

THE 100 SENTENCES THAT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

**100 SENTENCES
100 BOOKS
100 TAKEAWAYS
IN ABOUT 2 HOURS**

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RAND Media Company

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FOREWORD

This is a book about ideas ... Ideas that can have a positive impact on your life. These ideas are found in 100 non-fiction books that I have summarized for you in the pages that follow.

Each of these books has the potential to be life-changing – helping you to achieve what we all want – a happy, successful, and balanced life.

My guess is that you have not read many of the books I have selected for you. You are in the distinct majority. And that is one of the reasons I have written 100 Sentences.

100 Sentences is my effort to prompt you to read one or more of the books I have selected. I do this by pulling out of these books a central theme or idea(s) that may resonate with you. If it does, I hope that you will read or listen to the entire book I have summarized.

Am I just into writing book reports?

Actually, what I am about is attempting to bridge the gap between traditional non-fiction writing and the expectations of today's reader.

Today's reader, groomed by the Internet, expects information to be readily available – without the need to work through

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hundreds of pages of non-fiction text. And in many instances the Internet works quite well. But, not all instances.

In the 100 books that I have selected, there are ideas for you that cannot be Googled. One needs to actually break open the book (or audiobook) to understand the idea and how it can be useful to you. Wikipedia just won't do it.

And so, 100 Sentences, which is an extension of what I have been trying to do for the last ten years.

For a decade now, I have been advocating that writers and publishers needed to modify their works to the realities of the 21st Century reader. 300 + page books, with repetitive single-space (and small) font may be stocked with wonderful thoughts, but most readers today are not going to engage. While technologies for delivering the written word have changed dramatically in just the last twenty years, the format of the content is not that much different from what Gutenberg published in 1439.

For my part, for ten years I have been trying to create content that is substantive but presented in an abbreviated and hopefully entertaining fashion. Up until a few years ago, I had only achieved limited success. But recently, a book series that I call "The Skinny On" books have been breaking sales records in Asia (more about that in MY STORY below).

So, what happens from here?

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Well, first I am going to tell you MY STORY and how I came to believe that content providers need to do a better job syncing up with content consumers.

Then, you will come to the BOOKS section of [100 Sentences](#).

In this Section you will find 100 headline sentences – each one indicating the primary theme of a selected book. After the sentence you will find a one-page summary of the book and then a synopsis of the book's message.

My hope is that you will be curious about one (or more) of the books I have selected and pick it up. Worst case, you will be more knowledgeable about many of the best-known non-fiction books ever written.

My goal is to bring to your attention ideas that can have a positive impact on your life. I am trying to do that by highlighting works that contain such ideas and induce you to pick up the book so that you can apply these suggestions to your life.

NOTE: In the pages that follow, you will see numbers in brackets, e.g. [23]. That is a reference to the number of a book in my list of 100. All books are arranged alphabetically so there is no significance to the number except as to the alphabetical sequence of the first letter in the title.

MY STORY

I grew up in Perkins Township, Ohio. Perkins is near Sandusky which is home to a large amusement park, Cedar Point. Today Cedar Point is considered the roller coaster capital of the Midwest. Lots of large and scary roller coasters.

Even when I lived in Sandusky, Cedar Point had several roller coasters and every kid in Sandusky counted the days until Cedar Point opened for the summer, trying to get a job at “the Point”, so that he/she could ride roller coasters for free. I did that for one entire summer.

Reflecting on my summer riding roller coasters, I have concluded that was good preparation for my attempt at making a living as a writer – up, down, sideways; exciting and scary; lots of waiting in line for brief periods of exhilaration.

Anyway, Perkins Township was a very small town and other than the 3 months when Cedar Point was open, there was not a lot to do. And so, I became a reader – my outlet was books. I read everything I could get my hands on but was most interested in non-fiction books as a way to learn about the world.

My father had grown up in the New York City area and had attended Columbia University. I figured if good enough for him, Columbia was good enough for me. So I applied, I was accepted, and my life took on a whole new direction. Columbia and New York City were eye openers for me. I

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realized very quickly that there was a giant world that I knew nothing about. And, at first, I was lost and lonely.

But I had my books and I kept reading. Recognizing that my time in Perkins had not prepared me for a large and competitive world, I started reading self-improvement books.

I did so-so in my schoolwork at Columbia until my junior year when I decided I needed some kind of direction. So, I buckled down, got good grades, did well on the LSAT, and was admitted to Columbia Law School.

Even in law school, I kept reading – expanding my reading to some fiction but mostly anything that I felt I could learn from. Books about business, finance, science, sociology, biographies, psychology, self-improvement, and history.

In law school I had less time for reading than ever before and I began to form opinions as to what was good writing (worth reading), and what was not. I concluded that from purely a learning perspective (which was my goal), 90% of the books I was reading were far too long. I felt that while every (decent) book had a central theme and perhaps 5 novel ideas that I could benefit from, these ideas were imprisoned in 250 pages I had to work through to get the nuggets I was looking for.

At the time, I had a rule that I had to finish any book I started (dumb rule) and so I slogged myself through lots and lots of writing – often counting how many more pages I had left to read to finish the book.

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Over time I began to resent authors who I felt were too wordy. I decided that a non-fiction writer's job was to inform and educate and that should mean primary consideration for a reader's time and attention span. If a key point could be communicated in a couple of pages, great. No reason to wrap the message in lots of additional pages of bulk that (I presumed) were often about the need to hit a minimum number of pages a book needed in order to be published.

What's more, it was clear to me that 99% of readers were not going to be as fanatical as I was about finishing a 250 page (or more) book, and worse, might not even start reading in the first place – deterred by the heft of what were otherwise very substantive works.

And that seemed like a shame to me because some of these books had powerful and even life-changing themes and ideas that could be helpful to anyone. It frustrated me that this information was getting to such a small percentage of those who might benefit from it.

And so, during law school, I started doing something wacky. I started writing book reports on books I liked, and I sent them to my girlfriend and a few family members. Ah, so now you are wondering whether my girlfriend dumped me. Nah. She got over my nerdiness and eventually married me.

In the years after law school, in addition to practicing law, I started doing real estate deals (see [#9]), expanded my book report distribution list, and began to research how people

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read and how they learn. There was not a lot on the subject (a great book, How We Learn [#26] was not written yet), but I consumed all that I could find.

Reading is not an intuitive skill. Cave men and women did not instinctively know how to read (or even desire to read). It was an invention created by humans to help them communicate across distances. It got a big push forward when Johannes Gutenberg made the first printing press in 1439.

Fast forward to the start of the 21st Century and the Internet Age had begun. It did not take a genius to see that the Internet was going to have a major impact on how people access and consume information. I had four children at that point, and I could see how the Web, video games, and cell phones were dramatically changing what I believed were healthy reading habits.

In 2007 I came across a just-released book, Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain by Maryanne Wolf. At the time Ms. Wolf was a professor at Tufts University and the Director of the Center for Language and Reading Research. Ms. Wolf's book did not ease my concerns about my children:

"Many students who have cut their teeth on relatively effortless Internet access may not yet know how to think for themselves. Their sights are narrowed to what they see and hear quickly and easily, and they have too little reason to

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think outside our newest, most sophisticated boxes. These students are not illiterate, but they may never become true expert readers. During the phase in their reading development when critical skills are guided, modeled, practiced, and honed, they may have not been challenged to exploit the acme of the fully developed, reading brain."

I will refer to Ms. Wolf's book, again in the CRITERIA section of this book but for now let me highlight a distinction she made between what she called the "reading brain" and what she termed the "digital brain". She suggested that older readers – whose reading skills developed before the Internet Age - had a "reading brain" while younger readers – those whose skills developed during the Internet Age – had a "digital" brain. And further, that the two brains were very different. More on this later.

By 2008 the economy was in trouble. The economic crisis was in full bloom and the real estate world was suffering. So, I put my real estate wheeling and dealing on hiatus, and decided to start a publishing company to produce content I believed would connect with 21st Century readers.

In 2009 I formed RAND Media Company ("RMC") to be my publishing platform. Like a lot of entrepreneurs with an overage of hubris, I figured I could learn this business quickly. I mean how hard could it be to create a book or e-book, put it on Amazon, do a little bit of marketing, and wait for the sales to roll in?

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Soon after starting RMC I got inspiration from a power point flying around the Internet purporting to show how we, as a nation, had fallen into the housing crisis which had spawned the Great Recession (2008 – 2009).

The power point was the story of a young couple who, having followed the advice of unscrupulous real estate agents and attorneys, bought an overpriced house and eventually lost everything. All the characters in the story were visually depicted as stick people.

The power point was funny, off color, and eventually went viral. Every real estate attorney, broker, and banker I knew was sending it around to their colleagues. It was virtually flying around the Net.

It seemed obvious to me that the reason this power point was so popular had as much to do with the format as with the substance. Stick people ... what could be more basic than that? A story line with dialogue. Very relatable. Sophomoric humor. All good. And so, I decided to write a book in this same style and explain to the world the housing crisis.

The result was RMC's first book, The Skinny on the Housing Crisis.

While it looked like a comic book, it was substantive. As an attorney and real estate investor, I understood the housing crisis. My goal was to convey the facts in as simple and understandable a format as possible. (I subscribe to the

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words of Steve Jobs: *"simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."*)

With my self-published book in hand, in 2010 I entered a contest sponsored by the National Association of Real Estate Editors ("NAREE"). NAREE is a group of business journalists and their contest was to honor the best books written during the year about real estate. There were entries from most of the major publishers and to my shock and surprise, my little self-published book won First Prize (\$1,000). Second prize went to a book published by Doubleday and third prize to a book published by John Wiley & Sons.

Here are the comments from the three judges:

"WOW. What a concept, having stick people tell the story of one of the beefiest, multifaceted, complex and confusing bits of recent economic history in terms everyone can understand."

"I wish I had this on my desk when I was editing all those stories about the impact of the collapse of the real estate market. Original. Informative."

"Easy to read. And funny to boot. I want to see more books like this."

Then in 2011 I came across a newly released book, The Shallows, [#87] written by Nicholas Carr. This book, a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize, built on the points made in Maryann

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Wolf's [Proust and the Squid](#) suggesting that even those individuals whose reading habits had developed before the dawn of the Internet Age were losing the ability to read - addicted instead to "bytes" of text provided to us by sites like Wikipedia. (Carr is also well known for writing a controversial article published in Atlantic magazine in 2008 titled "Is Google Making us Stupid?")

Carr developed his theme with an explanation of brain plasticity, the phenomenon by which the brain re-routes electrical signals between neurons to account for changes in our behavior. This subject is developed further in Dr. Norman Doidge's [The Brain that Changes Itself](#) [#58].

Brain plasticity is neither good nor bad. The brain remodels itself on an "as needed" basis to account for our behaviors and demands. For example, let's say you move from one part of the country to another and you want to get a new cell phone number. Your old number was 123-456-7890. Your new number is 246-824-6824. You now want your brain to remember your new number and forget your old number. (By the way, forgetfulness is usually not something to worry about - it's sometimes the way the brain clears space for new information, see [How We Learn](#) [#26] for more on this topic.) This is a simplistic example, but because your brain is malleable, it can forget your old number and rewire for your new number.

Carr argued that in the case of reading, even "reading brains" (developed before the Internet Age) were changing due to

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brain pliability (plasticity). In other words, a constant reliance on quick and condensed information easily available online was causing our brains to rewire so that we can no longer engage with deep and thought-provoking content.

Bolstered by books like Wolf's and Carr's, in 2011 and 2012, I increased my writing and wrote seven more Skippy On books (about topics like willpower, networking, creativity, and persuasiveness), a real-world book for college seniors (Street Smarts: Beyond the Diploma), and three books on money and finance (Money 1, Money 2, and Money 3).

All of these books were written in a similar format – meant to appeal to the impatient reading style of a 21st Century reader (the “digital brain”) – bullet points, simple and condensed explanations, illustrations, conversational.

In 2011 Street Smarts was awarded “Book of the Year for Young Adults” by the Institute of Financial Literacy. Again, a small sign that the changes I was trying to make – new formats to attract Internet Age readers – were getting attention.

By the end of 2012 the real estate business had picked up and, since I was not having much success with my publishing company, I decided to shelve (no pun intended) that effort and get back into real estate.

Then something unexpected happened.

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In 2015, I got a call from a book agent in Hong Kong. She had seen one of my Skinny books and thought that they might do well in Asia. In fact, she had an offer from a Chinese publisher who wanted to license five of my Skinny books and translate them into Mandarin.

"Was I willing to do that?" she asked.

"Absolutely," I replied.

To my surprise, in 2016 I started getting e-mails from China. Readers were writing to me telling me they enjoyed one of my books and asking me personal advice. At first, I would get one e-mail a month. Then two or three.

By 2017 I was getting an e-mail or two every week. As of today, I have received more than one thousand e-mails from Chinese readers.

In 2018 my Chinese publisher informed me that The Skinny on Time Management was ranked #3 on a Chinese best seller list and The Skinny on Willpower was ranked #8. I was shocked to learn that I was the only Western author (living or dead) with a book in the top 100.

Recently I learned that my Skinny books have sold more than one million books/e-books in China. I am also published and doing well in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Korea.

MY OBJECTIVE

What started out as a project to develop a format that would be helpful to my friends and family has morphed into something larger.

I now hope to find a way to summarize great non-fiction content for a wide range of readers. And, I believe (as I have for years) that any attempt to do that must sync up with our re-wired “digital brains”. In other words, my attempts must be condensed, clear, and precise. I believe that if I give people just what they need to know, with no fluff or bulk, I will engage a large group of readers.

And so, I have written 100 Sentences, my most recent attempt to synthesize what I have learned from reading non-fiction books for 40 years.

As noted in the FOREWORD, I have selected 100 sentences from 100 non-fiction books. These sentences represent the central theme from the selected books – each of which I believe contains information that can help move your life forward in a positive direction.

If nothing else, reading the 100 sentences (and the one-page summaries if you choose to) will bring you up to speed on many well-known non-fiction works – some going as far back as 500 B.C. (The Art of War [#55]), and others just released (Shut Up and Listen [#51]). So, if you will give me just a couple of hours of your time, you will soon be knowledgeable about

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many of the most discussed and/or popular, self-improvement non-fiction books ever written.

More importantly, perhaps one or more of the sentences or summaries that follow will prompt you to read or listen to one (or more) of the books on my list – and that read will be helpful in moving your life forward.

Either way, I am happy you are holding or hearing my work. It is meant to be helpful.

MY CRITERIA FOR THE 100 SELECTIONS

Because I am suggesting that you may want to pick up a book(s) on my list, it is important to me that each of my selections meets certain criteria. The specifics follow but in general, in order to be on my list, a book had to be substantive (have good thoughts for you) and readable (it had to flow – it could not be an arduous read).

There are thousands of books I had to choose from. Quantity was not the problem. Quality was. I was looking for “bang for the buck.” I wanted to be able to answer this question from any reader:

“If I invest my time to read this book, am I going to be happy that I did?”

One other note before I get to my 10 criteria for the selection process.

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What you learn when you read a lot of non-fiction books is that good writers write good books (duh). And there are at least ten writers on my list who have written more than one book that could have been on the list. Writers like Gladwell, Lewis, Tolle, Sedaris, and Pink. But, I chose not to use more than one book from any one author – my thinking being that if you liked the book I suggested by a particular author, you would pick up one or more of his/her other books.

OK, on to my criteria ... what follows is how I selected the 100 books on my list.

1. SUBSTANCE OF THE IDEA OR MAIN THEME

Comic books are easy reads, but not much nutrition can be gained from them. I wanted books with real substance – some idea, thought, or message you could bite down on. If a book did not contain enough meat on its bones, that was a non-starter.

2. BULK

A non-fiction book is a transfer of ideas and experiences. Presumably the author has experienced, researched, or studied some subject more than the reader has. He or she then communicates to the reader in written (or audio) form her ideas or experiences.

But I have an issue when the core of this communication is wrapped in pages and pages of other stuff – examples,

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studies, arguments and counter arguments, anecdotes, and so on. It is my view that some of this “stuff” is OK but when it starts pushing the book past say 250 pages, the typical reader may lose the main point(s)... or, never even pick up the book in the first place.

Of the books I selected, almost half are less than 200 pages, and 7 are less than 100 pages. Of those books that are less than 200 pages, I do not feel that I sacrificed quality for brevity. You are the ultimate judge. If you decide to read any of the shorter books I selected, let me know if you would have appreciated more verbage. I doubt it.

Only five of the books on my list were more than 300 pages – and they only made the list because there were easy and engrossing reads.

Finally, I did not include any book on my list that was 400 pages or more. And so, I rejected some well-known books/authors such as Unlimited Power by Tony Robbins, Future Shock by Alvin Toffler, and Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kaheman. While each of those books (and others) do have meat on the bone, in my view, the effort needed to extract the meat was just not worth the end result for me.

3. TIGHTNESS

Related to bulk, I look for writing that is terse, tight. I do not enjoy books with long sentences or paragraphs. Short and sweet is what people want today. So, when I selected books for my list, I did not include any with a pedantic or academic writing style. I want punchy, clean writing.

Authors should not write for their own pleasure but rather to help the reader absorb and understand their points. In that regard, I believe that “less is more” (See The Power of Less, by Leo Babauta [#79]).

This is not just about style. Studies have shown that people learn best when the author summarizes or synthesizes important points for a reader.

In making my point, let me cite perhaps the most respected work ever written on the subject of writing, The Elements of Style (4th Edition), Strunk and White (1999):

“Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, and a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all sentences short or avoid all detail and treat subjects only in outline, but that every word tell ... There you have it ... a short valuable essay on the nature and beauty of brevity – fifty-nine words that could change the world.” Emphasis Added.

4. SIMPLICITY

I attempted to select books in which the central idea was presented in a simple and easy-to-understand fashion.

In the book, Made to Stick [#30], authors Chip and Dan Heath speak to what makes a new idea “sticky” – in other words likely to catch on with a large audience. The #1 criterion they identify is simplicity. An idea needs to be presented in a simple and memorable fashion for it to have any chance at becoming “sticky.”

The Heaths address a common problem with non-fiction authors – what they call the “Curse of Knowledge”. Because non-fiction authors are generally experts on a particular subject, they not only know a lot, they actually know too much. As a result, (1) many of these authors want to convey all that they know and their work tends to get really bulky, and (2) because they know so much, they assume you will easily understand their points (which of course are so obvious to them).

From Made to Stick:

“Becoming an expert in something means that we become more and more fascinated by nuance and complexity. That’s when the Curse of Knowledge kicks in and we start to forget what it’s like not to know what we know.”

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Many of the books on my list are there because the author's central message is easy to grasp. Yes, there is always a lot of stuff wrapped around the core, but a good writer will keep the elaborative material down to a minimum.

5. STORY

People like and remember stories. Before the written word, people communicated verbally, and story was a big part of that. Stories have a beginning and end. They are usually engaging. They are enjoyable reads.

As Daniel Pink explains in [A Whole New Mind](#) [#1]:

"Stories are easier to remember – because in many ways, stories are how we remember. Narrative imaging – story – is the fundamental instrument of thought ... rational capacities depend upon it. It is our chief means of looking into the future, of predicting, of planning, and of explaining... Most of our experience, our knowledge and our thinking is organized as stories."

The books I selected with an emphasis on story are either:

(a) Journalism – for example Michael Lewis' writing about the hapless Oakland A's transformation in [Moneyball](#) [35]; or

(b) Memoir – writings by an author who relates a story about his or her life. It was difficult to make selections among the many great memoirs out there, but I fell back on my desire

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for books that convey a message helpful to most readers. So, I did not choose either of the two excellent and recently published memoirs – J.D. Vance’s Hillbilly Elegy and Tara Westover’s Educated – because while entertaining, I did not see the application of those stories to most people’s lives.

To be contrasted, I feel that the four memoirs I selected have life lessons for almost anyone:

Born Standing Up, by Steve Martin [#6] - just when you think your dream career path has hit a dead end, the unexpected may occur.

Can't Hurt Me, by David Goggins [#8] - just when you think you have not one bit of mental or physical energy left, keep moving.

Into Thin Air, by Jon Krakauer [#29] - to be contrasted with David Goggins' book, sometimes you can push yourself too far.

Shoe Dog, by Phil Knight [#50] - you think being an entrepreneur is easy? Think again.

6. WHITE SPACE

Our eyes (and brains) can only handle so much.

Publishers need to help readers by using good-sized font (little font sizes drive me crazy) and break up the density of

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pages with white space, diagrams, photos, graphs ... whatever will give the reader a rest.

Visuals not only give the reader a break, they can also be very instructive.

As explained in Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner [#37], there are many different types of learners and some learn best through an assimilation of symbols that include but are not limited to the written word:

“Psychologists have recognized the importance of the capacity to use various kinds of symbols ... we garner messages through words, pictures, gestures, numbers, patterns and a whole lot of other symbolic forms.”

7. FLUENCY

Writing can be fluent or disfluent – essentially it flows, or it doesn't. Often a reader may not be totally aware of the fluency (or not) of what he or she is reading. He or she may just struggle without really understanding why.

Drunk Tank Pink, by Adam Alter [#12] speaks to how the fluency (or not) of a person's name can affect his or her future – giving one example of how lawyers of seeming equal ability were promoted (or not) based on how easy their name was to remember and/or pronounce.

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“(A)mong mid-career lawyers, 12 per cent of those with fluent names were partners, whereas only 4 per cent of their counterparts with disfluent names were partners.”

There are a lot of reasons that writing can be fluent or disfluent.

Often it has to do with sequencing – writing is fluent when sentence A logically leads to sentence B, which then leads to sentence C, and so on. Ditto for paragraphs. A reader may not know what is bothering him, but non-sequential writing causes a break in the flow of his or her thought processes which makes the reading more difficult.

I considered fluency in all 100 of the books I selected. Not all of them are totally fluent but few, if any, are disfluent.

8. NOVELTY

I love books that present a novel idea for the reader’s consideration.

Three of the books in my selection fit that category:

Emotional Intelligence, by Daniel Goleman [#14] popularized the idea that an individual’s inter-personal skills are far more important than his or her braininess (IQ).

Freakonomics, by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner [#21] invented a term (a “portmanteau” in that it is a combination

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of “freaky” and “economics”) to explain events that run counter to intuition and traditional economic thinking.

The Tipping Point, by Malcolm Gladwell [#9] introduced a new way of thinking about how and why certain events or phenomena seem to spread like a virus.

9. SPECIFICS

The 9th criterion in my selection process was the identification of books that gave the reader specific and precise advice for moving one’s life forward. I do not like writing that communicates silly, rounded advice – e.g. “become more optimistic” or “get over your fear of failure” – UGH. People need more than that – they need steps as to how to become more optimistic or less fearful.

Here are some examples:

Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway, by Susan Jeffers [#19] has detailed advice for conquering life-long fears.

Getting Things Done, by David Allen [#22] details steps for improving your time management and personal productivity.

Rich Dad, Poor Dad, by Robert Kiyosaki [#49] outlines the author’s view on wealth creation with specific steps for how he suggests you do that.

The 4 Hour Work Week, by Tim Ferriss [#54] is the bible for those who want to outsource as much of their life as possible, and with lots of specific suggestions.

10. FRIENDLINESS

Huh?

One of the best sellers on my list is Marie Kondo's, The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up [#69]- another book I selected because of its specific guidance and advice. But her book does something else which I found entertaining – it animates objects (like old socks) which in some weird way made her book more readable (friendly?).

“Can you truly say that you treasure something buried so deeply in a cupboard or drawer that you have forgotten its existence? If things had feelings, they would certainly not be happy. Free them from the prison to which you have relegated them. Help them leave that deserted isle to which you have exiled them. Let them go, with gratitude. Not only you, but your things as well, will feel clear and refreshed when you are done tidying.”

So, what does this have to do with my book selection process?

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Here is my point: some authors seem to write for their own pleasure or purposes while others write solely for the reader. In other words, some books are “friendlier” than others.

And what makes a book friendly? In my view, it has to do with the writer’s attitude and approach. A writer who is writing a book to elevate his visibility or standing in the professional community is not a friendly writer. A writer who is humorless, or overly academic, or takes himself too seriously, is not a friendly writer.

A friendly writer uses a conversational tone and style and writes the way people communicate. A friendly writer breaks up her points with an occasional aside or attempt at humor.

I wanted books on my list that were friendly – that you would enjoy reading, learn from, and want to keep around (like a good friend).

A few books that I think hit this mark are:

Bird by Bird, by Anne Lamott [#4] – a light style that connects with the reader.

Confessions of a Real Estate Entrepreneur [#9] – OK, a little self-promotion but I can swear to you that I tried very hard when writing my book to explain real estate investing in an easy style that would be understandable to anyone.

Quiet, by Susan Cain [#48] – gentle, flowing writing.

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The Right Stuff, by Thomas Wolfe [#83] – brilliant and humorous writing.

...

So that's how my 100 books were selected. Not each book on the list meets each of my criteria and some were on the bubble because portions of them ran counter to what was important to me. But, of the 100 books selected, I maintain that they are 100 excellent examples of substantive writing in a readable format.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Although I did not start out with this idea in mind, as I was assembling the list of 100, I was happy to see that there was a book and a point of view for almost everyone.

For example, if you are a people person, outgoing and extroverted, there are a lot of books that will resonate with you – perhaps the best-known being Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People [#25]. On the other hand, if you think of yourself as an introvert and generally opt for small gatherings or time alone, you will definitely enjoy Susan Cain's brilliant book, Quiet [#48].

THE 100 SENTENCES THAT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

If you are interested in money and finance, [The Essays of Warren Buffet](#) [#64] and [The Great Crash of 1929](#) [#66] are must reads. If you are more the spiritual type, well then you might want to dig into the Dalai Lama's [Ethics for a New Millennium](#) [#16] or Deepak Chopra's [Seven Laws of Spiritual Success](#) [#86].

Interested in becoming or learning about entrepreneurs? [Shoe Dog](#) [#50], the story of how Phil Knight started Nike, is one of the best books on the subject ever written.

Are you the organized, tidy type (or want to be that way)? You can't do better than Marie Kondo's [The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up](#) [#69] or David Allen's [Getting Things Done](#) [#22]. On the other hand, if you are more spontaneous, a bit cluttered, and even like a little chaos, you must read Tim Hanford's wonderful book, [Messy](#) [#33].

I could go on and on and give you a specific reason for picking up one or more of each of the books on my list. Hey, you never know, doing that might just change your life!

WRAP UP

One last point before I turn you over to the 100 book summaries.

As I was writing the book summaries, it became apparent to me that there were common themes within the books that provided insights to finding a balanced, successful, and

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happy life. Perhaps that will be the topic for another book I write someday but for now, I will leave you with this thought: Reading is a transfer of ideas. From the writer to the reader. The books on my list are all about ideas that can advance your personal growth. I certainly hope that you will pick up one or more of the books on the list and that you eventually see the potentially life-altering ideas in these excellent works.

THE 100 SENTENCES THAT CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

THE 100 BOOKS

#1

"WE ARE MOVING FROM AN ECONOMY AND A SOCIETY BUILT ON THE LOGICAL, LINEAR, COMPUTER-LIKE CAPABILITIES OF THE INFORMATION AGE TO AN ECONOMY AND A SOCIETY BUILT ON THE INVENTIVE, EMPATHETIC, BIG-PICTURE CAPABILITIES OF WHAT'S RISING IN ITS PLACE, THE CONCEPTUAL AGE."

A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers will Rule the Future, Daniel Pink (2005)

Our brains are divided into hemispheres. The left side controls linear, sequential, analytical, logical thinking. The right side controls non-linear, holistic, intuitive, big picture thinking.

Author, Daniel Pink, believes that because machines can do left-side brain work better and faster than most humans, the future belongs to right-siders – those who are innovative, holistic thinkers.

Pink wrote his book in 2005. Is it still relevant today?

To answer that, let's take a look at three enormously successful start-ups (all founded within the last 15 years):

Airbnb, Facebook, and Uber.

While each of these companies involved technology (left brain stuff), the engineering was not that difficult. What was innovative was the founders' vision as to how people would act in certain situations:

Airbnb: people will be comfortable renting out their rooms/homes to strangers; similarly, people will pay to stay in stranger's houses/rooms.

Facebook: people are super interested in what others are doing, want to share what they are doing, will be OK getting their news from online postings, etc.

Uber: people will ride in unlicensed vehicles; people will use their own vehicles to drive strangers around.

Each of these companies was created by a right-brainer.

Message: the best opportunities will go to big-picture conceptual thinkers.

#2

"A MAN CANNOT CHOOSE DIRECTLY HIS CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT HE CAN CHOOSE HIS THOUGHTS, AND SO INDIRECTLY, YET SURELY, SHAPE HIS CIRCUMSTANCES."

As A Man Thinketh, James Allen (1902)

The ideas of James Allen (1864 – 1912) are the foundation of the writings of many self-improvement authors who came later – people like Tolle and Covey.

Allen wrote that while one cannot control events, what one can control is his/her reaction to those events.

Here are some of my take-aways from this book:

1. While you cannot control events, your attitude will help you adapt to whatever life throws at you.

"The outer world of circumstance shapes itself to the inner world of thought."

2. Aspiration alone is never enough – what matters is one's thought processes and action steps.

"Not what a man wishes and prays for does a man get, but rather what he justly earns."

3. There is no substitute for hard work and sacrifice.

"Even the man whose sole object is to acquire wealth must be prepared to make great personal sacrifices before he can accomplish his object."

4. Belief in oneself is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

"Doubt and fear are the great enemies of knowledge, and he who encourages them, who does not slay them, thwarts himself at every step."

Message: if you can control your thoughts, you can script your future.

#3

*"THE DIFFERENCE A TINY IMPROVEMENT
CAN MAKE OVER TIME IS ASTOUNDING."*

Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results,
James Clear (2018)

I divide this book into two sections.

The second part of the book is about how to form good habits and/or break bad habits. It is similar to other works on the subject (e.g. The Power of Habit, #78) in identifying a four-step process: cue, craving, response, reward. The explanation is clear and worth reading.

But I selected this book for the List of 100 because I found the first part of the book unique and thought-provoking.

In the first section of his book, Clear makes the case, and with several good illustrations, that even very small changes in one's daily habits can, over time, have a very large impact on one's life.

Clear uses the word "atomic" to highlight the powerful life changes that can result from tiny incremental changes in your daily habits:

"This is the meaning of the phrase atomic habits – a regular practice or routine that is not only small and easy to do, but also the source of incredible power; a component of the system of compound growth."

I found Clear's reference to the principle of compounding an effective and unique inducement to those of us who could benefit from forming some good new habits (i.e. everyone). His approach is inspirational because it suggests that one does not have to make immediate, large and painful sacrifices to see significant life change over time. In other words, there is hope for any of us!

Message: little changes in habits can translate into big changes in one's life.

#4

*"THE ACT OF WRITING TURNS OUT TO BE
ITS OWN REWARD."*

Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life,
Anne Lamott (1994)

If you have any interest in pursuing writing as a career, Lamott's book is a must read.

With humor and guidance, she takes the aspiring writer through each step in the process – from writer's block to dealing with agents and publishers.

Her main theme is that the real reason to write is to scratch an itch – to write because it fulfills you ... because you need to write.

"The problem that comes up over and over again is that my students want to be published. They kind of want to write, but they really want to be published. You'll never get to where you want to be that way. I tell them ... almost every single thing you hope publication will do for you is a fantasy, a hologram ... And so, if one of your hearts deepest longings is to write, there are a number of reasons why it's important to do so."

Emphasis Added.

The title of this book is a suggestion for writer's block. Lamott's brother had been trying to write a school assignment about birds for months. But, he was immobilized by the magnitude of this task. Lamott's father (also a writer) had this advice for his son:

"Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird. One word at a time. And one word will lead to two, and then two will lead to four. You just have to get started."

I included Bird by Bird on my list for two reasons: (1) many great suggestions for writers, and (2) many great suggestions for anyone with a big dream and a long road ahead.

Message: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step." (Lao-Tzu)