

A close-up photograph of a green ceramic mug filled with dark coffee, resting on a white paper napkin. The napkin has the words "The best day ever!" written in black ink in a cursive, handwritten style. A silver ballpoint pen lies horizontally across the bottom of the napkin. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wooden table.

The best
day ever!

MY PERFECT DAY

YOU MAY NEVER GET TO LIVE YOUR PERFECT DAY (IN FACT, IT'S ALMOST CERTAIN YOU WON'T), BUT THAT SHOULDN'T STOP YOU TRYING. THIS EXERCISE WILL HELP YOU TO UNCOVER WHAT A PERFECT 24 HOURS MIGHT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU, AND SET YOU UP TO TAKE STEPS TOWARDS BUILDING THE LIFE THAT YOU TRULY WANT TO LIVE.

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IN PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

Let's be clear, right from the outset: you will never live your perfect day. It's just not possible. Life simply doesn't work that way. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't try. The fact that you'll never live it does not mean that the pursuit of your perfect day shouldn't be your number one priority. You see, in the pursuit of perfection - the 24-hours where everything is aligned and simply couldn't be any better - your life improves. You improve.

If you think about it, it has to be that way. As you take steps to build more and more of your perfect day into your life, you inevitably take steps towards becoming your best self - because your best self sits at the heart of your perfect day. And, as you become more and more of your best self, so you perform at higher and higher levels across every aspect of your life - your relationships, your use of time, your career, everything.

And that's what you need to keep at the front of your mind as you do this exercise: just because your perfect day is unattainable does not mean you should not strive to attain it. Because, in that striving, so you move closer and closer to it; and, in moving closer and closer to it, so every element of your life is improved.

DREAM WITH PURPOSE

Now, all of that may feel a little fanciful. The stuff of self-help gurus and motivational speakers. But, trust me, it's not.

Sure, you'll see plenty of references to living your best life splattered all over social media. You'll no doubt have caught glimpses of YouTube videos of people who are apparently living their best life - their perfect day - every single day. You know the ones - tropical island beaches, working (but only a few hours a week) from a deckchair with a laptop while sipping a cocktail.

But these people are not living their perfect day every single day.

Because, firstly, like I said already, you'll never live your perfect day for just one day, never-mind every day. And because, secondly, your perfect day isn't all cocktails and beaches. For it to truly be your perfect day, it will be full of meaning and purpose and, while that may include a sprinkling of cocktails, beaches and deckchairs, there'll be plenty of other stuff in there, too.

But remember, what gives you meaning and purpose in life is unique to you. For some



people, meaning and purpose may be all about relationships - being with family, friends and sharing time and experiences together. For others it may be about breaking new ground and innovating solutions to life's issues. Some may find meaning and purpose in helping or teaching others, in building a successful career, raising happy children, or a mixture of a whole multitude of things, including, perhaps, cocktails, beaches and deckchairs.

And your perfect day will be spent absorbed in those things, and only those things. Not a moment will be 'wasted' on the things that detract from spending time doing the things that truly bring you to life and align absolutely with who you really are.

So, as you begin to unpack what your perfect day looks like, don't fall into the trap of feeling like you should aspire to the lives portrayed on social media and in glossy magazines. If you want some of what those images show in your perfect day, factor it in, but don't limit yourself to only what you see there.

Look deeper inside yourself. Go beneath the surface and consider your values. Your passions. The things that motivate you. The things you yearn for. The things that give you meaning and purpose. What would a day filled with those things look like? What would it feel like? What would you feel like if you found yourself in that day?

NO ROOM FOR REALITY

This is no easy exercise. You've spent your entire life surrounded by 'reality'. You know (or have come to understand) what is achievable - what is realistic. And you have tasted the disappointment of striving for something and coming up short. You've endured the smirks and the sniggers when you missed the target or that dream never became reality. It hurts.

And, with all that crashing against you, seeing beyond what feels realistic can be a big ask. At least if you stay grounded in reality - if you avoid trying to peer beyond what feels comfortable and within your grasp, you'll most likely avoid those hurts and disappointments, right?

But, you have to do it - you have to put reality to one side and dare to dream the impossible for this exercise to work. And, when you remind yourself that the goal here is not to achieve the impossible dream, simply to work towards it, then it does get easier, trust me.

You will try to talk yourself out of some of the things you dream about in your perfect day. You'll tell yourself they are simply way too far-fetched. That, even putting reality to one side, they are border-line ridiculous. But you can silence that negative, limiting voice by reminding it that when it's not all about the destination - about achieving those things in your perfect day - but, rather, about the journey that moves you closer to them, absolutely nothing is unrealistic. Absolutely nothing is too far-fetched. And absolutely everything is up for grabs.



NO TIME FOR THE NAYSAYERS

Naysayers. You've met them, I know. The people who love to tell you it'll never work, or it can never be done. The people who tell you that you need to just knuckle down and put up with it: you made your bed, now you have to lie in it; you'll never change it.

And sometimes those people are pretty close to home. They may even believe they are looking out for you - that they have your best interests at heart. Maybe you've been told to 'get real' or to 'stop daydreaming' or 'get your head out of the clouds' by well-meaning (or even not-so-well-meaning) friends and family when you've dared to share your hopes and dreams. Maybe you've been called irresponsible or foolhardy. And, just like the hurts and disappointments that so often accompany daring to step outside reality, those well-intentioned words of caution, or even reprimand, drag you down.

But here's the thing - here's why you need to have no time for the naysayers: far from being irresponsible or foolhardy, to decide to apply yourself to the pursuit of your perfect day and, with it, your best self is one of the most sensible and responsible decisions you can make.

You see, when you are living your best life (your perfect day) as your best self, it is impossible for you to improve on yourself. You are the best version of you that there can be. Which means you are the best friend, colleague, parent, sibling, partner, employer, employee - the best whatever, in fact - that you can be. You are performing at your peak and both you and the world around you reap the rewards.

Now, like I've already said, you'll never live your perfect day, which means that both your best life and your best self will be a work in progress right up until you breathe your last. But, every day you reach for all that your perfect day contains, the closer you become to being your best self and living your best life. Which means that every day you perform at higher and higher levels as your life aligns more and more with your values, your passions, your motivations, and the things that hold meaning and purpose for you.

And, in so doing, you become a better friend, colleague, parent, sibling, partner, employer, employee, or whatever. And, while you may not be the best you can be, both you and the world still enjoy the rewards that the better version of you that you are becoming delivers.

ONE SMALL NOTE OF CAUTION

At this point, it would be easy to think that this exercise is the doorway to some kind of selfish adventure into a better future, justified on the basis that other people will benefit. It is not.



Certainly, this exercise is about aspiring to be everything that you can be in the future. But the future is built on the present. And, while you may take a moment to step outside reality to envision the life you truly want, the pursuit of that life very much flows out of your present reality - a present reality full of responsibilities and obligations you cannot ignore.

You may have a partner, children, a job, bills to pay, debts to cover. You can't ignore those. Your perfect day may not involve you in your current career, it may be a day where you are debt-free and your bills are incidental. And that's great. But to stand any chance of stepping closer to those parts of your perfect day, you need to take action in the here and now: you have to acknowledge what needs to change, identify the changes you need to make, and then make them. And that will take time and may require tough decisions and considerable effort.

So this exercise is not about avoiding the reality of the present, or about setting yourself up to fail as you consistently fall short of that day you aspire to live. Rather, it's about giving you a focus. Something to work towards. Something to inspire you, guide you and help you to navigate the storms.

You see, your perfect day can become your compass for life. It can create a reference point against which you can weigh every decision: "if I do such and such, does it move me closer to, or further from, my perfect day?". It can give you a reason not to throw the towel in when the going gets tough. It can give you the impetus you need to pick yourself up off the floor after life has knocked you down.

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

There is no hard and fast rule for how to approach this exercise. The key is that whether you paint a picture of your day with words, photographs, songs, video, or brushes and paints, it has to mean something to you. When you look at it, whether it is a piece of prose, a song lyric, a movie or a watercolour, it needs to capture your imagination and remind you of what your life is all about.

For me, it was prose. I wrote mine out from the moment the sun broke through the bedroom blinds to the moment my head hit the pillow at the end of the day. And now, when I read it, it reignites my passion and drives me forward. For you, it may not be words that inspire you, it may be something else altogether. So figure that out, and then take a look at the prompts below, which will act as a nudge and a thought-provoker to help you explore what your perfect day might look like, and create a picture that will be both your compass and your inspiration.



PROMPTS TO GET YOU STARTED

Here are a few questions that will help you to get to grips with your perfect day. Take some time to explore each one, and respond to the questions that flow out of them as you begin to unpack different elements of your perfect day. Then, when you are done, grab a pen and a notebook, your sketchpad, your camera, phone, or whatever works for you, put reality aside just for a moment, and tell the story of what living a single day in your best life, as the best version of you, might look like.

In your perfect day...

- Where are you living?
- Who lives with you?
- Are you married, in a long-term relationship, or single? Do you have kids?
- What do you do for a job?
- Who do you spend that time with?
- How much of your day is given over to work, whatever that may be in your perfect day?
- How much is leisure time just for you?
- How much is leisure time you spend with others?
- How do you spend that leisure time, whether it's leisure time just for you, or time you spend with others?
- How is your physical health?
- What about your mental health?
- What sort of house do you live in?
- What car do you drive?
- How are your finances?
- What are the smells and sounds that surround you?
- What are your interests?

And, finally, when you think about yourself in your perfect day...

- How do you feel?
- What strikes you most?



OVER TO YOU

Now it's up to you. You can go light touch with this exercise, or you can go all in. In reality, you are likely to have to ease yourself in, because a lot of what this exercise requires of you will probably feel quite uncomfortable. So, you may need to ease yourself in to start the ball rolling, and then revisit it to start pushing the boundaries a little, and go deeper into the intricacies of your perfect day.

In fact, revisiting your perfect day is something you should make a habit, no matter how light-touch or all-in you go with your first go. As you move closer to it, so more and more of what your perfect day contains will become visible. And that means you will want to enrich the picture you have already painted, so that you don't miss or forget any part of that perfect 24-hours.

And one final thing: I know I've said it several times already, but always remember that actually living that 24 hours is not the point of this exercise. Quite the contrary, the point is to step outside what is realistic, to expose the full potential of what your life could be, so that you can make it the best that it can be within the realities of life.

