



Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb to Fail

BEING GENERALLY CAPABLE

You're (Probably) Not Going to Listen to Me Right Now


- You don't have a sufficient reason to become generally capable
- You (are forced to) think your model of the world is more right than wrong
- You're going to ask questions and be skeptical
- You probably think accuracy is a general good
- At best, you're going to incorporate 2 or 3 suggestions





When Will You People Listen?

When, sometime in the next 10 years, you're enormously dissatisfied with the direction your life is going and consider your model of the world, by most measures, to be failing

- 
- Almost impossible to visualize
 - And that nobody takes precautions
 - I bet if you don't listen to this now, when that happens (or when you can visualize it), you'll be much more receptive


Once You Realize I've Won the Bet

I'm going to tell you how to visualize it, how to prepare for it, and what you're going to do once it happens – because it will make you more successful at almost everything



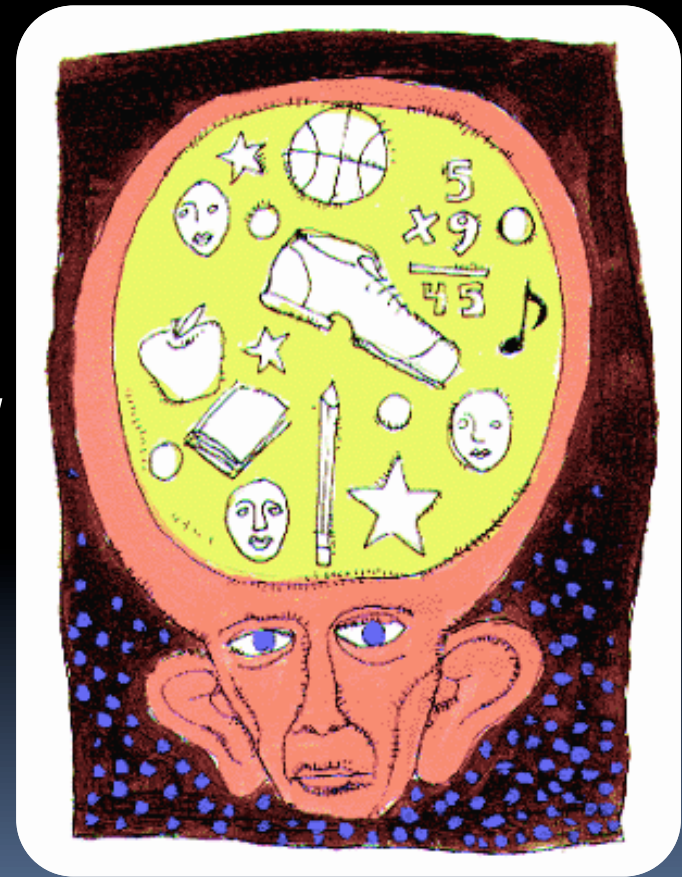


What Failure Will Feel Like

- Just-Enough Failure
 - Your model of the world is just enough to keep sliding through the world day-to-day
 - Constantly make exceptions so that you don't fail completely
 - Misery Failure
 - Watching your model work but not produce happiness
 - Just being 'happy enough' but nothing more
 - Break-Up Failure
 - Sudden realization that almost everything you valued has no meaning
 - Live a goalless life, in a state of avoidance, so that nothing challenges the little meaning you have left
 - Each of these are totally normal but still not optimal
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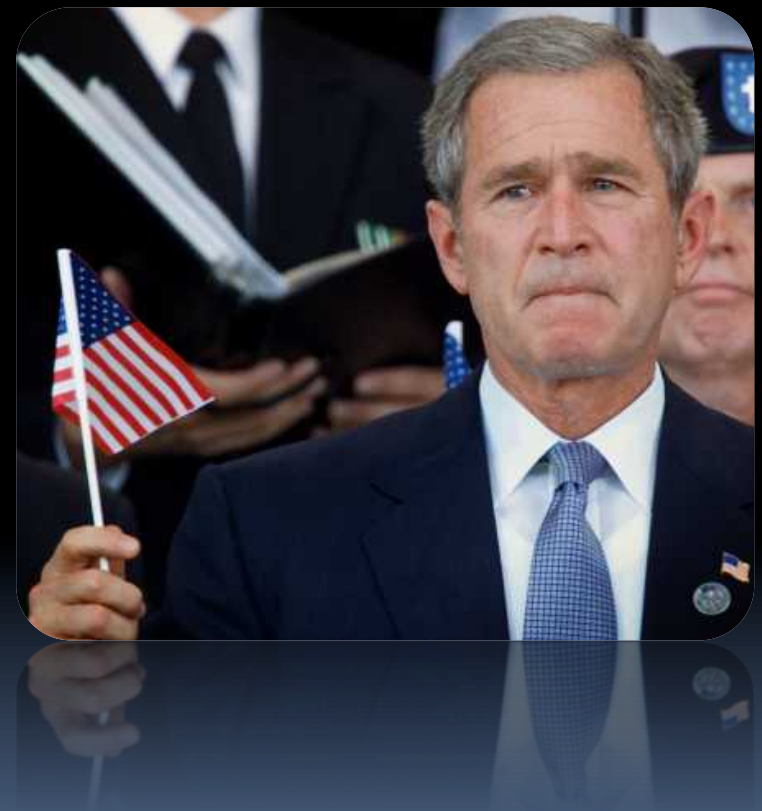
You'll Have Three Options

1. Denial
2. Remodel
3. Keep me on your hard drive/
memory



The Solution

- **Fail Smaller:** Fail at things smaller than life, things that won't cause existential crises
- **Fail More:** Chase new opportunities and add more goals onto your plate
- **Fail Often:** Pick goals that you think will have low chances of success, thereby increasing your rate of failure





"I failed my way to success." -- *Thomas Edison*

"Success is 99% failure" -- *Soichiro Honda*

"The way to succeed is to double your failure rate." -- *Thomas Watson*

"An inventor fails 999 times, and if he succeeds once, he's in. He treats his failures simply as practice shots." --
Charles Kettering



But first, we need to take a few steps back



The Theory: 3 Types of Goals

1. Performance Goals

- Seeking external feedback as a measure of success
- # of failures seen as measure of closeness to achieving goal

2. Work-Avoidance Goals

- Seeking little feedback to lessen possibility feeling failure
- Will neither fail nor succeed ever



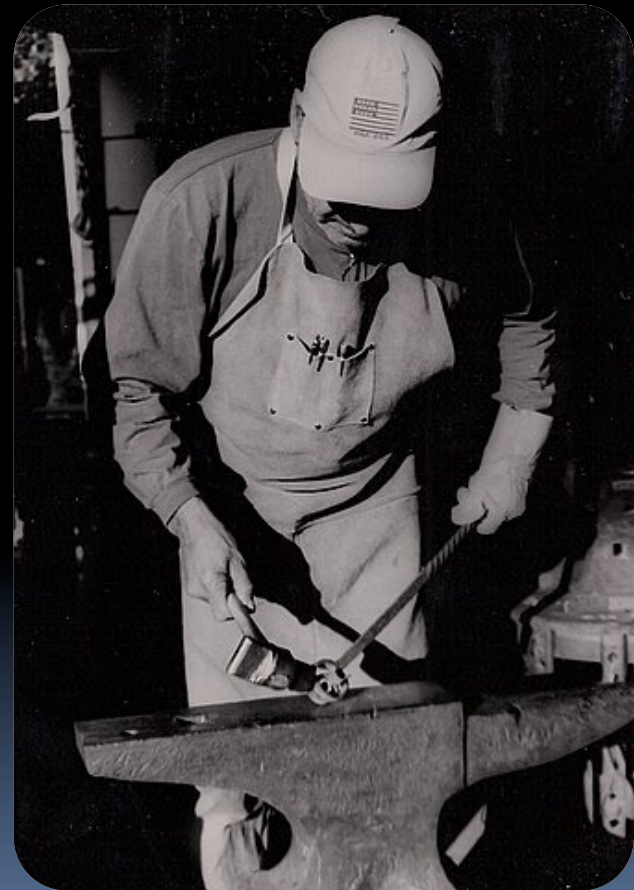
3. Mastery Goals

- Will fail at almost everything
- Seeks more challenges

Mastery Goals Part 1

Almost every generally capable person I've met has strong mastery goals. This is because they:

- **Seek (the most) difficult challenges in unfamiliar domains and so become capable in many domains**
- Don't see failures now as a measure of eventual success
- Derive motivation from failure



Mastery Goals Part 2

Psychologically, they:

- Have regret and remorse (and sometimes anger) when failing
- Have the emotional memory of a goldfish
- Hold the worldview that failing at something does not make you worse at it and succeeding will make you better



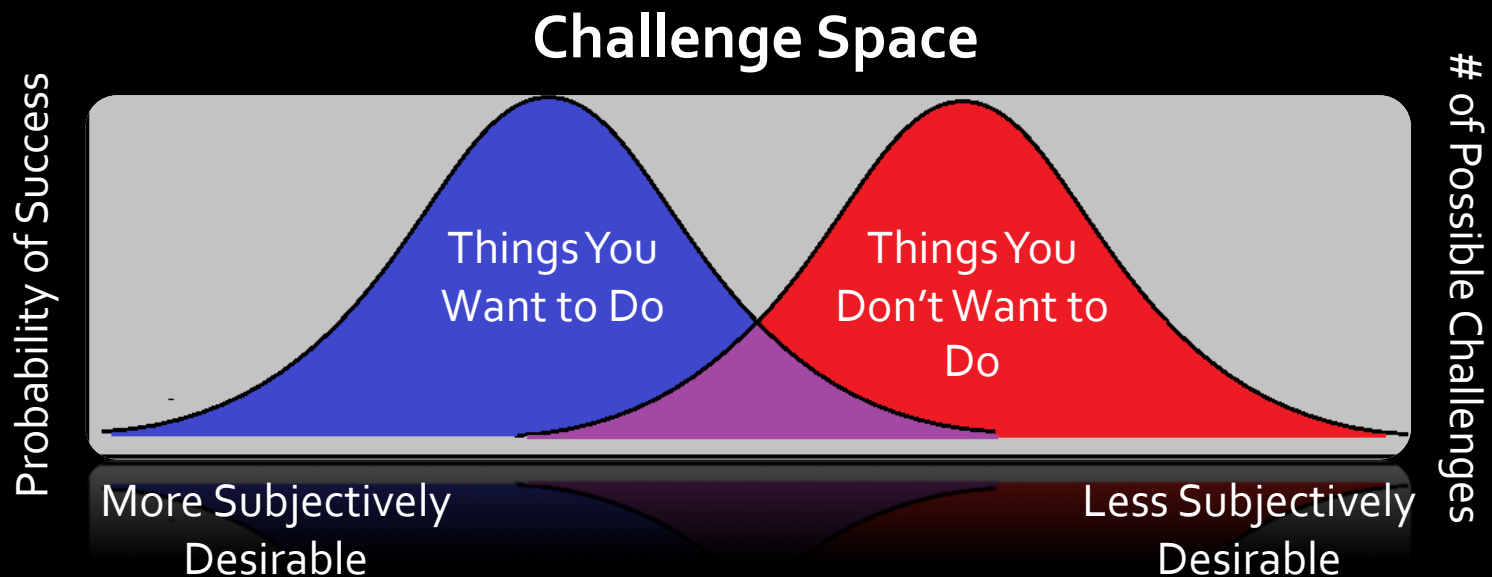
Habits of Mastery

I can't just tell you: "Go, have mastery goals!" But intentional habitual failure gets you there:

- Seek challenges in uncomfortable domains
- Intentionally pick goals with low success rates
- Act as if effort correlates highly with success (i.e. mimic motivation and have full commitment)



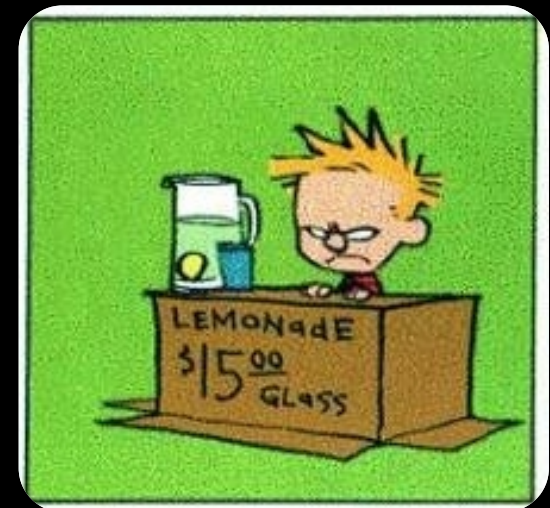
A Visual Approach



Notice that to span multiple domains in challenge space, you'll have to do plenty of things that you don't want to do

First Habit: Fail Smaller

- Find lower-risk challenges to fail at
- Not 'happiness', 'success', 'life'
- See 43 Things for a good list
- This means failing at things you don't originally want to do! (Things that you *want* carry higher emotional risk when they are unachieved.)



Second Habit: Fail More

"Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

- Pick more things to fail from
- Always have them on your plate
- Heuristic: If you're finding ways to put effort into all of them, then most of the time you don't have enough goals

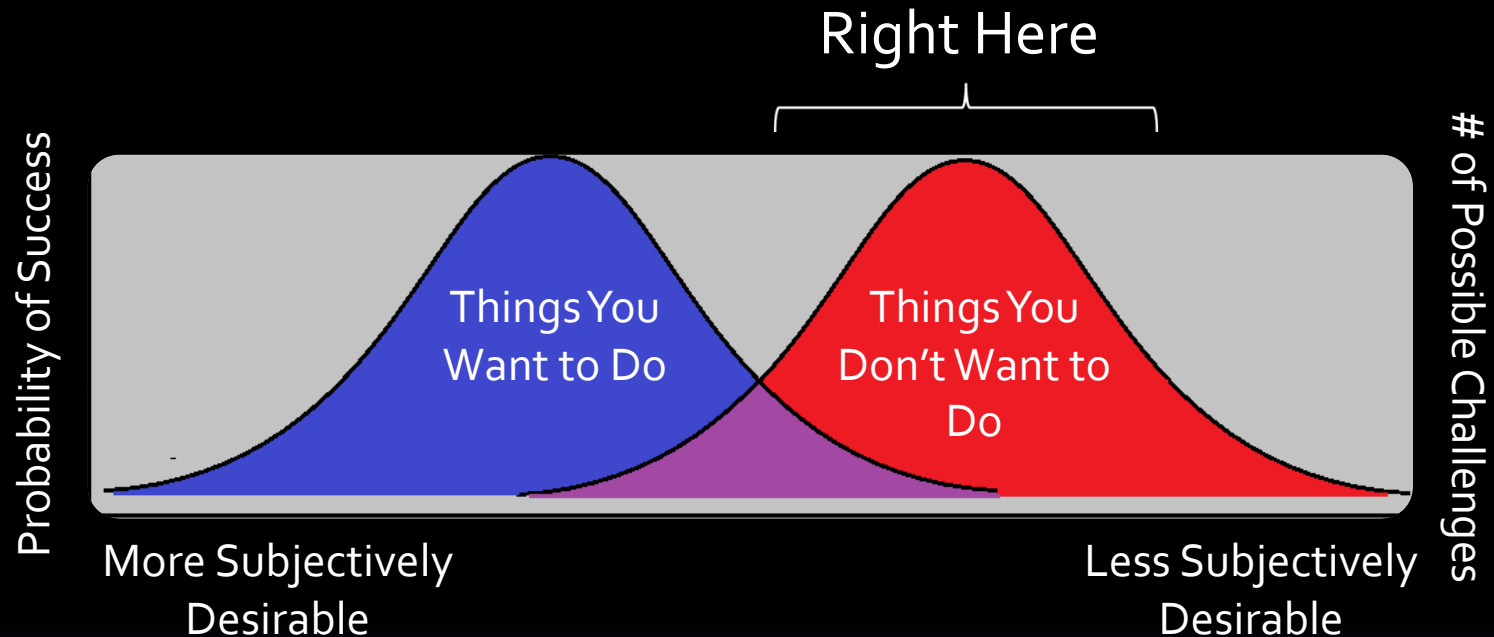


Third Habit: Fail Often

- Pick items that aren't guaranteed successes
- Give yourself deadlines
- If challenges are easy, make them repetitive (e.g. saying hi to everybody)
- Admit it! (When you fail that is)



Where to Find Challenges



To get habits of mastery, you're going to have to almost exclusively do things that you just don't want to do, and lots of them.

But note that changing your preferences makes previously 'impossible' items very possible



Wait, What Was This Presentation About?

- Oh, that's right, how to be a generally capable person
- Why have we been talking about failure so much then?
- What have we *actually* been talking about?

Creating a goal structure that seeks out scores of challenges from unfamiliar domains and consistently fails at them

Or,

How to succeed at almost everything



After You Start These Habits

After you start trying new things,
your mentalities will start to
shift:

- Declining costs of failure
- Focus on eventual success
- Seeking more difficult challenges with longer timeframes
- Forgetting and moving on



When You Actually Get There

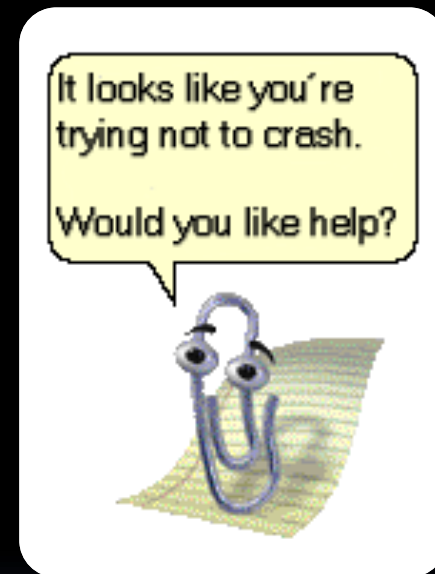
You'll know when you get there
when:

- Almost nothing feels impossible
- You stop being risk-averse
- New challenges stop feeling icky
- You know exactly what success and failure feel like



Support Habits

- Exploring, doing, then thinking
- Emotional resilience
- Stable egos
- Self-deception
- Commitment
- Self-criticism
- Its far better (habit-wise) to fail at something through commitment than meekly test it and remain unjudged



No, No, What Is This Presentation Really About?

Oh that. How habits of generally capable people will also lead you to:

- Satisfaction
- Happiness
- Broad successes
- Be prepared for the world's challenges
- A lack of existential crises

But you weren't going to listen if I just said that. Not unless you were unsatisfied, unhappy, unsuccessful, unprepared and in a crisis.



“Now I Feel Lied To”

Which makes me want to ask you questions.

