

OPEN IN CASE OF



LIFE

8 Concepts to Change Your Future

a Pastless EBook

by

Matthew Powell

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IN CASE OF...

NEEDING AN INTRODUCTION.

In UNDO I wrote that life doesn't come with an instruction manual, but it does come with teachers who can help make life easier. Over the years I've often struggled with the fact that in my life I had very little in the way of sage advice until I was older and found teacher's on my own. Anyone who comes from a dynamic family filled with strong personalities knows that the most successful child gets the most attention...and I didn't hit my success stride until a long after I most needed life-changing advice. Yet I was fortunate at 19 to have God begin surrounding me with incredible teachers of many kinds of knowledge. From martial art to business acumen, executive protection to remote viewing, by the age of 22 I had meditated with monks and been mentored by CIA veterans and went on to create Pramek.

All of these years, and teachers later, it still bothers me I had no one to give me the most important advice. With this in mind I decided I would take the most valuable lessons I've learned over the years and make a small book that someone, like my own child, could have with them on a smart phone when times gets tough and they need some advice...and I'm not there to give it. I'm not talking about 'I can't pay the water bill' hard. I'm talking, 'I'm so lost in life, I don't know what to do' hard because that's when I needed the advice the most...and that's when I didn't have *it* on hand.

I had to search for it, and *it* wasn't exactly easy to find...some people intentionally hid *it* from me.

There is an old story in the martial art world of a student who trains with a master for nearly 25 years. The student paid dearly in money, time, and sweat for a chance at a blackbelt. After 25 years he finally had his test, the ultimate test: to beat his own master in a one-on-one fight. They face off and he quickly defeats his teacher in an embarrassing manner. After the test his teacher grants him a blackbelt but he asks his teacher, 'Master, you are so great, why did I beat you so easily?' His master replies, 'The true master isn't the best fighter but one who keeps students longest so he makes the most money.'

A lot of personal growth programs will fill you full of amazing pleasentries, a few tips, and then leave you to come wondering, back to buy more, ask for more. I have had many of these teachers over the years where I learned more about spending money than I ever did about life. Had I asked any of these teachers what to do when I was uncertain, couldn't communicate, had lost my way in life...I would have only gotten enough of an answer to bring me, and my wallet, back.

This book is the kind of information teacher's hid from me so I would keep coming back, not because I wasn't ready for the information...but so I would spend more money. I always promised myself I would never be that kind of teacher...and this is me making good on that promise.

So if you're reading this, and life is hard, remember...the wind blows hardest near the top of a mountain.

And if you really like it, join the newsletter, buy a book, subscribe to the blog by email, say hello...

- Matt

IN CASE OF...

BAD COMMUNICATION.

Even the greatest communicators sometimes have a hard time communicating. Whether it's your spouse, child, boss, or the clerk at the store, communication can be the toughest aspect of living day-to-day. Wouldn't life be easier if communication went somewhere...somewhere where things got done? It is possible, but first you have to ask yourself some questions that are uncomfortable:

What if you worried more about understanding the conversation than you worried about being right? What if you focused on finding what you agree on rather than making them see things your way?

You have to get to the root of the problem: you. You can't control someone else, make them see things your way, but you can control yourself and how you hear and understand them...then act based on that. The keys to good communication are attached to the ring of being authentic and being honest. Being honest means not only in regards to what you think about the topic. Being honest means seeking what person you are communicating with knows or a place of agreement, to work from in communication.

Stop Being Right.

Wanting to be right filters everything through what you know, your experiences, your beliefs. Unfortunately being right does not filter everything through the person or people you are communicating with. Just because you feel you are correct and right does not mean others feel the same. If no one is communicating who cares who is right. You have to start finding agreement to work from for communication to work. One fast way to stop being right is ask: Am I open to being wrong? If I am wrong, what does that mean? Unless you have a gun to your head very rarely does being wrong mean the end of everything you hold dear. Being wrong rarely hurts anything more than your ego...and it is usually your ego standing in the way of getting what you want because you can't communicate it.

Stop Positioning.

Most of the communication techniques you will be taught don't work. Non-verbal methods, mirroring, echo'ing only work until someone realizes you are not communicating but positioning to win the conversation. Stop Positioning...Start Being Candid. When you are faced with bad communication, be authentic, be direct, tell them how you really feel. When you stop trying to figure out how to communicate better...you'll find you communicate better. Better communication starts with directness.

Stop Being Right, Start Finding Consensus.

Directness will often make people uncomfortable, but if you stop being right and start being authentic, asking them questions to find consensus - they will appreciate that you value their input. If there is 5% you find agreeable, find consensus there and then bridge it to address the 95%. That's communication.

IN CASE OF...

UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE.

The siren song of the past

No one has a memory of the future. The past is so powerful because the future hasn't happened. The past is our reference point. We relate to the past and draw out of the past for experience because at a certain point in time the past happened, it's a time we know, and an event we can remember. This doesn't mean the past is right or wrong, or what you remember about the past is actually accurate - it just means it's known and tangible. Most people will take the known and tangible over the unknown any day...unless they want to shape the future.

The past provides a level of stability and safety but in that state is danger. The reason you are uncertain about the future is because you know the past and it's easier to do things you always have rather than create a new way of doing things...your way. All of that safety and security has led you to being insecure about the future, so you feel anxious and soon it's led to you to being an uncertain person! The past has many lessons to learn from but we can quickly live the same life over and over again because we find it to be a safe and secure reference point.

Change Your Reference Point

If you are uncertain about the future your only choice is to change your reference point. Uncertainty occurs not because of the past but because you are using the past as a reference point. Your reference point must instead be on what you want in the future. You must change the way you look at the future and see it not as a place of uncertainty, but a place of your creation where you no longer repeat the mistakes of the past. In this reference point every success and failure must be seen as along the path. Anxiety occurs when you say to yourself 'I don't know what's going to happen.' You must replace this statement with a new thought process comprised of three concepts:

- 1) What you know about the unknown;
- 2) Who you want to be in the future;
- 3) Solace that the unknown will only get you closer to who you want to become.

You'd be surprised what you know about the future based on the present...but you must take the time to look at what you know, what you want to become, and know that everything is leading you somewhere.

Be secure in your reference point

Many times life is like driving with the rear-view mirror. Looking at the future as your reference point is like putting your hands back on the steering wheel. If we know who we want to become then everything that happens to us becomes a step we take on the staircase of becoming our future self. Make your decisions when you are uncertain based on who you want to become. Constantly say to yourself, 'My future self would want me to ___x___.' Embrace the unknown. Ask yourself...would you rather have a dream of the future or a memory of the past?

IN CASE OF...

FEELING ANXIOUS.

Unsettled

This topic brings a churning in my stomach. I lived unsettled for so long. Training and teaching, balancing work, school, martial art, travel...it led to the best and worst of times as relationships failed and debt piled up. Each time things got better I always had the feeling in my stomach that things were never that great and would become bad again. One day, after a meditation session with a teacher, I voiced that my anxiety had hit record levels. My teacher touched my shoulder and said with a smile, 'You just haven't developed the contrast between how bad things were and how good things are yet. I don't want to add to your anxiety but trust me, one day this will make sense.' It took me years to fully realize, and appreciate, what he meant by contrast.

Develop the contrast

For many people, perhaps you, great things are never *that* great. They are only great until we forget what not being great was like. My success and happiness only existed as long as I remembered how horrible I felt when I wasn't happy or successful. When I began to lose that contrast, I lost appreciation for how good I had it. We know from this book and other work at Pastless that we are creatures of the past, lurking in our own shadows, drawn to a known past instead of an unknown future. We selectively remember how great the past is because we don't know yet the greatness of the future. This leads to a loss of contrast. For me, today became intolerable because I had forgotten just how intolerable yesterday truly was. It's a vicious cycle you will fight the rest of your life, from relationships to jobs to your looks. If you're feeling anxious about today or tomorrow, just remember how bad the past was.

Spasm

When you feel anxious, focus on where the anxiety comes from, write it out, list it out. Anxiety is like a muscle spasm, it has a trigger point, an origin, but sometimes we chase the spasm and not the origin. When you focus on the point of origin of your anxiety think in terms of fixing it tomorrow instead of dwelling on the past. Develop your contrast between the good and the bad, and even if you can't fix the anxiety, develop a plan to address it tomorrow. Become future focused, remembering the contrast, fixing the anxiety with tomorrow's actions. You don't have a time machine, you can only affect tomorrow...focus on the point of origin and make sure it doesn't take root in tomorrow's life.

Chase how good tomorrow can be

Just as today can be better than tomorrow, conversely, today can be worse than yesterday. When this happens we hear the siren song of the past and we chase yesterday instead of looking how to make tomorrow. When we work on becoming Pastless this doesn't mean forgetting the past...it means not letting yesterday dictate tomorrow. When we become future focused we become pastless.

IN CASE OF...

NOT HAVING A CHOICE.

A long time ago I went to a course about how to escape from restraints...handcuffs, ropes, it didn't matter. We learned all of the techniques but in the end the primary techniques was the creation of enough space to give you options...to give you a choice. Restraints are designed to remove your choices but when you see the restraints not as preventing your movement, but giving you new movement options you haven't had before, only then can you begin to escape what seems like a situation in which you have no choice. It is the mindset of the person in the situation, not the situation, that is important.

We have all said, 'I didn't really have a choice' but in the end, it's not about the number of times we didn't have a choice but the one time we find out we have a choice in how we react to these situations? If we see the situation in which we have no choice as providing us access to something new...a new mindset, a new personal challenge, a way to find new choices...we find our most powerful weapon.

Your most powerful weapon

When Adam and Eve bit from the proverbial apple we were given a gift that no other animal on earth has access to: free-will. We have the ability to make of our life what we will. Most of the time we go with the flow, we let our past or, even worse, people around us make decisions for us. When we decide to decide, when we look at what we wish to become in life and exercise free-will we truly define the difference between not only ourselves and animals but those around us who do not exercise their free-will. You have the ability to see every situation you confront in a way that benefits you...if you wish to.

When being a Two-Face is a good thing

My favorite Batman character is Two-Face. While many people have their favorite characters I find Two-Face to be intriguing because of his two-headed quarter. In any decision he makes he gives two options, but when he flips the quarter, he has already made his decision: heads, because he has a two headed quarter. This mindset changes everything around him as he has a single purpose while other characters work to figure out how they will act depending on flip.

Engage your own Two-Face

When you feel you have no choice you must engage your inner Two-Face. People only control you and take your choices away from them when you do not exercise free-will. While you can not control what others will do without a lot of training in psychology, you can engage your free-will to decide how you will act regardless of the situation. You should see choice where others see hopelessness and obstacles. Regardless of the outcome, regardless of what side the coin lands on, either result still leads to your wish if you view it as a path and not a wall. Have confidence that you can steer any situation to accomplish your choice...a choice you can make to create new choices that benefit you.

IN CASE OF...

BEING LABELED.

We've all felt like we are labelled. Whether it's the girl who's reliable or the girl who is a gossip - we know how people view us. Labels are a reflection of what we project to the world, and even more powerful, they can begin to determine our fate by limiting our choices in the people we associate with and the way that we associate with the world. Whenever you are labeled, ask yourself, 'Does this label help me become the person I want to be?' If it doesn't...some serious soul-searching is in order.

You choose to be powerless

You aren't a canned food...you get to choose how you are labeled because you choose your labels through your actions. Perhaps you choose to be known as a warrior or someone reliable...or because you are never on time others label you as unreliable. It is also important to remember that when you choose the label - you choose the limits it places on you in how people will see you. If you choose to be reliable you can rarely be late without risking your reputation. Labels also create a powerful sense of identity, or a symbol of the group you choose. Conversely a label can limit your potential due to a lack of choices available to people of your label. Just remember, when it comes to labels: you choose.



Purpose > label

The constrictions of a label often lead us away from our true purpose in life. It doesn't matter how you view yourself if others view you differently, and then act to limit your life because of your labels. While one can fight against this limitation you can very quickly find yourself

forgetting why you were fighting in the first place. Is a label really worth fighting over if it prevents you from achieving your destiny? Controlling your means your will choose purpose over a label, refusing labels in order order find no limitation to achieve their purpose which makes them special.

Removing a label

When we refuse labels we take control of ourselves but we also become harder to control. Removing labels means we are no longer operating within the group ethic and the expectations of others. Look closely at yourself...you know your label. When you decide to remove that label and act contrary to the label you will find that people around you lose leverage on you because you no longer act as your label. This means they can no longer manipulate you in the way that they are used manipulating you, like a parent who acts a particular way toward a child in order to manipulate them. When you remove the label, and become who you want to be instead of who people know you as, you free yourself to be yourself. Become who you want to be...let your label be the person who does as they will because they are going somewhere particular: their future.

IN CASE OF...

'I DIDN'T ASK FOR THIS TO HAPPEN.'

I remember the first time I ever said, 'Look, I didn't ask for this to happen.'

The response from my mother was... 'Well, it did... now deal with it.'

Um. That's not a solution.

Deal with it is never a solution unless you are dealing with it in well thought out way.

You Have Control - If You Exercise It

I had a friend once tell me he had been assigned a project he didn't want. When he told me he didn't ask for it to happen, I asked him, 'Did you ask for something else to happen?' You always have control over your life. If you know projects are being assigned - what prevents you from asking for the project you would want to do, or the project you would do best? That's exercising control and controlling your fate. How many things in your life could you ask for right now so you don't have to react later?

Deal with it \neq Accept it

There is a simplicity in the way my mother told me to 'deal with it'. Words have meaning. When you tell someone to 'deal with it' do you mean:

- a) take care of the problem and solve it; or
- b) accept that this has happened and move on.

These are two different courses of action that must take place whenever you didn't control your fate and life 'happens' to you. You must accept that it happened so you can move beyond the shock of it happening...and begin to solve the problem quickly and decisively to create a result that you want, like flipping the coin.

How, you may ask?



Ask The Ultimate Question

Whenever you say "I didn't ask for this to happen to me" I challenge you to respond with the question: 'How would I act if I did ask for it to happen to me?' When it is too late to exercise control over it happening - you can control what will unfold after. Ask yourself how you would behave if you asked for it...begged for it...prayed for it....because you knew it would be something you would enjoy and could solve easily. What would the solution be? What would the person with the solution act like?

Focusing on not having control will give you the feeling of helplessness, substituting the time you could be acting with time spent wallowing in a feeling of being hopeless. Focus on what you can control, act decisively as we discuss in UNDO, and turn 'I didn't ask for this to happen' into 'I'm glad it happened, I learned a lot from it.' This the mindset of the pastless, the people who actively control their future.

IN CASE OF...

BEING INDECISIVE.

What's in a decision

While all animals on earth have a sense of freedom it seems only man has free-will. Every decision we make has a consequence, a cause and effect we most often could recognize if we took the time to think through our decisions and looked for the consequences in the future. Do not act like the animals who have limited action when acting through instinct born from experiences of the past. We have the ability to look ahead, weigh the outcomes of our decisions and the consequences they will hold.

The root of decision: decide

When was the last time that you decided to decide? When you were faced with a decision you couldn't make how often have you taken the time to make a decision on what you are deciding about. How does the future appear with each option...from the high calorie slice of cake to the difficult conversation with a loved one? Making decisions based on lessons learned from the past is not free-will...this is guided spontaneity where the mind compares the present to the past. Free-will is often an illusion if we allow the brain to act based on the past as our past self makes the decision, not the present self reflecting on the future. When you are faced with a decision the first action must be to make a decision to decide based on the present and the past, not the past alone.

The first question...

If you have a decision to make, first decide to ask yourself a question: *do I have to make this decision?* Think about it and ask yourself - who says you have to make the decision? You have free-will and this is your life. What are the repercussions if you decide not to decide and instead think? When you have answered this question ask yourself the next powerful question: *what decision am I expected to make?* Based on your past experiences, the people asking you to make a decision, and the situation at hand, how are you expected to make the decision? With these pieces of information in-hand, ask yourself what is the outcome you want and do you have the ability to make that outcome happen in the circumstances? If you have to write the questions out and take time to make pro's and con's list do so... within these questions you have decided to make a decision and will find an answer born of free will.

Spontaneous doesn't spell success

The person that can take control of their life has to first take control of their mind and stop it's need to act spontaneously. The person who is in control looks beyond the immediate and looks to how their decision will affect them in the future. This a person who can make decision to decide whether to decide. Being spontaneous is rarely advisable if you want to be successful in life. Success is dictated by deciding what you want the future to look like and then working backward through having goals. Remember, don't be spontaneous until things go your way...then enjoy the creativity of spontaneity.

IN CASE OF...

FEELING LOST IN LIFE.

When I was younger I could never figure out how to use a compass. It wasn't until later in life that I became marginally good with a compass and land navigation. The compass can save your life in the most dire of circumstances, leading you to the right path back home when you are lost. But, the compass, when use incorrectly, can lead your completely off course by being slightly off over a long distance. Feeling lost in life is similar as it seems we are either lost, on track, or slightly off track over a long period of time...resulting in our being lost again.

Finding purpose

Whenever I tried to find my purpose I fell back on the same ol' lines everyone had parroted before me. Whether it was God's purpose, charity, or having money so you can enjoy your life, no concept ever helped me find purpose more than when I asked myself this question: *What am I so passionate about I would burn down my house and sell everything I have to go and do?* What would I leave all I have behind for? You don't have to burn down the house and sell the car, but ask yourself what that one thing is...and see how you can do it and live your life. For me it is helping and teaching, for you it may be becoming a master astronomer because you are drawn to the stars, or a carpenter because you'd do anything to just quit it all and work with wood until you die and be happy. If you could give it all up and be happy being poor and alone doing something - you may be close to your passion.

True north

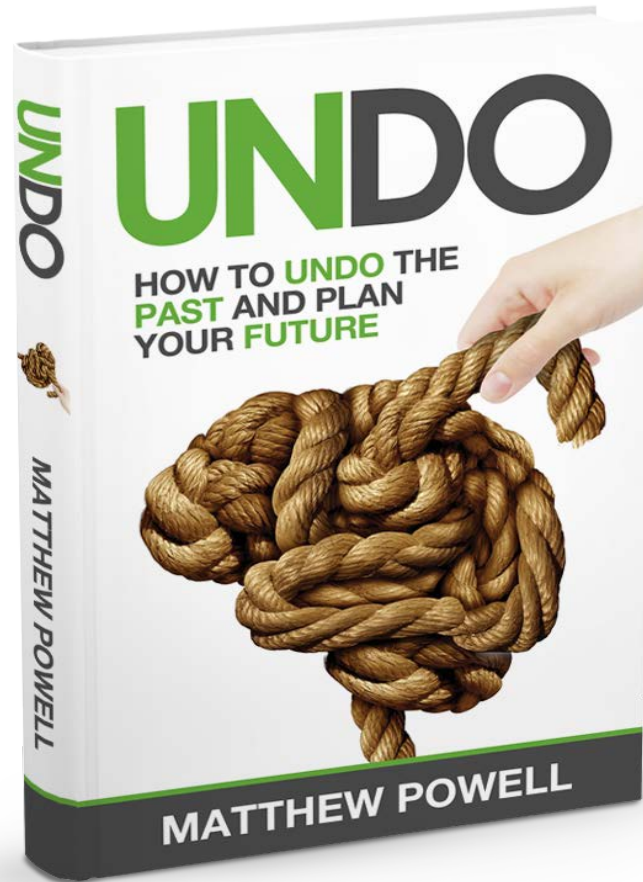
If you've ever been lost to the point of fear you know what it is to have a singular goal: get unlost. The first purpose with a compass is finding true north so you can determine the direction you want to go. In life true north is similar to knowing your purpose in life. If you don't know your purpose, if you don't know where you are going, then it is impossible to find your way out of being lost. Find true north, find your passion, what does your end-result in your dreams look like...then work backward from there to who you are today and what you can do today and tomorrow to get there.

Navigating the big and small world

A compass can get you across a continent on an expedition or out of the woods where you are lost. Sometimes you might not be lost in life but the where and when of your life. Big or small, finding true north, your purpose, can help you navigate every situation to get to where you want to be. Life can be a confusing maze and it doesn't take long to get lost or turned around. Once you know your purpose use it as a means of finding your way when are lost by asking the question: *how does what I'm facing help me along my path to purpose?* Use your purpose as your north star whether it's a continent called life or forest called a rough patch.

Remember: when you look to your purpose first then every thing leads there.

'This book changed my life.'
'A self help book like no other.'
'...a co-creative process.'



Are you ready to UNDO the past?
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