude, which determines the altitude at which you soar*. The nice alliteration and rhyme scheme helps that quote stick but it doesn't paint the whole picture. There is a much stronger technique to creating confidence that you have direct control over- *behavior*.

Most of our life is shaped by the decisions we make. Have you ever thought about it like that? Yes we may have ideas, morals, or a belief system but none of that matters if we don't express it through certain *behaviors*. I had an old girlfriend often remind me the old adage 'actions speak louder than words.' She was right. They not only speak louder than words but actions can have a major impact on the way we view ourselves. Are you always on time or are you often late? Do you workout on a routine or just whenever you feel like it? Obviously I could delve deeper into the personal sacrifices required to achieve certain goals for each of us but that's not my point today. I'm saying that your behavior will either boost your confidence or dampen your spirit.

Personally, my behavior has been the trademark of New Year. It has been the defining difference from a year ago. Let's look at, if you will, a snapshot of my week. I built my work availability around two commitments- a young peoples group on Wednesday nights and church on Sunday. I focus on getting to these two things every week and guarantee myself work won't get in the way. I made a personal commitment to myself. After a few weeks I added a fitness membership to this schedule. To use my investment I decided to start each day at the gym before work. All I did was change my

behavior. I made it priority to honor these commitments to myself. These required other changes like getting up earlier and taking multiple busses etc. BUT my mind was set. Doing this consistently, I found a change in my *attitude*. I'm more confident and sure of myself in conversation. I'm more optimistic about what I can accomplish. I'm encouraging to others in their own personal goals. This rough outline of my week helps me be more structured in my day. When someone invites me to something, I'm mentally prepared to answer at what times I'll be available. My life feels like I've discovered some magical remedy. So recently I traced back my *actions* and found that it all started with honoring a personal commitment to myself.

My point is this: In a world obsessed with horsepower, political power, and nuclear power- where is the importance of **willpower**. Instagram, if you're familiar, is holding a contest called #resolutionfail. The entire premise is to send in pictures that show how horribly you've failed to keep your New Year's Resolution.



#resolutionfail

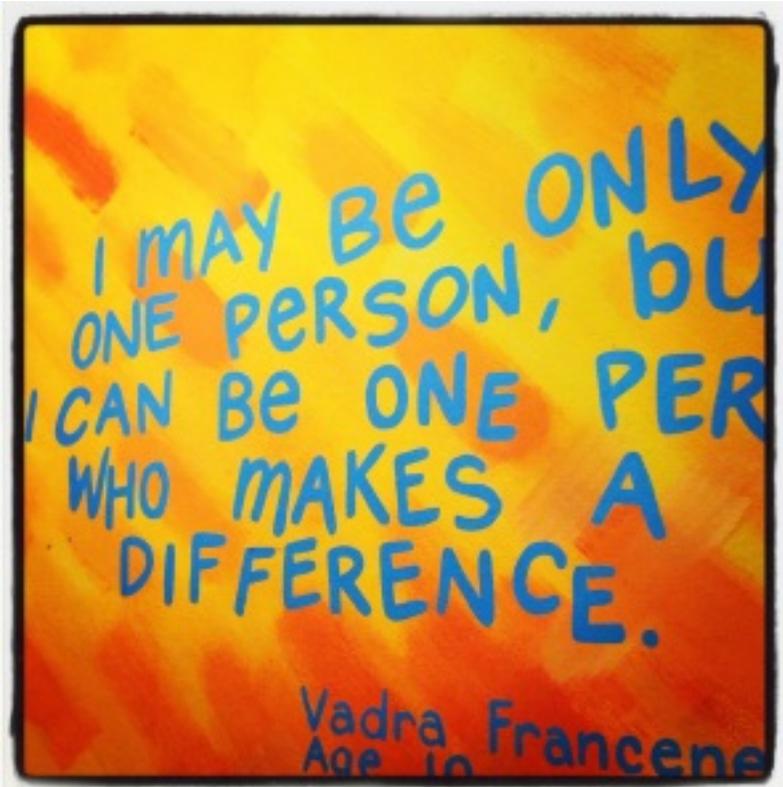
This is what we're glorifying to the next generation? If you want to build some confidence, make a commitment and keep it. John Wooden was obsessed with his players being on time for EVERYTHING. If you showed up out of uniform or not clean-shaven for a road trip, the bus AND plane left without you. Wooden later admitted that being on-time was one of the *only* rules he made for himself and wanted to pass that onto his players. This is coming from the winningest coach in college basketball history! (UCLA by the way) **One rule.** This week I challenge you to make a commitment to yourself and keep it. This can be as simple as eating *only* oatmeal for breakfast. No

matter what happens, you are going to start your day with oatmeal. Nothing can deter you. No McMuffin will tempt you. Do this for a month. In your daily conversations and schedule you will see a difference. By honoring a simple commitment, you will have more confidence. You will be surer of yourself in conversation and personal goals. Want to know the most exciting thing about this? It makes you want to master MORE commitments! No one goes into his or her day saying, “Today I will become master of every aspect of my life.” It is a building process of becoming master of one and another and another. Consistency builds confidence. Pretty soon others will look at your routine and think, “How do they get so much done? They seem so confident in themselves.” Hopefully, by that time, you’ll be able to smile back at them and say, “Try oatmeal.”

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## Use fear to your advantage

Posted on [February 6, 2013](#)



10 year-old wisdom

Fear. This phenomenon affects almost every person we meet in our daily lives and yet, is never fully addressed. I believe understanding our fears is the key to overcoming them. Jerry Seinfeld talked about fear during one of his stand up comedy routines. At the time, in the United States, the number one fear was public speaking. Number two was death. "Death!" he proclaimed, "Death? That means that at a funeral, you would rather be *in the casket* than giving the eulogy."

Can you guess what the most common fear of the American people is today? *A break in service...* as in no bars, no signal. The term *phobia* is one way we hear about chronic fear today. In a recent study, TIME magazine found over 50 million Americans are plagued by some phobia today. There are many that you or I would recognize but many others border on the ridiculous. There is a fear of chickens, of ventriloquist dummies, and bald people to name of few. I mean there is even a fear of phobias- *phobophobia*. It is my personal belief that these terms will only grow in years to come. Why? People like to identify with something. Hearing that their condition has a name provides the comfort of identity in an alienated world. There are many irrational fears but how about we talk about a completely common and normal one.

Can you identify with a *fear of failure*?

When I listen to entrepreneurs speak on their successes, many say they would never have chosen their business if they had known how hard the road would be. So why did they do it? I've heard one recurring theme- youth. They were too young to be discouraged or put off by naysayers. They had a vision and intended to follow through on it. Consequently, that vision and passion holding a lot more weight than a thorough business plan to Venture Capitalists these days. The point is that Youth doesn't know or recognize fear of failure nearly as much as someone that has seen his or her share of hardships. Kids dare to dream and change the world. Ask a kid what he wants to be when he grows up and you will most likely get a response like the president or an astronaut. If you ask an individual recently unemployed or laid off by this recession the answer will be very different. Of course there are exceptions but don't miss the point. I remember my Dad put this career question to me at the ripe age of ten. With a smile, I responded, "I'll be an athlete first and then an entrepreneur and then a teacher. When I retire I'll run for president." Not to toot my own horn (because I'm far from any of these positions) but I **knew** how to dream even at that age. Kids seem to know

something that the elders don't. Or maybe its what these kids *don't know*. Either way, you are free to come to your own conclusion. I think we should be fearful of something far more crippling than failure. Average.

Average, mediocre, pedestrian, common place, ordinary, run-of-the-mill- call it what you like. This attitude affects far more people than any fear or phobia. This is what happens when you grow up. I'm ten times more worried that sometime in my twenties, I'm going to realize the grass isn't greener on the other side. I'm going to say, "Well Drew, this is the real world and you better get used to it. Smile and do your job and someday you might have a nice retirement." Actually, I'm terrified of this. My Dad told me I'm extraordinary and I plan to be.

Flipping fear on its head allows me to use it to my advantage. Fear of the average gets me up in the morning. It pushes me to separate myself from the gradual curve because I want **nothing** to do with the mean, median, OR mode. I want to be an outlier. I want to look at failure as lesson and, if I can, learn from other's mistakes. God knows I've made enough on my own. I'm not saying that a wife, a dog, and 2 ½ kids is bad. If you're happy where you're at, that trumps all else. I'm talking about those of us that say, "I don't really *hate* my job but I don't like it either. I *would* do something else but everyone told me this is my only option or my only strength." Are you LISTENING to yourself? Do you realize the path that you are sending yourself down? I heard once that "Someday" is a disease that will take your dreams to the grave with you. I listen to too many people start sentences with "I wish I would have..." and not enough "I'm so glad I did..." This fear is the reason I started blogging this New Year and Journaling on a daily basis as a measurement tool. It's why I start everyday at the gym listening to Business podcasts instead of music. It's how I realized the need for me personally to be involved with people who hold me accountable. *The Progressive Group* just hit the one-month mark with our meeting last night. One month of consistent behavior from strong friends holding each

other accountable to their short AND long term goals. Life is too short for me to do anything different. There is no excuse for you to not be taking what you want out of everyday. Come on now- *Carpe Diem* is a pretty old concept.

There is one thing we are all poor in and that is TIME. Every person is given the same amount of hours in a day but tomorrow is not guaranteed. You need to take your fear of failing and turn it around. What if you don't apply for that job? What if you never move away from home? In Napoleon Hill's book *Think and Grow Rich*, he tells a story about Thomas Edison's assistant. This man was determined to be Edison's assistant. He was so determined that he woke up one morning, sold all his belongings, and road as a vagabond in boxcars down to Edison's lab. When he arrived, he told Edison he was there to be his assistant. After several attempts to turn him away, Edison consented to his doing some sweeping and cleaning duties. The point is the man eventually became Edison's primary assistant. What if you sold all you had and wholeheartedly risked it all to go and follow a dream? I ask because this doesn't exist in our society. There is always a "fallback plan" and young people end up settling for what's easy instead of determining to carve out the destiny they dreamed of. Quitters never win and winners never quit. Redefine determination and flip fear on its head. What happens if you don't? The first thing to die will be *passion*, then *hope*, and then the dream itself which will be fleeting memory of 'when you were young.'

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# Pay it forward

Posted on [January 30, 2013](#)

I tapped my foot impatiently while the Bank of America teller went to get her supervisor. I looked around at the marketing, annoyed with every keyword: *policy, useful tool, statement, transaction, protection and valued customer*. “A couple smiling faces and people will buy anything,” I thought. As the teller walked over, an old woman came bustling up to the counter, skipping the line.

“Can someone help me? My car is stuck and I can’t get out!” She glanced back and forth between the teller and the supervisor. They stalled, probably considering if this fell under their job description. Florida hospitality- gotta love it.

“I’ll help you. Show me your car,” I said as I left my spot in line and followed her outside. Her car was in the middle of the parking lot, a cement block from her spot stuck underneath. It looked like the steel rods that should secure the block to the ground were sticking up about 8 inches. She had driven her wheels up the block and onto the rod when she had parked and now it was vertically locked in her wheel well. Onlookers shook their heads and some asked if they should call a tow truck. I simply told her to turn the wheel to the left. Then I picked up the back end of the block and flipped it on it’s side so the rod was horizontal and shimmed it out from under her bumper and back to the parking spot it belonged to. It took about 5 minutes but the effect was profound. The older woman gave me a big hug, an onlooker made a remark about how nice I was, and when I walked back into the bank, the supervisor told the teller to give me everything I need. “One good deed deserves another,” she remarked as she walked away. I disagree.

We're all familiar with the concept of *Pay it Forward* but I find one major flaw in this thinking. The idea is predicated on another cliché- *an eye for an eye*. If someone treats you with goodwill then you should give that goodwill to another and on down the line it continues. But where does it start? I believe (and correct me if I'm wrong, I often am) Newton said an object in motion stays in motion until it encounters an equal and opposing force. Can this be applied to human relations? Who gives the first push? How often do we give without expecting ANYTHING in return or getting something first? You may have heard that there is 'No such thing as a free lunch' and, if my economics teacher taught me anything, it's true. Someone always has to pay. As a Christian, I'm not afraid to tell you that I believe Jesus paid the ultimate price for my sin. He also had some thoughts on how people should treat each other. He summed it up in just a few words- **do onto others as you would have others do onto you.**

Some of you just checked out mentally. You may have stopped reading at the word Christian or definitely *Jesus*, if you made it that far. Your mind recognizes *Christian* and thinks of all previous associations or stereotypes or hypocrites you've seen to claim this identity. You might see the Golden Rule and turn off because you think there is no *new learning* here. Many of us, myself included, go into the "I know, I know, I know," mindset. We shut off. This is perfectly normal by the way but I have a small challenge. STOP DOING IT! It's annoying. The great Ralph Waldo Emerson said that, "every man is better than me in at least one way- in that I can learn something from him." For just this week, see if you are actually treating people how you would like to be treated. To me, it seems the more I do this; the more chances I'm given to show it. Give without expecting anything in return. Be kind even when others are mean. Base your actions and words **on the type of person you want to be and not the current circumstances**. It will start to solidify into something you can be proud of and something others will want to emulate. I will end with another Carnegie story that hopefully emphasizes this point. The story has to do with a genuine compliment that Carnegie

paid a postal worker about his wonderful head of hair. As he shared the story in public later, a man asked him what he was ‘trying to get out [the worker]?’ This is Carnegie’s response verbatim:

*“What was I trying to get out of him!!! What was I trying to get out of him!!! If we are so contemptibly selfish that we can’t radiate a little happiness and pass on a bit of honest appreciation without trying to get something out of the other person in return- if our souls are no bigger than sour crab apples, we shall meet with the failure we so richly deserve. Oh yes, I did want something out of that chap. I wanted something priceless. And I got it. **I got the feeling that I had done something for him without his being able to do anything whatever in return for me.** That is a feeling that flows and sings in your memory long after the incident is past.”* (How to Win Friends and Influence People, p95)

I can’t promise any profound change or insight because of the thoughts I’ve put down here. I only hope to be a reminder that life isn’t fair and neither are people, but you can be. You can stand apart by your conduct, your principles, and your character. Sometimes you just have to change your thinking or put it into action. To the banker, I thank you for your help but I disagree with your conclusion. One good deed doesn’t *deserve* another but rather *encourages* another. If you want to make people scratch their heads, treat others, down to the bums on the street corners, how you would like to be treated. That attitude, if shared, can generate ten times the momentum of *Pay it forward* because the good deed is only the outward expression of an inward change.

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# People are going to let you down

Posted on [January 29, 2013](#)

Have you ever been let down by someone? How about someone you consider a very close confidant? How about family? Most people would answer yes to one of these questions and if you're like me, all three. Today, I want to share a simple story about how three examples from my past taught me about the imperfections of people.

I have an amazing family and an amazing father. In 7th grade, my class was asked to write a one page paper on a "Hero" in their life. This person could be historical, an athlete, or even a mentor. I wrote my paper about my dad...and so did four of my other friends. During childhood, my dad was my baseball and basketball coach, Boy Scout leader, and best friend. He even took me and my brother out for a weekly 'Special Breakfast' where we just talked about what was going on with girls or school or anything else on our minds. He also wanted me to know all about chivalry with girls and *doing the right thing* in tough situations. I can remember three such times he was looking to show his son that doing the right thing, although hard, always pays off. All three backfired.

The first of these opportunities appeared during a baseball game. Baseball was my favorite sport but my coach that year had made it a living hell. During a game that was particularly frustrating, I gave him a piece of my mind and walked off the field into the parking lot. My Dad stopped me and after a talk, made me go back and apologize to my coach. The second time was during a Boy Scout meeting when this tool of a 'leader' came down on me out of favoritism to his own kids. I went OFF, calling him and his sons a joke among other expletives and walked out. Again, my father came and got me and made me go back inside and say sorry. The final instance happened at school under

very similar circumstances. I ate the proverbial humble pie once again. I say that all three backfired but not on me. They backfired on my Dad. All three of the men that I, as a young boy, apologized to, lashed out at me even with even more severity. They poured into me with things like, “You better be sorry! You should be ashamed of yourself! You obviously were not brought up right and are headed for more failure.” My Dad was shocked. He went back in each instance and told them what kind of an example they were showing that a sincere admittance of wrong gets you in the world. As a child, I watched with delight as my Dad stood up for me. Now, as an adult, I think of the *true* lesson hidden between the lines of these instances. People aren’t perfect.

My Dad thought that these men would show me that saying sorry is necessary when we screw up. Instead, I learned that the world isn’t fine tuned to some explicit moral code of conduct. I learned that *people* screw up because we’re all human. I had to re-learn this principle later on when, as a senior in high school, I saw my Christian parents go their separate ways. Our family fell apart. A comment from my younger brother helped me during this: “When I stopped looking at mom and dad as parents and more like *people*, I forgave them. I understood that they’re just as human as you or I and have their own lives, their own worries, and their own choices to make.” I assure you, both of my parents have let me down since that time and my dad did very recently. It’s why I’m writing this now.

People deal with this in different ways. I hear girls say, “All guys are a@#holes! I’m never dating again.” I hear about examples of families where resentments or grudges have kept siblings and parents apart for years. I hear about individuals who have been so hurt once, they will never let anyone else in. How many close confidants do you have in your life? Want to guess what the most common answer is, according to a 2012 study? **ZERO**. I disagree with all of these options. People can be just as wonderful as they can be mean. They can be encouraging, generous, outgoing,

courteous, thoughtful, considerate, motivating, and sympathetic influences on our daily lives. BUT! Lets not forget that each and every one is human. Prone to mistakes. Programmed to think of themselves first and others second. If this doesn't sound familiar, just go find and a mirror because De-Nile ain't just a river in Egypt.

Just like recycling, it starts with us as individuals. You can be sure that when I have a little kid say, "Thank you," I return it with a smile and, "Your welcome." I even go out of my way to compliment him in front of the parents on his wonderful manners. I've heard that when you have kids, the way you raise them will either be the same as your parents or the exact opposite. I was blessed with wonderful parents! Even though they let me down at times, I'm reminded that we're all human and if I want to see a change in the others behavior, that starts with my own first.

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## Are you a BoyScout?

Posted on [January 25, 2013](#)



Are you a Boy Scout?

“Are you a boy scout?” The decrepit man looked at me with heavy but bright eyes that had seen their share of years.

“Why yes, I actually am,” I replied with uncertainty.

“Would you mind doing a good deed?”

That is how I found myself placing a bandage around the yellowish, infected toe nail of a 90 year-old man in my gym's small locker room this morning. I had to hold the toe nail, which was about to fall off, while I tightly wrapped it up with Johnson and Johnson's most popular product. Does that make you cringe? Probably. Yet for me it had a different effect. Only minutes before I had been in the shower feeling tired, hungry and a little discouraged. I was all wrapped up in my own poor circumstances when this man's voice had broken through the fog with that unusual question, "Are you a boyscout?" As the situation progressed and I realized what he was asking, I began to laugh out loud. You have GOT to be joking. I told him to trim his nails and see a doctor but he said, "If that's all that is wrong with me at 90, I'm probably pretty well off." What a perspective!

Charles (his name) brought new life to my day. He gave me a story. The image of his gross toenail will be stuck in my head days from now and it will bring a smile that I would otherwise have missed out on. Sometimes we all need a little break from the monotony of our daily routine to open our eyes to the people in the world around us. It could be taking a different route to work or getting coffee from a new coffee shop. Try a food you've never tried or go do Yoga for the first time. These events have more of an effect than the activity itself. They do more than you probably think.

I once heard that it is a good exercise for our brains to listen to a new CD all the way through. The reason has to do with the human brain and the pre-frontal cortex. This part of the brain, among other functions, has the ability to play out scenarios that have not yet occurred. For example, major life change's like marriage, a Caribbean vacation, a new car, or winning the lottery. We can imagine how each of these would make us feel even before they happen. Our brain plays and replays the outcome of these hypotheticals until it becomes rooted. It becomes so rooted that when the result is different than expected, we are let down. Instead of joy at a vacation, we think, "I wish it would have been longer. The hotel staff was rude. We should have chosen a different location. The weather

would have been better in July"...and so on and so forth. In terms of the CD scenario, when we listen to something we are familiar with, we mentally prepare for the next song to come on as we expect it to. So it's actually exercising the brain to listen to a) something we are unfamiliar with and b) use our imagination, not previous experience, to think about what's coming on next. Your brain is thinking of a hundred possibilities of what music will play next. It is being exercised. The problem with our pre-frontal cortex? Most of the time it's wrong. Reality deals life from a different deck of cards. You want to be happy on vacation? Be thankful and happy for today. You want marriage to mean something? Be thankful for every moment you spend with that person and show love when it's NOT expected. Why do you think flowers are more meaningful when it's not Valentines Day? DUH!

Somehow it always comes back to a child's imagination. Children don't put limits on their world. One way to look at it is this: When did wrapping paper stop being a sword? When did a towel stop being a cape? As a lego maniac myself, I can assure you that when I saw a box of lego parts, I saw much more than the average kid. I saw huge lasers that could be assembled onto massive starship cruisers to battle underwater monsters. If you gave me legos today I would probably still see that. I love creativity and Disney World is one of my favorite places to be. That's another topic though.

The main point is that we get stuck in the monotony of day-in, day-out routine. Our brain becomes trained to expect coffee in the morning, a nine hour work shift of boredom, a job we dislike, and acquaintances we don't even consider true friends. When something does come along that's extraordinary, we barely lift our heads to see it. We don't even recognize it. What if you went into every day like a kid. What if everyday you thought that ANYTHING could happen. It might allow you to begin to appreciate the little things. It would allow you to recognize the extraordinary. I mean tomorrow isn't even guaranteed right? So ANYTHING truly can happen tomorrow. That's how I want to think and I thank Charles for opening my eyes and widening my smile just for today.

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## Connecting with people

Posted on [January 25, 2013](#)

I was at the Laundromat by 7am this morning because I still needed to get to the gym and then work a double shift at one of my two jobs. The only other person there was a heavier woman organizing dry cleaning for the day. I threw my wash in and politely asked her if she could watch my bag while I ran to grab some coffee. Her face lit up at the word coffee. I can relate. She jotted down her mocha latte order and gave me money and I walked the couple blocks to Dunkin Donuts, happy to help another person. I remembered times as a manager at Hollister that I would send my employees off to DD to bring back coffee and donuts for everyone. When I got back, Jill (her name) and I had a 20-minute conversation about coffee, busses, and minimum wage jobs. We talked about things we connected on and could relate to. We established a *connection* when only an hour before we had been complete strangers to each other.

A little later I was safely seated on Bus 30 on my way to the gym. I like to fill my travel time with more than music so I turned on one of my podcasts. Coincidentally or serendipitously, depending on your optimism, it was about connecting with people. Specifically, the talk concerned the *instant*

*connections* in daily interaction that are more impactful in the long-term than we think. The podcast brought up three factors associated with connecting with other people.

The first of these was vulnerability. If you want to break down the façade of a ‘keeping up the with the Jones’ attitude, bring up a weakness of yours. Friendship is made in the moment that one person says, “What? You too? I thought I was the only one.” According to this talk, bosses and leaders are trusted much more when they show some vulnerability to their employees. Examples? Yesterday I got coffee at Starbucks from a nice young girl. While giving me my change, she knocked over a small display and blushed with embarrassment. I immediately said, “Don’t worry, I’m probably more clumsy than you on a daily basis.” She smiled and told me she had already poured coffee on a customer that morning- she wins. *INSTANT CONNECTION*. My mother related a story of a waiter she had two nights ago. After he dropped off the food he said to raise a hand if she needed anything else because he “wasn’t very attentive and it was busy; but he wanted to make sure she was taken care of.” That vulnerability gained the waiter a good tip and trust from my mother. It also had nothing to do with his service or the restaurant’s reputation.

The second factor discussed was touch. Touch has been long displaced in our digital world and culture. It has not been **replaced** though. The speaker brought six volunteers from the audience to sit in a circle as if they were having a meeting. They instinctively sat about arms length apart and began by personal introductions. He then told them to move closer to each other until their very

knees were touching. “Now what did you have for breakfast?” The group went around again, knees touching, and he asked them how they felt immediately after. You guessed it. Each felt much stronger connection to the person next to them. The NBA conducted a study on all teams’ group interaction throughout a season. They specifically monitored how many times individuals touched each other through high fives, celebrations, or huddles. They found a **direct** correlation on the season between winning percentage and amount of touching involved on the team. Crazy right? My guess, and it is only a guess, is that maybe there is some subconscious trust involved. Touch may trigger a sense of trust. A teammate passes you a ball because he’s more confident you will catch it and you trust that he is a more able passer and that it will be catchable. It’s only a guess at our subconscious but you’ve probably heard the phrase, “90% of the game is mental.”

The third and final factor concerns people who are born with this as a natural trait. These people are referred to as *high self-monitors*. These people naturally meet us where we are instead of bringing us to where they are. We are inclined to naturally like these people because they mirror us. When I was just a kid my dad asked me what type of person I am: a nerd, a jock, a hipster, or my own category. As a confident 11 year-old, I responded with, “Depends on who I’m around.” He and my brother got a big laugh out of that but I felt embarrassed. I had responded truthfully. I have not thought about that again until I heard this speaker bring it up. It’s not that high self-monitors are schmoozers or fake. They simply have the ability to mirror their environment in a fluid fashion. These people make these instant connections much faster than others under similar circumstances. How interesting! Not only with a genuine interest in others help create relationships but it can be helped by these other tools. Vulnerability and weakness inspires almost instant trust. Touch and proximity can be a major factor in collaboration. It’s the reason why face-to-face interaction is so much more powerful than

any Skype or conference call will ever be. Finally, certain people are born as high-self monitors. These people create instant connections because of their ability to mirror people and situations. Some food for thought. Hopefully it was interesting if you chose to read it. This is the stuff I LOVE J

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## Momentum

Posted on [January 22, 2013](#)



Each day is a new life to the wise man

I'm not a good decision maker in more ways than one. First, I hate being the one in the group deciding where to eat or what movie to see. This is because I'm a people-pleaser (to my own detriment) and am often afraid of upsetting..well...anyone. Second, because I'm a people pleaser, I am likely to go with the popular vote. As you probably know, this doesn't always put in you in the best place. In fact, the title to a chapter in Timothy Ferriss' *The Four Hour WorkWeek* is title "Everything Popular is Wrong." It's time to get with the minority.

Today I have a few thoughts about *momentum*. Is it ever hard for you to get moving? Do you ever feel stuck? Again, welcome to my life. In my first post, *A new year, a new you*, I mentioned my goal to create a mastermind group of like-minded individuals. We had our second meeting last night. We have named it *The Progressive Group*. The week before we set some initial goals and this was the opportunity to follow up. Guess what? Most of us didn't accomplish even one, myself included.

Was the group a failure? Not at all. The group was created for just this purpose- to bring tangibility to our goals and accountability for our time. We reworked our goals more specifically. We realistically looked at our schedules and decided exactly when we could accomplish things within the upcoming week. We set new goals. We challenged each other to do more. We generated *momentum*.

*Momentum* is defined by Merriam-Webster as "**strength or force gained by motion or by a series of events.**" You need to get the ball rolling and you need to define what your *motion* or *event* will be to do that. Let me tell you what it will *not* be-RESEARCH or IDLE TALK. If you want to set a goal to travel to Europe it's great to research ticket prices, tours, and places you want to see. Nothing wrong with that, but tell me: How much *momentum* does that create? You can complain about your job or where you live but until you do something about it, you're the only one

who's really in the way. Find out what you want and take step one TODAY. Be specific in terms of a daily or weekly goal.

A turning point in my life was when I decided to study abroad in college. I wanted to go somewhere warm. I told my family and my friends and got responses like, "Good for you," without much conviction or belief that I would actually do it. I needed momentum. I decided to go to the office at school. There, I was directed to the upcoming Study Abroad Fair at the union. I initially thought of a three-month interim trip but everyone I met told me to stay the semester so I could really see the country. I chose Australia because they spoke English and it was opposite seasons so it would be warm for the entire spring semester. That's how long it took just to pinpoint WHAT I WANTED.

My momentum hit a brick wall when I found out how much it was going to cost between flights, traveling, tuition, and living expenses. After two months of trying, I felt defeated. I remember going back to my counselor desperately asking questions about funding options. She stopped me short and said, "Drew relax! We want you to go to Australia and will do anything we can to help you get there." She gave me a list of scholarships to apply for and explained how to change my "need" requirements for Financial Aid. She gave me step one to get my *momentum* back. A week or two later, my Dad ran into someone whose daughter who had just gotten back from studying Australia. I called her to ask for any advice or tips and we arranged to grab coffee. She took me through almost a thousand pictures on her laptop over the course of two hours. Guess what happened? I MADE IT to Australia. That experience has given me the confidence to do anything.

Keep in mind; no one thought I was serious. I didn't allow anyone to stop my *momentum* though. I gained more motion through conversations with people and my actions than any talk or research

would have achieved. If you want to go to Europe, find and talk to someone who has been there. Call a travel agent. If you want to live somewhere else then find out who lives there or who has been there. Make a phone call. Take a trip. Gain some *momentum*. A few closing insights: 1. Life does not stop for you to make a decision but it will pass you by. 2. Change scares EVERYBODY. Real learning and real growth comes from getting out of your comfort zone. It's being not afraid to fail. I heard one description of success as becoming "incrementally better at failing." You're going to fail anyways because you're human. Why not stumble or fall while taking steps in the direction you WANT for your life? Start doing this today but be specific. Be realistic. Don't set a goal you can't accomplish. You will feel defeated before you even start. Now take a look around. Welcome to the minority.

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## A Person of interest

Posted on [January 21, 2013](#)

**“You can make more friends in two months by becoming genuinely interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”**



These famous words should be set in stone. They should be placed on every nightstand, desk, and front door in America. Dale Carnegie said these profound words in a book published almost eight decades ago- *How to Win Friends & Influence People*. They are even truer today.

Every act since the day you were born was performed because *you* wanted something. Did you ever think about that? Even those that give to charities or volunteer at shelters are getting a feeling of importance or goodwill. When I wake up in the morning I am full of selfish ambition: What do I want to do? What do I want to accomplish? What can I do to help someone else I meet today? Wait a minute. That last one doesn't sound as familiar as the first two. It's not. It stands out because it goes directly against all we are programmed to be as human beings. Certainly, it separates us from animals.

You may be thinking, "Enough of the "Golden Rule" talk Drew. We all know it and few of us do it. How does it help me?" I would agree. This is about you. See I have stumbled through this life just as selfish as the next guy. At the end of a long day of work I want to do something for me. I think, "I can't wait to go out with friends. It will be so much fun, I will feel better, and I won't be thinking about work." Do you ever find that the event itself falls short of expectations? In other words, you're not as satisfied or happy as you thought you would be if you did so-and-so. Here is my point. I find it's hard to make myself happy. As two sides of the same coin- I find it's EASY to make someone else happy. Let me illustrate.

One of my jobs is serving at a restaurant in Fort Lauderdale. I had a young couple come in for lunch the other day. As they were ordering, the husband casually asked the wife what was for dinner. She said they were having salmon; he ordered pizza and on the meal went. A week or so later, the same couple came in and sat in my section again by chance. When I walked up to them, I welcomed them back saying, "Great to see you again! I remember you had me hungry last week. How was the salmon dinner?" They were confused for a second until the wife realized what I was talking about. Her face lit up as she told me the marinade she had used, how she had cooked it, and even the side

dishes prepared for her “specialty.” They both could not believe I remembered and left me a very generous tip. The two have requested to be served by me ever since.

That story is simple but there are hundreds of similar ones I could share from my own life experience, let alone others. The point of it is not the reward of a tip or a loyal customer. The point is happiness. ***I find it much easier to make other people happy with a kind word or gesture. I also believe this happiness is just as real as anything I could do for myself.*** Sometimes the best way to help yourself is to help someone else. Sometimes, for you to have a better day, try to brighten another persons. Be genuine. Be interested. Try to see the world from their point of view as well as your own. Again, this does NOT come naturally. I have to work daily to develop it similarly to a muscle. It has incredible rewards though.

I will end this train of thought with another Carnegie quote, “The world is full of people who are grabbing and self-seeking. So the rare individual who unselfishly tries to serve others has an enormous advantage. He has little competition.” Would you like an advantage in your life? I would. Practice this perspective shift on the people you meet tomorrow. Think of relationships in your life where you might not of thought about where the other person is coming from. Perform a random act of kindness for a stranger. It will all come back to help YOU one way or another. I promise. This is education of a different kind. “Most people go through college and learn to read Virgil and master the mysteries of calculus without *ever discovering how their own minds function.*” What we can learn from others will teach us a lot about ourselves.

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# You have an Unfair Advantage

Posted on [January 19, 2013](#)



Mr. Ed has got swag

If you're like me, your ADD applies to more than daily focus. It expands beyond the scope of shiny objects, strange sounds, and pennies on the ground. For example, you may be reading this because you're wondering why this horse is wearing sunglasses. The answer is because I wanted him to... and he told me. Back to the point- a different type of ADD. If you're like me, you see something you're not good at and make it a priority to improve upon. You are a plethora of useless facts and figures. In other words, you are a, "Jack of all trades but master of none." Nothing will hold back an ambitious individual more than this type of passion without real direction...in my opinion (Ben Franklin disclaimer)

Don't fix your weaknesses. Discover your strengths and leverage them for success in your life. It makes a lot of sense right? I'm not talking about when you are a child and you're better at playing football than reading. Not at all. I'm talking about that crossroads of education and career where you are told to choose a path. That path determines your focus. That focus determines your career and you live happily ever after. It's a very uncomfortable place to be. Why?

If you're like me, your mind creates every hypothetical outcome once you take a path. Your decision-making ability becomes a foggy cloud of 'what if' scenarios and hope begins to fade. Suddenly, a thought comes to you like a sliver of sunlight in the haze. You think, "I can do anything! Really, I have many options." Here's the problem- you move forward feeling confident but **without direction**. You are convinced in your mind that you are *accomplishing something by simply realizing you can do anything*. How ridiculous is that logic? The only reason I can even speak on this subject is because I'M GUILTY OF IT.

I saw my brother stay focused on his tennis and his school while I did what I felt like on a daily basis. Outcome? He played tennis all of college while maintaining a pre-med undergrad and is now at the top D.O. program in the country. On the other hand, I have two random degrees, have worked in five different industries, and can do the Rubiks cube in under 2 minutes. Focus matters. Direction matters. Measuring progress matters. Results matter.

You have an unfair advantage. You have something that nobody else does. You are unique. Don't you dare say you don't! The only person you are fooling is yourself. Every goal you set starts with the only thing you have control over- today. My challenge to you **this week** is to discover your "unfair advantage." This post isn't even about you. It's about ME

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## **A new year, A new you**

Posted on [January 18, 2013](#)



There's something about turning the calendar that inspires change. If you're like me you want change in your life NOW and have felt that way for a while. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee just over a year ago and decided my first change was going to be a move. As the 23rd winter of my life approached, I abruptly packed up and moved to South Florida. The last year has been a search for the right outlet to plug my talents and resources into. Through it I've learned a couple things about myself.

The first thing I've learned is that wherever I work, I have the ability and drive to become the best employee at the business. The second thing is that I'm not a very good employee. These are not as different as they may seem. On the one side, there is the Drew that wants to learn all the ins and outs of the business to become as effective as possible. On the other side, once learned, the same Drew seeks to reveal inefficiencies in the business and explore better ways to do things. Independent and entrepreneurial Drew has the same problems from a different perspective. I constantly look to better myself and improve both my knowledge base and habits in my personal life. I have a hunger to apply myself in all areas. This becomes a problem when I look for a direction or project to put those talents into action. I am simply a different breed of most people. I will never settle for mediocrity. I will always want to set a new standard once the old one is accomplished.

This leads me to today. I'm looking to develop a "Mastermind" group of friends who are also driven and passionate go-getters. Without any real direction to take real steps, I've begun to document where I'm at TODAY. It's simply a tool of measurement and of expression and, with repetition, my hope is that it will convert to realities.

To master my new year, my goal is to become Master of my day. Does anyone out there feel me?