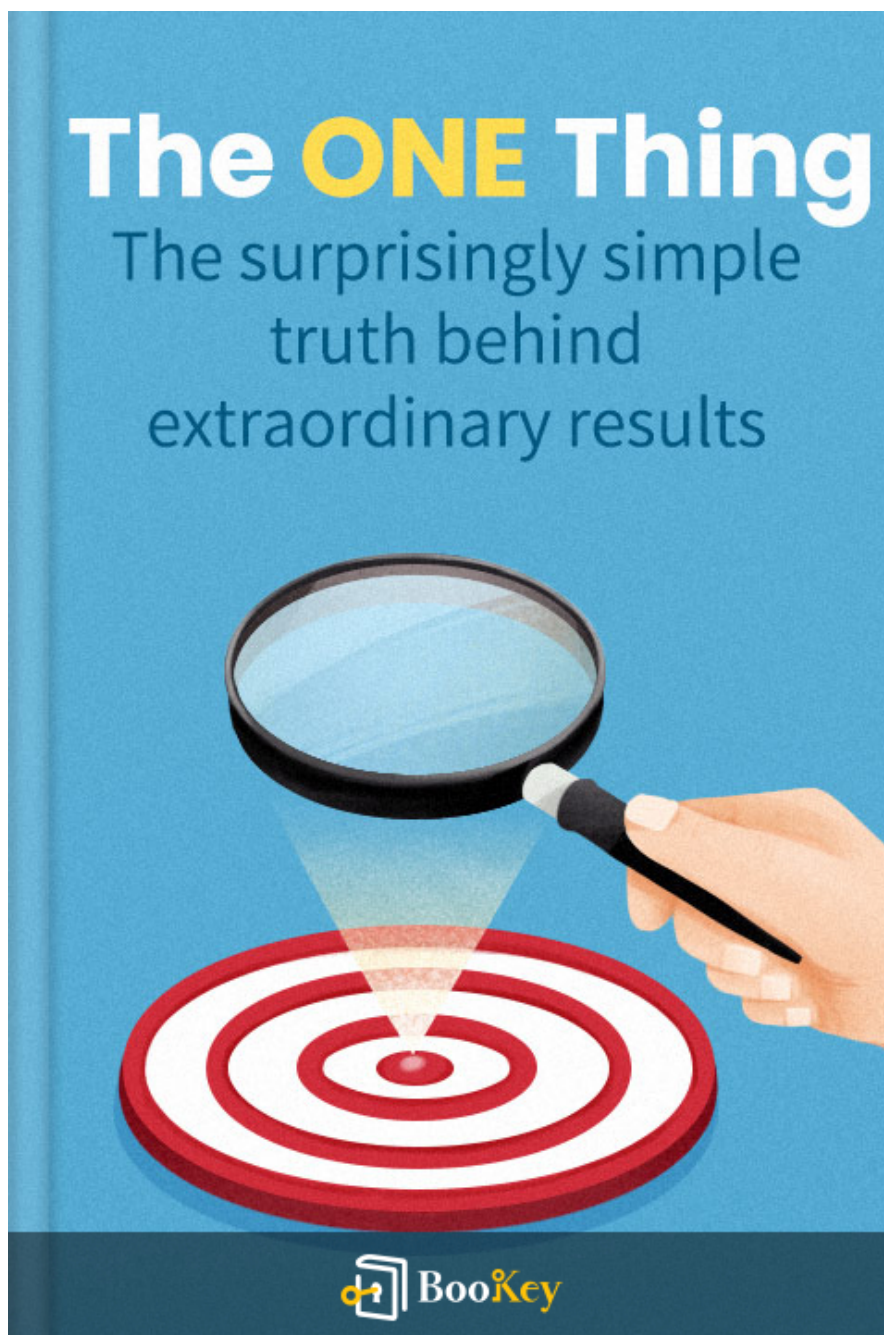


# The One Thing PDF (Limited Copy)

Gary Keller, Jay Papasan



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# **The One Thing Summary**

"Achieve More by Focusing on What Truly Matters."

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## About the book

In "The ONE Thing," Gary Keller and Jay Papasan unravel the surprisingly simple truth behind extraordinary results: profound success comes not from juggling multiple priorities but from relentless focus on the single most crucial task— \*your one thing\*. Advocating for a transformative approach to productivity and purpose, this book extends an empowering blueprint to channel your energy where it truly matters, urging you to eliminate distractions and embrace the power of prioritization. With a blend of insightful anecdotes and practical strategies, Keller and Papasan challenge conventional thinking, inviting you to redefine success by zeroing in on what matters most, ensuring your efforts generate impactful outcomes in your personal and professional journeys. Dive into this compelling narrative and discover a path to masterful achievement, one purposeful step at a time.

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## About the author

Gary Keller and Jay Papasan are the dynamic duo behind the revolutionary self-help book "The ONE Thing," which aims to help individuals focus on what truly matters in life and work. Gary Keller, a prominent entrepreneur and visionary, is the co-founder of Keller Williams Realty Inc., the world's largest real estate franchise by agent count. His keen insight into personal growth and business strategies has made him a respected figure in the real estate industry and beyond. Jay Papasan, a renowned author and executive, has collaborated with Keller on various projects. As Vice President of Publishing at Keller Williams, Papasan couples his rich literary background with practical insights to craft stories that resonate with readers. Together, Keller and Papasan combine decades of experience to empower people to eliminate distractions and channel their energy towards achieving massive success.

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## Chapter 1 Summary: 1

The first chapter of "The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results" opens with a reflection on the power of singular focus, encapsulated in a quote by Josh Billings about sticking to one thing. The chapter starts with an anecdote from the film \*City Slickers\* where a conversation between the characters Curly and Mitch reveals a timeless piece of wisdom: success hinges on focusing on one thing. Curly's advice, though delivered humorously, holds deep significance—it highlights the necessity of identifying and concentrating on the single most important thing to achieve success.

The author, Gary Keller, shares a personal narrative that mirrors the movie's theme. He recounts a period when his professional and personal life felt tumultuous despite past successes. Faced with a failing company and a sense of chaos, Keller sought guidance from a coach who offered a transformative insight: streamline efforts by focusing intensely on key areas. For Keller, this meant identifying 14 crucial positions within his organization that required the right individuals to drive change and success. This pivotal decision to "go small" and focus transformed his company, sparking significant growth and success over the years.

Keller expands on the principle of narrowing one's focus, arguing that success is not about doing more but about doing what matters most. He





describes the importance of discerning between what could be done versus what should be done, stressing that not all tasks contribute equally to desired outcomes. Keller suggests that by narrowing focus to the essential tasks, individuals can achieve extraordinary results and experience greater effectiveness in their professional and personal lives.

This notion of "going small" contradicts the common belief that big success necessitates complex and time-consuming efforts. Keller contends that most people mistakenly try to do too much, leading to overstretched schedules, diluted efforts, and ultimately lesser achievements. He advocates for subtracting rather than adding tasks—concentrating limited time and energy on the singularly important goal—thereby maximizing impact and minimizing stressful side effects like missed deadlines and loss of personal well-being.

Ultimately, the chapter emphasizes that success comes from focusing intensely on the "one thing" that has the power to make everything else easier or irrelevant. By adopting this simple yet effective approach, individuals can achieve extraordinary results in any area of life.



# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Focus on the 'One Thing'

**Critical Interpretation:** Immerse yourself in the art of singular focus and observe how it unlocks potential in your life. The key takeaway from this chapter is learning to identify and concentrate on the 'one thing' that truly matters in any given situation. This strategic focus can inspire transformation by simplifying complexity and channeling your efforts towards activities with the highest impact. By homing in on what truly matters, you cultivate the power to drive extraordinary results; thus, prioritize what plays the most pivotal role in your personal and professional achievements. This practice not only streamlines your actions but also enhances effectiveness, reduces stress, and ensures that your goals align with your true aspirations. Let the wisdom from this chapter guide your journey, transforming ambition into tangible success by doing less, more effectively.



## Chapter 2 Summary: 2

In the chapter titled "The Domino Effect," the narrative begins with a vivid illustration of how seemingly small actions can initiate powerful outcomes. The chapter sets the scene in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands, during Domino Day on November 13, 2009. On this day, Weijers Domino Productions orchestrated a spectacular event that set a world record by arranging over 4,491,863 dominoes. This ambitious domino fall released more than 94,000 joules of energy, akin to the energy required for an average-sized male to perform 545 pushups.

Each individual domino embodies a modest amount of potential energy, and as more dominoes are aligned, this potential accumulates. A simple flick can trigger a chain reaction unleashing tremendous power. This event was a testament to the concept that initiating one small action, the right action, can lead to the toppling of many others. But the implications of this go beyond mere linear progression.

Lorne Whitehead, in an article for the American Journal of Physics in 1983, expanded the concept by demonstrating that a domino can topple another 50% larger than itself. This geometric progression, as modeled by a San Francisco physicist in 2001 with plywood dominoes, starts slow but accelerates dramatically. The progression results in exponential growth, with the potential for astounding outcomes—like a 57th domino reaching from



Earth to the moon.

Exploring this domino effect in real life, the chapter underscores that extraordinary success mirrors this sequential and geometric growth. In life, priorities are often not laid out plainly. Successful individuals identify their "lead domino," the most critical task, and focus on it until progress is made. This approach, grounded in sequential action, allows for the accumulation of success over time, where each achievement builds upon the last, ultimately leading to remarkable results.

The chapter emphasizes that all forms of significant achievements, whether knowledge, skills, accomplishments, or wealth, are attained progressively over time, reinforcing the notion that success is a journey of sequential acts, each paving the way for the next.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Focus on your 'lead domino'.

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine you have a lineup of tasks or goals, each representing a domino. Your life can feel overwhelming when staring at all these dominoes, seemingly equal in importance. Yet, success doesn't require you to knock over every domino at once. By identifying and concentrating on your 'lead domino'—the single most crucial action—you could set off a chain reaction of progress. This isn't about being busy; it's about being effective. Tackling that one task can create momentum, naturally propelling you forward, and simplifying how you achieve larger goals. It teaches you that complexity doesn't equate to productivity. This mindset shift towards focusing on a singular, strategic task can inspire you to channel your energy effectively, unravel complicated goals, and ultimately transform your aspirations into achievements."



# Chapter 3 Summary: 3

## Success Leaves Clues

The essence of success often boils down to one key element — the "ONE Thing." Inspired by the idea that concentrating on a singular goal or task propels progress, this chapter explores how focusing on one key aspect can lead to extraordinary achievements. Renowned figures across various domains have harnessed this principle, demonstrating that success leaves clues.

## The Power of One Product or Service

Many successful companies owe their prosperity to excelling in one primary product or service. For instance, KFC originated from Colonel Sanders' single secret chicken recipe, and the Adolph Coors Company thrived for two decades with just one product. Likewise, Intel's revenue predominantly stems from microprocessors, and Starbucks is synonymous with its coffee offerings. Google's strength lies in search, enabling its advertising revenue success, and the Star Wars franchise shows how the original movies amplified its product sales, especially toys. These examples illuminate an essential business strategy: identifying and nurturing their "ONE Thing."

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## **Adaptation and Evolution**

Determining the “ONE Thing” isn't always straightforward and may evolve with technological, cultural, or competitive shifts. Apple exemplifies this adaptability, transitioning from Macs to iPhones over the years while maintaining its overarching innovation ethos. The focus remains on prioritizing one outstanding product or service at a time, as Ross Garber emphasized: only one can be the most important.

## **Impact of One Person**

The narrative of success extends to individuals as well, where one key person often makes a defining difference. Walt Disney's journey began with the support of his brother Roy; for Sam Walton of Wal-Mart fame, it was his father-in-law, L.S. Robson. Albert Einstein had mentor Max Talmud, while Oprah Winfrey credits her father's influence and the professional guidance of Jeffrey D. Jacobs. The Beatles' groundbreaking music was shaped with the guidance of producer George Martin. These relationships highlight that no one succeeds alone; everyone has a pivotal figure who catalyzes their success.

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## **Channels of Passion and Skill**

Extraordinary success stories often stem from a fusion of passion and skill. An intense passion can lead to focused practice, which in turn transforms into notable skill — a cycle seen in figures like Pat Matthews and Angelo Amorico. A striking example is Gilbert Tuhabonye, whose passion for running drove his accomplishments, including surviving a horrific attack due to his athletic prowess. This cycle of passion developing into skill, which then becomes a profession, underscores a pathway to achieving exceptional outcomes.

### **The One Life of Bill Gates**

Bill Gates epitomizes how the “ONE Thing” philosophy can shape an extraordinary life. His passion for computers sparked a skill in programming, eventually leading to the formation of Microsoft with Paul Allen. This singular focus on developing software set the stage for Gates’ monumental success, later transitioning his focus toward global health solutions through the Gates Foundation. Their decision to focus on vaccines illustrates the impact of choosing a singular path for the most significant global health outcomes.

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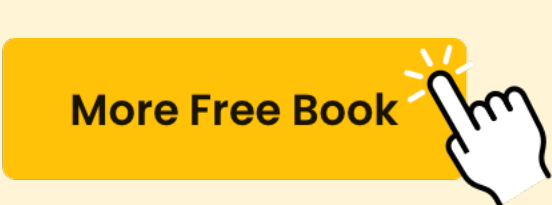
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# Clearing Misconceptions

Yet, embracing the “ONE Thing” is challenged by common misconceptions or lies about success. People often succumb to the fallacy that multitasking enhances productivity, or that everything holds equal importance. These myths — including the need for perpetual balance and discipline, or that big dreams are impractical — often cloud judgment and derail potential. Dispelling these notions is crucial for paving the way to successful concentration on the “ONE Thing.”

Ultimately, this chapter invites readers to explore the profound impact of focusing on a singular path or priority. Behind every success story lies a fundamental truth: understanding and applying the concept of the “ONE Thing” can lead to exceptional personal and professional achievements.

Key Themes	Details
Success Leaves Clues	The essence of success is concentrating on a single goal or task. Renowned figures demonstrate that this focus can lead to remarkable achievements.
The Power of One Product or Service	Successful companies often excel with one primary product or service. Examples include KFC, Coors, Intel, Starbucks, Google, and the Star Wars franchise.
Adaptation and Evolution	Determining the "ONE Thing" is not always straightforward and may evolve. Apple illustrates this through its shift from Macs to iPhones.



Key Themes	Details
Impact of One Person	One key person often plays a pivotal role in another's success. Examples include Walt Disney, Sam Walton, Albert Einstein, Oprah Winfrey, and The Beatles.
Channels of Passion and Skill	Success often results from the fusion of passion and skill, with individuals like Pat Matthews, Angelo Amorico, and Gilbert Tuhabonye exemplifying this cycle.
The One Life of Bill Gates	Bill Gates' singular focus on software development led to Microsoft's success, with later efforts toward global health through the Gates Foundation.
Clearing Misconceptions	Challenges include dispelling myths about multitasking and equality in priorities, arguing for focused effort on the "ONE Thing."
Conclusion	The chapter invites readers to understand and apply the "ONE Thing" concept for exceptional personal and professional achievements.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Concentrating on Your 'ONE Thing'

**Critical Interpretation:** In a world filled with endless distractions and competing priorities, mastering the art of focusing on your 'ONE Thing' can truly transform your life. By honing in on a singular goal or task that aligns with your deepest passions and utilitarian skills, you position yourself to achieve remarkable outcomes. Imagine the power in waking up each day with a crystal-clear understanding of what truly matters most in your personal and professional journey. This focus empowers you to allocate your energy and resources efficiently, casting aside the noise of multitasking and equal prioritization. As you dedicate yourself to this concentrated effort, you uncover a path paved with clarity, where every action propels you closer to the pinnacle of success and fulfillment, much like the titans of industry and innovation who have walked before you.

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## Chapter 4: 4

In the chapter titled "Everything Matters Equally," the author explores the misconception that all tasks and aspects of life hold equal importance. This notion is challenged by highlighting the reality of inequality in the world of achievement and decision-making. The chapter discusses the necessity of prioritizing tasks to achieve true success, as echoed by the quote from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: "Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least."

The author elucidates how, from childhood to adulthood, individuals transition from having structured tasks to choosing their activities, leading to a sense of being overwhelmed and overcommitted. This inundation often results in poor decision-making, where tasks are approached reactively rather than strategically. The chapter underscores that not all actions contribute equally to success, and productivity should not be confused with mere busyness.

Bob Hawke's idea—that the most important things don't always demand attention the loudest—complements Henry David Thoreau's question of purpose amidst busyness. The text critiques the traditional to-do list, which can be an exhaustive catalog of obligations rather than a roadmap to success. Instead, it advocates for a "success list," emphasizing that tasks should be selected based on their potential for significant outcomes, following the





Pareto Principle.

The Pareto Principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, is introduced through the historical context of Joseph M. Juran, who built upon Vilfredo Pareto's findings that a minority of efforts yield the majority of results. Juran's

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# Chapter 5 Summary: 5

## Chapter 5: Multitasking - The Myth Unveiled

The concept of multitasking has permeated modern culture, often hailed as a hallmark of efficiency. However, this chapter dissects the myth, revealing that multitasking is more a detriment than a benefit. The term "multitasking" originated in the 1960s to describe computers capable of handling multiple operations rapidly, but even then, it was misunderstood. Computers, despite their speed, don't perform tasks simultaneously; they switch quickly between them, creating the illusion of simultaneous processing. This distinction is crucial when drawing parallels between machines and human capabilities.

In 2009, Clifford Nass, a Stanford University professor, spearheaded research to assess the efficacy of multitasking among college students. His findings were startling: frequent multitaskers, presumed to be highly adept, actually performed worse on cognitive tasks compared to those who multitasked less. Nass concluded that heavy multitaskers are "suckers for irrelevancy," easily distracted and inefficient. This contradicts the prevalent belief that multitasking enhances productivity.

The psychological underpinnings of multitasking reveal that while humans can perform simple simultaneous actions, like walking and talking, true



focus is limited to one task at a time. Attempting more results in "task switching," where the brain suffers from reduced efficiency as it alternates focus, akin to juggling—a sequential process rather than simultaneous engagement. Dr. David Meyer, a noted researcher, highlights that task switching incurs time penalties, especially with complex activities, further debunking the multitasking myth.

The illusion of multitasking extends into everyday life and work environments. Modern offices, described as "carnivals of distractions," exemplify this. Workers face constant interruptions from emails, alerts, and overlapping tasks, leading to wasted time and diluted focus. Billy Collins, a poet laureate, likens this scattered focus to a "monkey mind," a concept in Buddhism that describes an unsettled, restless state.

Furthermore, multitasking impacts personal and professional realms profoundly. Distraction contributes to mistakes and stress, eroding productivity and diminishing life quality. Research indicates that multitasking can decrease effective work time by nearly 28%, leading to inaccurate time estimates and a frazzled state. In extreme cases, such as "driving while distracted," multitasking becomes fatally dangerous, underscoring its risks.

Ultimately, the chapter pleads for a reevaluation of multitasking. It suggests shifting from a fragmented, multitasking mindset towards focused,



single-tasking priorities. By fostering concentration, individuals can preserve relationships, enhance productivity, and achieve high-quality outcomes in their endeavors. This pivot from a pervasive myth to embracing focused work can transform both personal satisfaction and professional success.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Focus on Single-Tasking

**Critical Interpretation:** Transitioning to a single-tasking approach can dramatically enhance your life's quality and effectiveness. Imagine dedicating your full attention to one priority at a time, clearing away the clutter of simultaneous, divided efforts. As you focus on one task, you'll find your productivity soaring, your stress levels diminishing, and your outcomes more polished and rewarding. By stepping away from the multitasking myth, you preserve your mental space and deliver your best work, all while finding a profound sense of accomplishment and peace in the deep dive of true concentration. This shift not only boosts your professional achievements but also enriches personal relationships, creating a more fulfilling and streamlined life journey. Embracing single-tasking is your key to unlocking a future of focused success.





# Chapter 6 Summary: 6

## Chapter 6: A Disciplined Life

In contemporary culture, the notion prevails that success comes from being a continuously disciplined individual. However, this is a misconception. As Leo Babauta points out, it's not about being perpetually disciplined, but about directing the discipline we already possess to cultivate the right habits. Success, contrary to being a marathon of disciplined action, is more akin to a short sprint where discipline lasts just long enough to form beneficial habits.

The interplay between discipline and habit is critical to achieving results. Discipline involves training oneself to act in a specific manner, and when sustained over time, it becomes a habit. Thus, what appears to be a disciplined lifestyle is actually a life built upon a few powerful, ingrained habits.

The idea of constantly channeling every action under strict control is daunting and impractical. Many people either double down on this impossible task or give up, feeling defeated. However, success isn't about doing everything right but focusing on doing the right thing. By investing discipline to establish the right habits, individuals can appear disciplined because their effective habits do the heavy lifting.

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Michael Phelps, the renowned Olympic swimmer, serves as an exemplary illustration of selective discipline. Diagnosed with ADHD as a child, Phelps wasn't perceived as someone who could focus. Despite such early challenges, his dedication to daily swimming forged a habit that propelled him to become the most decorated Olympian in history. His singular focus on swimming demonstrates that channeling discipline into the right habit can yield simplicity and effectiveness in life, allowing freedom from constantly monitoring other areas.

The journey from discipline to habit formation is initially challenging but becomes easier over time. Studies by University College London indicate that, on average, it takes 66 days for a new behavior to become a habit. Although some self-help texts argue for a 21-day period, scientific evidence does not support this. Beginning with a selected discipline and persisting long enough leads to eased maintenance and potentially aids in improving other aspects of life through a halo effect, making tasks like healthier living and better financial habits easier.

In essence, achievement isn't about performing specific tasks but integrating habits into one's lifestyle. Developing powerful habits over time through selected discipline fosters success. The key takeaways are: focus on mastering one habit at a time, allow sufficient time for habits to form (66 days on average), and realize that building habits sequentially rather than



simultaneously leads to extraordinary results finding you.

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## Chapter 7 Summary: 7

### Chapter 7: Willpower is Always on Will-Call

In this chapter, the author delves into the misconception regarding willpower, emphasizing how it is often misunderstood and mismanaged. The saying "Where there's a will, there's a way" is critiqued for its oversimplification of what is required for success. Many assume willpower to be a constant and readily available resource, which leads to inevitable failure when it's not.

The chapter recounts the story of "The Marshmallow Test," pioneered by Walter Mischel in the 1960s and 70s, as a seminal study demonstrating the role of willpower in future success. In this experiment, children were given the choice between a single treat now or two if they could wait 15 minutes. The ability to delay gratification strongly correlated with better academic and social outcomes later in life, such as higher SAT scores and better stress management.

A key insight from the chapter is that willpower is not an unlimited resource. Like a battery that depletes with use, willpower diminishes throughout the day and needs restoring through rest or stress-reducing activities. Research from Baba Shiv at Stanford University highlights how even small cognitive

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loads can tax willpower, impacting decision-making processes.

The discussion extends to the significant role nutrition plays in sustaining willpower. The brain, though a small part of the body, consumes a considerable amount of energy, and its most recently developed areas—responsible for self-control—are the first to suffer from energy depletion. Studies mention that foods providing steady energy release, like proteins and complex carbohydrates, support sustained willpower.

The chapter also examines how diminished willpower pushes individuals towards default habits, which may be detrimental. For example, a study on Israeli parole hearings showed that judges were more likely to deny parole as their decision-making energy waned between breaks, illustrating how fatigue leads to defaulting on the easier, but not necessarily just, option.

To effectively use willpower, the author suggests front-loading important tasks to the beginning of the day when willpower reserves are at their fullest. By doing so, individuals can better manage their energy and maintain focus on long-term goals. Practical advice includes conserving willpower for priority activities, ensuring proper nutrition, and structuring tasks to align with natural energy rhythms—thereby maximizing success.

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## Chapter 8: 8

Chapter 8 of the book presents a provocative thesis: the notion of a perfectly balanced life is an illusion. Often pursued as an ideal, balance is a concept that is more of a verb than a noun, more of an ongoing activity than an ultimate goal. The chapter argues that the quest for balance between work and life is not only impractical but can be harmful, as it distracts from the pursuit of purpose, meaning, and significance—elements that truly constitute a successful life.

Historically, balance as we understand it today is a modern luxury. For much of human history, survival necessitated an integration of work and life—work was life. With the rise of agricultural societies, and eventually industrialization, people began working within rigid schedules for others rather than solely for survival. As more married women entered the workforce in the 1980s, the term "work-life balance" emerged, capturing a perceived imbalance in modern life.

Despite popular belief, the chapter argues that equilibrium does not necessarily result from maintaining a middle-ground approach. Living at the extremes, though it presents challenges, can lead to extraordinary results. It asserts that significant achievements require focused time and energy, leading to an inherent imbalance. The pursuit of balance often results in mediocrity, as the middle prevents the dedication needed for extraordinary





achievements.

The chapter highlights two stories illustrating the dangers of delaying life for future balance: one involves a woman who never enjoyed her retirement plans due to untimely death, and the other features a businessman who attempted to reclaim family time after years of work, discovering that missed moments could not be recaptured. These narratives stress the futility of expecting to balance life at some future point, as time wasted cannot be regained.

To manage this inherent imbalance, the chapter introduces the concept of "counterbalancing" rather than balance. Counterbalancing acknowledges that while focusing on priorities, other areas might be underserved temporarily, but not indefinitely. It requires a conscious negotiation between work and personal life, ensuring neither is neglected for too long.

Counterbalancing divides life into two buckets: work and personal life. Professionally, it suggests allowing periods of significant imbalance to focus on what matters most, accepting that some areas will be temporarily sidelined for extraordinary achievements. Personally, it calls for more frequent adjustments to ensure all vital aspects of one's life receive attention. This means staying attuned to one's well-being, family, and social connections.

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In conclusion, the chapter proposes shifting from a mindset of balance to that of prioritization. By recognizing that true fulfillment stems from acting on priorities and embracing the imbalance it entails, one can lead a more purposeful and satisfying life. The key is to dynamically manage when and how long to focus intensely on particular aspects, allowing life to be a continuous act of counterbalancing.

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# Chapter 9 Summary: 9

## Chapter 9: Big Is Bad

The age-old connection between 'big' and 'bad' in stories and songs—like the Big Bad Wolf—is a misleading narrative that society often subscribes to. However, associating size inherently with negativity can sabotage one's pursuit of success. Fear of big opportunities often stems from misconceptions that they are complex, stressful, and unattainable. This mentality, coined as "megaphobia," leads to small thinking and limits potential progress.

The chapter then explores how, historically, mankind's progress was stifed by misconceptions, such as the belief that the earth was flat. Similarly, in personal and professional endeavors, there is no clear boundary to what we can achieve. The narrative encourages embracing big thinking as a vehicle for exploring vast possibilities, exemplified by stories of success like Sabeer Bhatia's creation of Hotmail, which grew from a bold vision despite humble beginnings.

Thinking big isn't just about grand business ventures; it can lead to substantial societal impacts, as shown by philanthropists like Candace Lightner and her foundation, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The chapter



stresses that big goals might appear daunting, but pursuing them results in personal growth. Psychologist Carol S. Dweck's research is cited to support the value of a "growth mindset" over a "fixed mindset," enabling individuals to pursue their full potential.

Ultimately, the narrative asserts that a life of mediocrity should be more feared than the challenges of pursuing greatness. By embracing courage and bold actions, individuals foster a mindset conducive to extraordinary achievements.

## **Chapter 2: The Truth - The Simple Path to Productivity**

In this chapter, the author shares a personal journey of trying to conform to traditional success tactics—believing that everything mattered equally. Initially, the author mistakenly embraced a high-pressure lifestyle, epitomized by long hours and projecting an image of success, which ultimately led to burnout and disillusionment.

Once the pressure became unsustainable, a paradigm shift occurred. The author chose to embrace authenticity over convention by relaxing, prioritizing personal well-being, and focusing on carving out meaningful work rather than tackling everything at once. This transformation included breaking free from stereotypes, embracing a relaxed demeanor, and



ultimately becoming more effective by doing less.

The key lesson discovered was that success isn't about managing time but rather about discerning and focusing on the essential tasks that genuinely matter. This approach led to a more balanced, fulfilling life and greater success.

The core principle learned was simply the "ONE Thing"—focusing on the most critical task at any given moment—as the foundational truth for achieving extraordinary results. This wisdom underscores that authenticity, directed effort, and focus are the ultimate keys to true success.

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## Chapter 10 Summary: 10

Chapter 10 of the book focuses on the power of the "Focusing Question," a concept that underscores the importance of prioritization and clarity to achieve success. The chapter opens with anecdotes from historical figures like Andrew Carnegie and Mark Twain to illustrate the value of concentrating one's efforts on a singular, prioritized task. Carnegie, a titan of the steel industry, advised focusing all energy on a single business endeavor, emphasizing the importance of putting "all your eggs in one basket and then watching that basket."

The chapter conveys the idea that clarity in one's goals and concentrating efforts on the most important task lead to extraordinary results. This is encapsulated in the Focusing Question: "What's the ONE Thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?" This question serves as both a strategic map for life's big decisions and as a tactical compass for immediate actions. Its simplicity might tempt individuals to overlook its power, but the question's real strength lies in its ability to identify the initial, most critical task—the first domino—that leads to cascading success.

The author argues that the quality of answers we receive is directly related to the quality of the questions we ask. Great thinkers and inventors have always understood that questions drive discovery and innovation. The Focusing



Question, thus, is presented as a tool for achieving exceptional outcomes because it narrows down possibilities to align efforts with one's core goals.

The chapter suggests that life itself is a series of questions, and how we choose to frame these questions dictates the answers and results we receive. The emphasis is on crafting the right questions to guide one's life and work toward desired objectives. This involves clarity and courage to focus on what truly matters rather than being sidetracked by multiple interests or superficial tasks.

The Focusing Question operates on two levels: the Big-Picture Question, which helps in setting overarching life goals and visions for one's career or personal legacy; and the Small-Focus Question, which is concerned with immediate tasks, ensuring day-to-day actions align with larger aspirations.

The chapter concludes with the assertion that extraordinary results rarely happen by chance. They are the product of deliberate choices and the disciplined pursuit of essential tasks, embodied by the consistent application of the Focusing Question. This approach not only prepares individuals for optimal productivity but also aligns their actions with meaningful personal or professional growth, thereby creating a profound domino effect of success.





## Chapter 11 Summary: 11

Chapter 11, "The Success Habit," centers around the concept of harnessing the power of habits to achieve extraordinary results in various aspects of life. The core of this chapter is the introduction of the "Focusing Question," which is designed to help individuals identify their most crucial task or priority to ensure that everything else becomes easier or unnecessary. The author emphasizes the importance of forming purposeful habits and using the Focusing Question to navigate through life's different areas.

The chapter begins by discussing the nature of habits—both their challenges and their capabilities. Habits form when a behavior or thought pattern is repeated over a long enough period. The author stresses the choice we have in forming habits that align with our life goals. The Focusing Question is presented as an essential tool in this process, capable of guiding individuals towards achieving success in their personal and professional lives. The question asks, "What's the ONE Thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?" It serves as the foundation for creating new and meaningful habits.

The author then shares how they personally apply the Focusing Question as a fundamental part of their daily life. The question is utilized to identify the most leveraged priorities and to optimize time management across various life domains including spiritual life, physical health, personal life, key



relationships, job, business, and finances. By prioritizing and addressing each area in succession, the author creates a working framework for a balanced, fulfilling life.

To implement the Focusing Question effectively, individuals are encouraged to tailor it to different aspects of their lives. The chapter provides specific Focusing Questions targeting areas such as spiritual development, physical health pursuits, personal growth, relationships, work performance, business strategies, and financial wellbeing. By doing so, readers are given a framework to ask impactful questions that prompt actions aligned with their immediate and long-term goals.

The chapter concludes by proposing concrete strategies to integrate the Focusing Question into one's daily routine to achieve extraordinary results. Key strategies include understanding the concept and believing in its potential, making asking the Focusing Question a daily habit, and leveraging visual and social reminders to reinforce the habit. The author also underscores the significance of social support in maintaining success habits, encouraging readers to engage with family and colleagues to sustain motivation and reinforce positive behavioral changes.

The Focusing Question and its successful integration are declared as powerful tools for setting and achieving ambitious goals, with guidance drawn from experience and insights on habit formation. The chapter



emphasizes that by asking the right questions and forming disciplined habits, individuals can unlock extraordinary outcomes and see significant improvements in all areas of their lives.

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# Chapter 12: 12

## ### Chapter 12: The Path to Great Answers

The chapter delves into the importance of forming habits that guide future success, inspired by F. M. Alexander's belief that habits shape futures. At the heart of the discussion is the concept of the **Focusing Question**, a powerful tool for identifying the most important action—the ONE Thing—that brings extraordinary success.

**Asking Great Questions:** The process begins with asking a great question, characterized by its specificity and size, akin to setting ambitious and clear goals. This is visualized through a matrix that divides question types into four quadrants based on their qualities:

1. **Big & Specific:** Exemplified by "What can I do to double sales in six months?" such questions demand large, precise goals, enabling extraordinary answers.
2. **Small & Specific:** Such as setting a mere 5% sales increase as a target. This is incremental and lacks transformative impact.
3. **Small & Broad:** Exemplified by general inquiries like "What can I do to increase sales?" These serve as starting points but lack the focus needed for tangible results.
4. **Big & Broad:** Questions like "What can I do to double sales?" These



are ambitious but lack the clarity to direct specific action.

The chapter emphasizes transforming a great question into a **Focusing**

**Question:** "What's the ONE Thing I can do to double sales in six months such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?"

This form of questioning sharpens focus and directs efforts towards what truly matters.

**Finding Great Answers:** Discovering impactful solutions involves three types of answers: doable, stretch, and possibility. The simplest, a doable answer, aligns with current skills and knowledge. Beyond this is the stretch answer, where some research and effort are required. However, extraordinary achievers opt for a **possibility answer**, which extends beyond comfort zones, demanding innovation and new behaviors.

**The Success Habit:** Achieving extraordinary results requires pushing boundaries. High achievers understand the essence of possibility answers, living at the thresholds of their capabilities to attain success. This journey involves thorough research, leveraging resources such as books and the internet, and learning from the experiences of others. To craft a groundbreaking answer, one must benchmark against the current best and trend towards future possibilities.

### Extraordinary Results: Unlocking Potential

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The journey to extraordinary achievement hinges on understanding the intertwined nature of **purpose, priority, and productivity**. These elements form a framework akin to an iceberg; visible productivity is underpinned by the covert drivers of purpose and priority.

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## Chapter 13 Summary: 13

In Chapter 13, titled "Live with Purpose," George Bernard Shaw's assertion that "life is about creating yourself" sets the stage for discussing how purpose is essential for leading an extraordinary life. Using the classic tale of Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens's *\*A Christmas Carol\**, the chapter explores the transformative power of purpose. Scrooge, a mean, penny-pinching old man who detests Christmas, undergoes a haunting experience by the spirits of past, present, and future, initiated by his deceased partner Jacob Marley. This supernatural ordeal opens Scrooge's eyes to the value of compassion and community, shifting his life from a focus on money to one centered on people and generosity. His transformation illustrates Dickens's formula: living with purpose, priority, and productivity. Scrooge's journey signifies that choices shape destinies, and a life that prioritizes people and relationships over material wealth offers true fulfillment.

The chapter delves further into the concept of happiness, critiquing the misguided quest for happiness through desire, as exemplified by an ancient tale known as "The Begging Bowl." It conveys the idea that chasing desires is futile much like how the king in the story couldn't fill the beggar's bottomless bowl, symbolizing the insatiable nature of human desires. Achieving long-lasting happiness, according to scholars like Dr. Martin Seligman, is more about meaningful engagement and purpose rather than





material possessions.

Moreover, it scrutinizes the misconception that wealth equates to happiness. It argues that true financial wealth comes from having enough resources to support one's life purpose, highlighting the importance of having a "Big Why" — a driving purpose that fuels enthusiasm and perseverance even in tough times.

The chapter concludes by providing practical advice for discovering one's purpose. It encourages individuals to reflect on their "Big Why" — what ignites their passion and keeps them going. It suggests experimenting with different paths to find what resonates, as Jane Doe's personal narrative exemplifies through her long dedication to teaching and personal development, finding fulfillment by aligning actions with purpose. In essence, the chapter posits that purpose is a powerful catalyst for happiness and achievement, directing us toward a life well-lived and genuinely content.

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## Chapter 14 Summary: 14

Chapter 14 of the book explores the concept of living by priority to achieve extraordinary results. It begins by highlighting a famous exchange from Lewis Carroll's *\*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,\** where Alice and the Cheshire Cat discuss direction and purpose, emphasizing that having a clear purpose is crucial for knowing what actions to take. This sets the stage for defining priority as the means to channel purpose into action.

The chapter outlines the evolution of the word "priority," which originally referenced what mattered most. However, over time, it became pluralized, diluting its significance. The author reinstates its singular importance to mean the *\*ONE\** Thing that should be the focus at any given moment to achieve goals.

The concept of "Goal Setting to the Now" is introduced as a method to transform long-term ambitions into immediate actions. This approach aligns future goals with present actions by asking a series of incremental questions: What is the ONE Thing you can do right now to be on track for achieving a future goal? This method ensures that present actions are directly connected to future ambitions, much like Russian matryoshka dolls, where each action is nested within larger objectives.

The chapter delves into the psychological hurdle of "hyperbolic

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discounting," where people prefer immediate rewards over larger, future benefits. This bias towards immediate gratification can derail long-term success. The author suggests that by consistently choosing future rewards over present biases, individuals can align their actions with their bigger goals.

Real-life studies and examples are shared to illustrate how breaking down larger goals into actionable steps leads to better outcomes. Dr. Gail Matthews' research is highlighted, showing that writing goals down significantly increases the likelihood of achieving them. Visualization techniques focusing on the process, rather than just the outcome, also play a critical role in success.

Engaging in the practice of writing down goals and priorities is strongly advocated as a tool for maintaining focus and accountability. The chapter closes by emphasizing that even though people might have many things they want to achieve, there is always one that matters most—the \*ONE\* Thing—and focusing on this leads to extraordinary results. In the end, knowing the priority is only part of the equation; consistently acting on it is what drives success.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Goal Setting to the Now

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine this: your life as a series of cascading dominoes. Each domino needs to be strategically placed to ensure that the next one falls in the right sequence. 'Goal Setting to the Now' urges you to examine this carefully planned lineup, encouraging you to transform future aspirations into tangible, present actions. Ask yourself, 'What is the ONE Thing I can do right now that will make everything else easier or unnecessary?' Embracing this mindset empowers you to channel immediate actions towards long-term success, making each day's step purposeful and aligned with your grand vision. By focusing on the power of this singular action, you can unlock exponential progress, ensuring that your future becomes a reflection of the deliberate choices you make today.

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## Chapter 15 Summary: 15

Chapter 15 of the book focuses on the concept of productivity and how it can transform one's life, using the story of Ebenezer Scrooge as an example. Scrooge's transformation from the quintessential miser to a benevolent figure is less celebrated for his change in spirit and more for the fact that he took decisive, productive action. This chapter argues that true productivity isn't simply about constant busyness or working late hours; rather, it's about setting priorities, planning effectively, and protecting one's time fiercely.

The author introduces the idea that everything we do fills time. Every moment is spent doing something, whether it seems important or not, but the crux of living for productivity is maximizing the moments that matter for extraordinary outcomes. This requires a detailed approach to managing time, ensuring that one's actions align closely with their main goals—their ONE Thing.

A critical point discussed is the variety of time-managing systems people use and how they often focus on the format rather than the function. The author provocatively poses a question regarding income as a reflection of a time-managing system's effectiveness, leading to the conclusion that productive individuals generally earn more. They dedicate maximum time to their priority, fiercely protecting periods dedicated to their ONE Thing



through a practice known as time blocking.

Time blocking involves designating specific chunks of time to focus exclusively on one's most critical task. This method, inspired by figures like Stephen King and humorously referred to in a story about Jerry Seinfeld's joke-writing practice, emphasizes consistency in focusing on one's primary goal to yield extraordinary results.

The chapter extensively details the mechanics of time blocking:

1. **Time Block Your Time Off** Start by scheduling your downtime to recharge and relax. Successful individuals see themselves as working between vacations, managing work time around downtime.
2. **Time Block Your ONE Thing** After scheduling breaks, earmark time for the most important tasks. Productive people design their days around these tasks, focusing intently until they are done. The author suggests dedicating at least four hours a day to this focus.
3. **Time Block Your Planning Time** Finally, set aside time for planning, reflecting on long-term goals, and aligning them with current tasks to maintain a forward trajectory. This requires regular check-ins to ensure progress is consistent across days, weeks, and months.



The chapter argues for protecting these time blocks against interruptions by creating a “bunker” environment free from distractions, storing necessary provisions to avoid unnecessary exits, and enlisting support from those around who might demand attention.

In conclusion, the secret to extraordinary results isn’t in working more hours but achieving more within the hours available. Time blocking must be intentional and safeguarded to ensure productivity reaches its full potential.

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## Chapter 16: 16

Chapter 16 of the book discusses the critical commitments necessary to achieve extraordinary results through time blocking, a technique where you reserve specific hours to focus intensely on a single task. To make this process effective, three commitments must be respected: seeking mastery, moving from entrepreneurial to purposeful thinking, and living an accountability cycle.

### Commitment 1: Follow the Path of Mastery

Achieving mastery is presented not as a distant destination, but as an ongoing journey. Mastery involves striving to be your best, which requires a relentless commitment to learning and improving. This process involves deliberate practice, as advocated by psychologist K. Anders Ericsson in his concept of the "10,000-hour rule." Mastery is about consistent practice and gaining expert performance over time. The narrative uses examples like the enduring dedication of the famous guitarist Eddie Van Halen and the legendary artist Michelangelo to illustrate the relentless pursuit necessary to achieve mastery. Time blocking is crucial in this endeavor because focus is essential to mastering any craft.

### Commitment 2: Move from “E” to “P”

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This section emphasizes shifting from an entrepreneurial (E) approach, where individuals rely on natural abilities and enthusiasm, to a purposeful (P) approach. The purposeful approach involves continually challenging oneself to break through achievements ceilings using new models, systems, and methods. The author argues that merely doing your best isn't enough; you should seek the best way a task can be done and be open to change. This shift often requires a willingness to embrace new skills and relationships, which enables unprecedented breakthroughs and accomplishments beyond natural abilities. This commitment cautions against settling at "OK Plateaus," urging an attitude of constant improvement and innovation.

### **Commitment 3: Live the Accountability Cycle**

Accountability is highlighted as a pivotal aspect of achieving extraordinary results. It involves taking complete ownership of outcomes and not blaming external factors. The book contrasts two types of managers—one who confronts reality and seeks solutions, and another who denies problems and blames others for failures. The accountable manager changes outcomes through proactive actions. Accountability means acknowledging one's role in challenges and failures to find paths to success. It also involves finding an accountability partner like a coach or mentor, who can provide honest

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feedback and help keep you focused and moving towards your goals.

To sum up, these commitments—seeking mastery, moving from an entrepreneurial to purposeful approach, and maintaining accountability—are presented as the foundation for achieving extraordinary results. The chapter underscores the importance of time blocking in this context and suggests leveraging coaches or mentors to facilitate progress. The ultimate goal is to transform your approach to work and life to consistently produce exceptional outcomes.

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## Chapter 17 Summary: 17

Chapter 17 of the book discusses productivity and the common obstacles that impede it, drawing an analogy from the 1973 Good Samaritan Experiment. In this study, seminary students were observed to see if they would assist a distressed person on their way to an assigned task. It turned out that time pressure was the key factor determining their behavior. The chapter uses this to illustrate how easy it is to lose focus on our true priorities when we feel rushed or overwhelmed.

The author identifies "Four Thieves of Productivity" as common barriers that can derail our efforts:

1. **Inability to Say "No":** We often find ourselves overwhelmed by requests and obligations, leading to diluted focus and diminished capacity to achieve what truly matters. The lesson is to protect our commitments by saying no, much like Steve Jobs did when he famously streamlined Apple's product line. It's about recognizing that every "yes" to a new commitment is a "no" to something else that might be more important.

2. **Fear of Chaos:** Productivity often requires singular focus, which means other tasks may be left unattended. This can create chaos and discomfort. The author encourages embracing this chaos as a part of pursuing greatness. Like filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola suggests, intense



passion invites chaos, and learning to navigate through it is part of succeeding.

### 3. **Poor Health Habits:** Personal energy is crucial for productivity.

Without maintaining good health, we compromise our ability to focus and function effectively. The author recommends a balanced routine including proper nutrition, exercise, and sleep to sustain energy and drive high performance. Structuring your mornings with a focus on health can pull you through the rest of the day more effectively.

### 4. **Environment Doesn't Support Your Goals**

The people around us and our physical surroundings significantly impact our ability to focus. The book stresses that our environment should nurture our goals and warns against the negative influence of unsupportive people or distracting surroundings. Just as our social circles can influence our health and attitudes, they can also affect our productivity.

The chapter concludes by emphasizing the need to live purposefully, prioritize effectively, and remain productive by avoiding these thieves. Leo Rosten's quote encapsulates the message: life should be about making a meaningful impact rather than just seeking happiness. By aligning our actions with our core goals, we ensure our lives matter.

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## Chapter 18 Summary: 18

Chapter 18, "The Journey," explores the concept of extraordinary success and fulfillment, grounded in the saying "one step at a time." This age-old advice suggests that any journey, no matter how grand, begins with a single, focused step known as the "ONE Thing." This concept involves visualizing your biggest dreams, then determining the singular, most important action that can propel you forward.

The chapter emphasizes that thinking big is crucial to achieving a large life, but it must be coupled with actions that start small and focused. It likens life to planting an apple tree—while you might dream of having an orchard, you must start with planting a single sapling. Only by narrowing down your focus to the most critical task can you begin the journey toward expansive living. This targeted focus helps crystallize your goals and streamlines the steps needed to achieve them.

The narrative also draws a parallel to the idea of knocking over a line of dominos. Success builds upon success, and actions create a chain reaction. This means striving for greatness involves a sequence of deliberate actions, gradually building momentum toward outstanding results.

A powerful anecdote involving wolves, symbolizing Fear and Faith, illustrates the inner battle everyone faces. Feeding Faith over Fear fosters

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confidence and decisive action, which are vital for a life without regrets. The importance of faith in purpose and priorities overcomes hesitancy and aligns actions with one's ultimate goals.

The chapter underscores the wisdom of minimizing regrets, drawing insights from both elders and studies that show inaction often leads to more enduring regret than actions taken. It's advocated to pursue a life true to oneself, not one based on external expectations.

To avoid regrets, a life driven by purpose, clarity, and the priority of the ONE Thing is suggested. An illustrative story about a father and son engaging in puzzle-making shows the significance of focusing on putting oneself together to better align one's world—a metaphorical representation that success stems from inner clarity and purpose.

In summary, the chapter argues that extraordinary results come from a clear sense of purpose, an alignment of priorities, and consistently productive actions toward the most important goals. By understanding that success begins from within, individuals can systematically work toward a life full of achievement and absent of regret. The chapter closes on the note that each person is their first domino—how they choose to set it defines the course of the journey.

