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# Fundamental Truths That Will Change Your Life

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It's surprising how easy it is to lose sight of the important things in life. Busy schedules and regular routines have a tendency to put the brain on autopilot.

When things aren't going quite the way you'd like them to, it's often because you've lost focus on what really matters. But focusing on life's fundamental truths can be difficult, especially when they remind you that you're heading in the wrong direction.

The best things in life don't come easily, and failing to observe yourself carefully is a sure path to mediocrity. I believe that Socrates said it best:

*“The unexamined life isn't worth living.”*

Socrates' observation also applies to business. When Eric Schmidt was CEO of Google, he famously said, “We run this company on questions, not answers.”

Life and business run on questions, not answers. You should be asking yourself regularly if you're headed in the right direction.

Many of life's essential truths need repeating. We need reminders that help us to stay focused on them. Keep these truths handy and they're sure to give you a much-needed



**Great success is often preceded by failure.** You will never experience true success until you learn to embrace failure. Your mistakes pave the way for you to succeed by revealing when you're on the wrong path.

The biggest breakthroughs typically come when you're feeling the most frustrated and the most stuck. It's this frustration that forces you to think differently, to look outside the box and see the solution that you've been missing.

Success takes patience and the ability to maintain a good attitude even while suffering for what you believe in.

**Being busy does not equal being productive.** Look at everyone around you. They all seem so busy—running from meeting to meeting and firing off emails. Yet how many of them are really producing, really succeeding at a high level?

Success doesn't come from movement and activity. It comes from focus—from ensuring that your time is used efficiently and productively.

You get the same number of hours in the day as everyone else. Use yours wisely. After all, you're the product of your output, not your effort. Make certain your efforts are dedicated to tasks that get results.

**You're only as good as those you associate with.** You should strive to surround yourself with people who inspire you, people who make you want to be better. And you probably do. But what about the people who drag you down? Why do you allow them to be a part of your life?

Anyone who makes you feel worthless, anxious, or uninspired is wasting your time and, quite possibly, making you more like them. Life is too short to associate with people like this. Cut them loose.

**You're living the life you've created.** You are not a victim of circumstance. No one can force you to make decisions and take actions that run contrary to your values and aspirations.

The circumstances you're living in today are your own—you created them. Likewise, your future is entirely up to you. If you're feeling stuck, it's probably because you're afraid to take the risks necessary to achieve your goals and live your dreams.

When it's time to take action, remember that it's always better to be at the bottom of the ladder you want to climb than at the top of one you don't.

**Fear is the #1 source of regret.** When it's all said and done, you will lament the chances you didn't take far more than you will your failures. Don't be afraid to take



I often hear people say, “What’s the worst thing that can happen to you? Will it kill you?” Yet, death isn’t the worst thing that can happen to you.

The worst thing that can happen to you is allowing yourself to die inside while you’re still alive.

**You don't have to wait for an apology to forgive.** Life goes a lot smoother once you let go of grudges and forgive even those who never said they were sorry. Grudges let negative events from your past ruin today’s happiness. Hate and anger are emotional parasites that destroy your joy in life.

The negative emotions that come with holding on to a grudge create a stress response in your body, and holding on to stress can have devastating health consequences. Researchers at Emory University have shown that holding on to stress contributes to high blood pressure and heart disease.

When you forgive someone, it doesn’t condone their actions; it simply frees you from being their eternal victim.

**Live in the moment.** You can’t reach your full potential until you learn to live your life in the present.

No amount of guilt can change the past, and no amount of anxiety can change the future. It’s impossible to be happy if you’re constantly somewhere else, unable to fully embrace the reality (good or bad) of this very moment.

To help yourself live in the moment, you must do two things:

- 1) Accept your past. If you don’t make peace with your past, it will never leave you and, in doing so, it will create your future.
- 2) Accept the uncertainty of the future. Worry has no place in the here and now. As Mark Twain once said, “Worrying is like paying a debt you don’t owe.”

**Your self-worth must come from within.** When your sense of pleasure and satisfaction are derived from comparing yourself to others, you are no longer the master of your own destiny. When you feel good about something that you’ve done, don’t allow anyone’s opinions or accomplishments to take that away from you.

While it’s impossible to turn off your reactions to what others think of you, you don’t have to compare yourself to others, and you can always take people’s opinions with a grain of salt. That way, no matter what other people are thinking or doing, your self-worth comes from within. Regardless of what people think of you at any particular moment, one thing is certain—you’re never as good or bad as they say you are.



**LIFE IS SHORT.** NONE OF US ARE GUARANTEED A TOMORROW. YET, WHEN SOMEONE DIES unexpectedly it causes us to take stock of our own life: what's really important, how we spend our time, and how we treat other people.

Loss is a raw, visceral reminder of the frailty of life. *It shouldn't be.*

Remind yourself every morning when you wake up that each day is a gift and you're bound to make the most of the blessing you've been given. The moment you start acting like life is a blessing is the moment it will start acting like one.

After all, a great day begins with a great mindset.

**Change is inevitable—embrace it.** Only when you embrace change can you find the good in it. You need to have an open mind and open arms if you're going to recognize, and capitalize on, the opportunities that change creates.

You're bound to fail when you keep doing the same things you always have in the hope that ignoring change will make it go away.

After all, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Life doesn't stop for anyone. When things are going well, appreciate them and enjoy them, as they are bound to change. If you are always searching for something more, something better, that you think is going to make you happy, you'll never be present enough to enjoy the great moments before they're gone.

## Bringing It All Together

Staying focused and asking the hard questions can be extremely uncomfortable. But we don't learn and grow by sticking with what's comfortable.

*Please share your thoughts in the comments section below, as I learn just as much from you as you do from me.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of the #1 bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, and the cofounder of [TalentSmart](#), the world's leading provider of [emotional intelligence tests](#) and [training](#), serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. Dr. Bradberry has written for, or been covered by, *Newsweek*, *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company, Inc.*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Harvard Business Review*.



the online *Emotional Intelligence Appraisal* test that's included with the *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* book. Your test results will pinpoint which of the book's 66 emotional intelligence strategies will increase your EQ the most.



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