

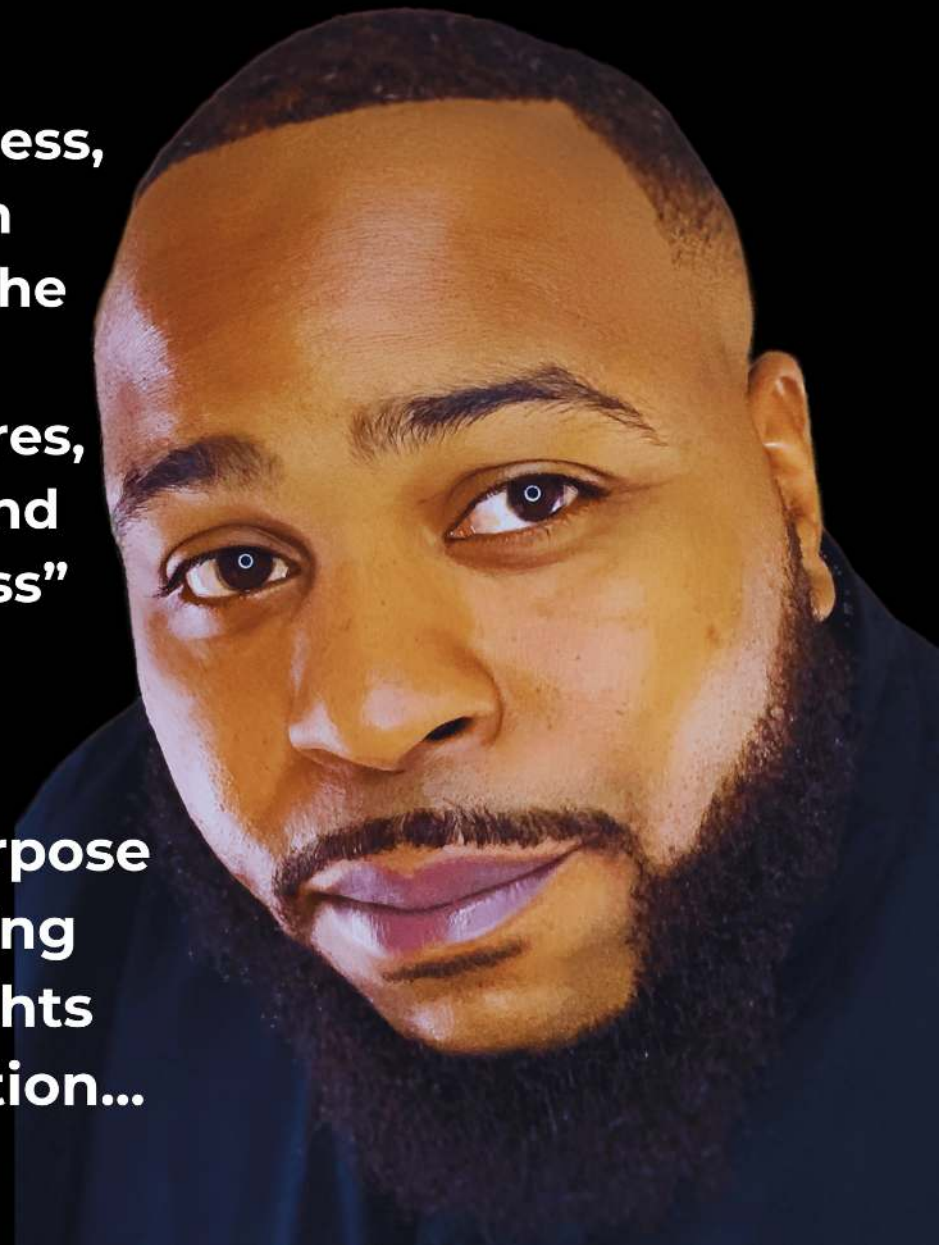
LIVING WITH PURPOSE

CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS
CHANGE YOUR ACTIONS
CHANGE YOUR LIFE

**“The True Progress,
However, Lies in
The Training – The
Repetition, The
Attempts, Failures,
Adjustments, And
Eventual Success”**

**Cincinnati
Reek**

**Living with Purpose
Is About Creating
Positive Thoughts
and Taking Action...**



TITLE PAGE

CREATING MUSIC WITH PURPOSE

**BOOK 1: LIVING
WITH PURPOSE**

CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS

CHANGE YOUR ACTIONS

CHANGE YOUR LIFE

AUTHOR: CINCINNATI REEK

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Creating Music with Purpose

Book 1: Living With Purpose

Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Actions, Change Your Life.

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WORDS FROM THE AUTHOR

Words from the author

Time, To Me, Is the Most Precious Gift We Have. It's Irreplaceable and Fading. This Realization Didn't Strike Me Earlier, But It's Crystal Clear Now: Time Is the Most Significant Asset in My Life.

There's A Season for Everything – A Time to Sow and A Time to Reap. We Plant the Seeds of Our Future, Nurturing Them Patiently as They Grow. Yet, Often in Our Journeys Through Life, We Fall into The Trap of Impatience.

We Wonder Why Things Aren't Moving Faster or Why We Haven't Learned Certain Lessons Yet. But The Truth Is, The Concept of Taking "Too Long" Is Subjective and Often an Illusion. The Real Failure Lies in Not Starting or Stopping Midway.

Remember, Growth Isn't Always Straight or Predictable. Like Crops, Our Personal and Professional Growth Might Vary in The Time It Takes to Manifest. Sometimes It's a Matter of Months, Other Times Longer.

What's Important Is Not the Time It Takes but The Consistent Effort and Actions in The Right Direction. As Time Passes, You'll Be Able to Look Back and See the Progress You've Made.

Change Becomes Visible Over Time, And If Immediate Results Aren't Evident, It May Simply Mean That More Growth and Development Are Needed. Time, Therefore, Is Not Just a Measure; It's A Necessary Element for Witnessing Change and Progress.

WORDS FROM THE AUTHOR

Honesty Is Indeed Critical. Whether You Find Yourself at The Back of The Pack or At the Front, It's Crucial to Recognize That Outside Opinions Are Secondary to Your Self-Perception.

People Might Comment on Your Position, But Ultimately, They Are Concerned with Their Own Lives and Challenges. It's Your Internal Dialogue That Shapes Your Journey.

This Journey Starts with The Thoughts You Entertain Regularly. Question These Thoughts: Why Do They Dominate Your Mind? Are They Guiding You Towards Your Desired Path?

Investigate Their Roots – Are These Truly Your Thoughts or Have They Been Shaped by External Influences Like Media, Society, Or Others' Opinions?

Your Thoughts Fuel Your Emotions, Which in Turn Drive Your Actions. Negative Thoughts Produce Negative Emotions, Leading to Unhelpful Actions.

Equally, Positive Thoughts Inspire Positive Emotions and Actions. It's Crucial to Distinguish If Your Thoughts and Emotions Are Authentically Yours or The Product of External Forces.

To Truly Understand Yourself, Consider A Temporary Disconnection from Outside Inputs. Avoid Consuming Opinions, Media, And Societal Storylines.

This Break Allows You to Understand Which Thoughts Are Authentically Yours and Which Are Influenced by External Factors.

Over Time, You'll Gain a Clearer Understanding of Your True Self, Unswayed by The World Around You. This Self-Awareness Is Key to Directing Your Thoughts, Emotions, And Actions Towards Your Personal Goals and Dreams.

DEDICATION

Dedication

To My Niece, Laylah,

Thank You for Seeing Me at My Best When I Was at My Worst.

One Day, You Texted Me, Sharing That You Were Writing a Book About a Prince Who Left His Kingdom on A Journey of Discovery. Upon His Return, He Brought Back and Shared His Discoveries with His Kingdom.

You Told Me I Was That, Prince.

At That Time, I Was 1,000 Miles Away from All Our Family and Friends, Struggling to Survive, Feeling Lost and Alone, And Constantly Second-Guessing Myself, Wondering If I Had Made the Wrong Decision to Move Away from Home.

That Day, You Inspired Me to Be Great. You Gave Me A Story and A Purpose When I Couldn't Create One for Myself.

Thank You for Seeing Me at My Best When I Was at My Worst.

Uncle Rico Loves You.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I'd Like to Acknowledge the Ones That Cared for Me When I Couldn't Take Care of Myself:

The Ones Who Shared Their Time, Their Energy, Their Money, The Ones Who Gave Me A Hot Meal and Let Me Sleep on Their Couch.

My Greatest Dream in Life Is to Repay You.

Whenever I Go Out into The World, I Always Have You in My Mind, In My Heart, And I Vow to Represent Us Well.

You Helped Mold Me. It's Been a Long Time Coming But, **Look at What You Made!**

All My Love,

Rico

Aka

Cincinnati Reek

Aka

Reek The Great

FOREWORD

Foreword

The Essence of Life, In My Perspective, Is to Find Joy and Make the Most of Our Time Here.

Uncertain About What Lies Beyond Death, I Believe It's Important to Seize the Present Moment. Our Unique Ability to Imagine and Then Create Those Visions in The Physical World Is a Remarkable Gift.

If Your Life Feels Empty of Joy, It's Worth Asking Yourself Why. Is There a Disconnect Between Your Desires and Your Actions? Perhaps Your Mind Desires to Create, But Your Body Is Engaged in Tasks That Bring Little Personal Fulfillment.

This Misalignment Can Lead to A Sense of Frustration with Life.

Understanding Who You Are Is the First Step Towards Living a Life That Vibrates with Your True Self.

Once You Establish Your Standards and Values, It's Crucial to Uphold Them and Not Compromise on What You Believe You Deserve.

Remember The Saying: "If You Don't Stand for Something, You'll Fall for Anything."

Even The Strongest Among Us Stumble; The Key Is to Always Get Back Up.

-REEK THE GREAT

BOOK PURPOSE

Book purpose

Welcome to a journey that transcends the ordinary—a guide crafted not just for reading, but for living. This book is an encouragement for those craving to discover their true selves, to break free from the limits of normal expectations, and to forge a life filled with purpose, passion, and resilience.

From the very first page, you're invited to embark on a transformative expedition that spans from uncovering your unique talents to embracing the challenges and rewards of entrepreneurship, redefining what success means to you, and facing life's unpredictability's with strength and grace.

Here, we dig into the essence of what it means to live a life that is authentically yours, encouraging you to evaluate and realign your actions with your deepest values and aspirations.

This story is not just about surviving; it's about thriving—about the courage to live a life that is rich in personal joy and freedom, one that contributes positively to the world around you. Through the pages of this book, you will find a call to action to live intentionally, to embrace change, and to learn from every step of the journey.

This is more than a book; it's a companion on your path to discovering a life marked by authenticity and fulfillment. It's a comprehensive guide to navigating the complexities of modern life and work, pushing you to not only dream but to act—to create a legacy that transcends traditional system of measurement of success.

So, take this first step with an open heart and a willing spirit, ready to transform your life into an extraordinary adventure that truly reflects who you are. Welcome to your journey toward personal joy and freedom.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION OVERVIEW

Chapter 1: Introduction overview

Chapter 1 invites you on a personal journey to find the right balance between following your dreams and meeting what everyone else expects from you. It talks about how true happiness often comes from doing what you love, even when it seems hard or uncertain. This chapter is like a pep talk for anyone who's ever felt stuck between what they want to do and what others think they should do. It encourages you to look at your own life, recognize what you're good at, and have the bravery to take your own unique path. Through stories and reflections, this chapter will help you see the value in sticking to your guns and making choices that are right for you, not just what's expected. It's about finding the courage to be yourself and chasing after what you truly want, showing that it's possible to carve out your own success by being true to who you are.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Struggle in Ordinary Jobs

I realized that I was struggling at jobs. The highest earners are always the owners or creators of an idea. When I say I struggled at jobs, I mean my body was present, but my mind was elsewhere. Despite being a great worker, my thoughts constantly drifted to music. At every job I ever had, I found myself writing lyrics whenever possible - during lunch breaks, or even sneaking off to the bathroom to jot down ideas.

1.2 Choir Singing: Family Tradition and Personal Unwillingness

I grew up singing in a church choir since before I could even remember. In high school, I sang in the school choir too, but only for the easy A; I never aspired to be a singer. That was just the life I was living. Going to church wasn't really a choice for me. As I mentioned, I've been singing since I can't even remember. My entire family was involved in the choir; my grandmother was the director, and all my cousins were singers. So, I never questioned it, even though I was always just a background singer. I never wanted to do solos; the thought terrified me. Whenever it was my turn for a solo in church, I tried to hide, hoping someone else would take my part. Gospel music just wasn't my thing.

1.3 Musical Preferences: Beyond the Choir

At home or around my neighborhood with friends, we listened to rap and R&B. I couldn't fall asleep without the radio on, so music has been a constant in my life from birth. But music was just something I did; it wasn't my dream.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.4 Athletic Aspirations and a Life-Changing Injury

From the time I was 5 until I was 18, I played sports - football, basketball, and baseball every single year. I dedicated all my time to it, practicing and training, and I was good. In high school, I thought I could go to college and play. I wasn't dreaming of becoming a big sports star or going to the NFL or NBA; I was just a kid living life, not thinking beyond the present.

1.5 A Career-Ending Moment and Its Aftermath

But everything changed my senior year. During a football game, I tore my Achilles, ending my athletic career. This game was against my personal rivals, not my schools. I had attended a different school from the one in my neighborhood, so we were playing against the kids I grew up with. The night before, I had called them, boasting about how we would win and what I planned to do in the game. This made it a big game for me.

During that game, I was playing as a running back. At one point, the coach substituted me out, but the replacement player didn't have the right equipment - I think he was missing a tail pad. The referee stopped the play and the substitute had to leave the field, so I had to go back in. And it was on that very play that I got injured.

Reflecting on that day, there's an odd kind of humor to it. It's not a laughing matter, but it's strange. The game started sunny, but just before my injury, it began to rain. In movies, rain often symbolizes change, and it felt like my life changed forever at that moment, all stemming from that specific event.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.6 Redefining Identity Post-Injury

Throughout high school, whenever I sustained an injury, the coaches ensured I was well taken care of. For instance, in my sophomore year, I fractured my leg. The coaches went above and beyond for me. I remember being in the middle of English class and the coach would come get me, driving me personally to physical therapy. The treatment I received was exceptional. I was a sophomore and yet they had me running on a water treadmill – something I had only seen on TV.

1.7 A Tough Lesson in Conditional Support

However, things changed drastically in my senior year. After I got hurt, I approached the coach, expecting a similar level of support and care, perhaps some physical therapy. But the response was disheartening. The coach simply said there was nothing they could do. He suggested I could attend practices and games to support the team, but that was it. This really broke my spirit. I had always believed they were taking care of me because they valued me as a player.

But I realized then that their care was conditional. They had taken care of me in the past, so I'd be fit for the next season. But in my senior year, with no next season in sight for me, there was no reason for them to invest in my healing. It was a harsh lesson about the reality of my situation in high school sports.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.8 Rethinking College and Sports Dreams

After the injury, I had a conversation with my mom about my future. I told her I believed I could secure an academic scholarship to attend college. My grades weren't exceptional, but they were good enough to meet the minimum requirements. I also mentioned that I didn't want to continue playing football. Her response was direct and unexpected: she said if I didn't play football, she wouldn't pay for my college education or take responsibility for any student loans.

As an adult, I now understand the burden of student loans, but back then, as a teenager, I didn't fully grasp the implications. This conversation with my mom led me to a significant decision. I stopped pursuing the idea of going to college and halted any efforts to apply to schools. It was a turning point where my path diverged from what I had initially envisioned for my future.

Even my teammates had their own perceptions about my injury. I overheard one of them saying his dad claimed that if I had truly torn my Achilles, I wouldn't have been able to walk off the field. Part of me was thinking that his dad wasn't as tough as I was. But the truth was, I hadn't walked off the field. When I got hit, it didn't initially hurt; it just felt like my foot wasn't there, as if it had disconnected from my leg. There was no pain at first, but I knew something was seriously wrong, so I stayed down for a while. When I tried to stand and put pressure on my foot, that's when I felt the pain and fell back down. I couldn't walk off by myself; two people had to help me, supporting me as I hopped off the field on one leg.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

That incident made me feel like everyone had given up on me. Once I was injured and no longer useful to them, it seemed like they just moved on. This abandonment hit me deep in my soul. It was a profound blow to my spirit. And as a result, I gave up on sports entirely. I lost all interest in playing, being around it, or even watching it on TV. It felt like a part of me was lost, and a significant chapter of my life had abruptly closed.

1.9 The Turning Point: From Athlete to Music Enthusiast

Life indeed has a way of being funny and unpredictable. One day, a few months after my injury, when I was starting to heal and move around more independently, something interesting happened. By this time, I had transitioned from a boot to a lighter cast brace on my ankle. It was the summer after my high school graduation, and I was working at KFC, 18 years old and freshly graduated.

1.10 Discovering a Natural Talent in Music

One day, I decided to buy a music CD. In my neighborhood, it was easy to find CDs being sold on the street corner. I picked one that listed names of popular rappers and their songs, expecting to enjoy some good music. But when I got home and played it, I realized it wasn't what I expected. It was just instrumental versions of those songs – no lyrics, just the beats.

At first, I was annoyed and thought about returning it. But as I continued listening to the instrumentals, something clicked. I found myself freestyling to the beats, and before I knew it, I felt compelled to write down what I was rapping. This moment, though initially frustrating, turned out to be a significant turning point. It sparked something in me, a new way to channel my creativity and express myself. It was like a door opening to a path I hadn't considered before.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.11 The Unconventional Start to Music Production

One day, I came up with what I thought was a brilliant idea. I went to an Office Depot or Staples, one of those places, and bought an office microphone. It was the kind with a flat base and a stem that looked like a pen, not designed for making music. But I had an old desktop computer at home, and I somehow managed to rig this microphone to it for recording.

My recording setup was basic: I would play the CD on a CD player through my speakers, and then I'd rap over the beats, recording it through the computer. It was just my voice layered over the instrumental tracks. I did this for a long time, creating multiple songs over a few months.

1.12 Finding Validation and Expression Through Music

Somehow, other people started hearing my recordings. It wasn't like I was going around telling everyone that I was rapping; it just kind of leaked out. My sisters heard it first and liked it, then my cousins. Encouraged, I burned the recordings onto CDs and shared them with friends in the neighborhood. They liked it too. And honestly, I liked it as well. It was just something to do since I was on my own. I didn't have a group of friends who were into making music, so it was a solo endeavor. My parents weren't supportive of my music pursuits, so I never took it very seriously and put it on the back burner.

1.13 Music as a Natural, Untrained Skill

But the thing was, rapping felt easy to me. I never really tried; it just happened. When I listened to the beats, it was like they were speaking to me. I could hear the instruments, and they sounded like words. It was a natural and spontaneous connection with music, something that seemed to flow from within me without much effort.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.14 Navigating Jobs and Developing Music

At that time, I was a confused kid, hurt and trying to prove a point – that I could make it on my own and didn't need anyone. Instead of focusing on music or considering pursuing it, I just started working random jobs. I would apply anywhere that was hiring and work wherever I got hired, all to make enough money to survive.

Even while I was working, music was still a part of my life. My coworkers and even my bosses would listen to my music. I remember coworkers coming in the next day, singing my songs. Once, my boss called for a meeting and unexpectedly started playing my music during it. So, I always had validation from others, but what they didn't know was how I felt about it. I was just doing this from my spirit. I hadn't been taught to rap, write lyrics, or make songs; it all came naturally to me. And maybe that's why I took it for granted. I didn't see it as a gift because I didn't know how to monetize it or understand the technicalities behind it.

I made beats, but it was all intuitive. I would press keys, and if they sounded good together, I'd combine them into a beat. But I didn't know anything about making chords or playing the piano. I had never played an instrument. Everything I did was on the computer. I didn't have a keyboard; I just used the computer keys. It was a raw, untrained approach to music, driven purely by feeling and instinct rather than formal training or technical knowledge.

Throughout the years, I continued to record songs whenever I could. I found people with makeshift studios – often just a computer set up in their bedroom – and they let me record. Remarkably, no one really charged me for it. I remember one guy who normally charged for studio time; his girlfriend insisted on it. To keep up appearances, he would meet me outside, hand me some money, and then I'd hand it back to him inside the house in front of his girlfriend, so she'd think I was paying.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This experience highlighted to me that others believed in my musical talent, even when I struggled to see it in myself. I felt my music was good, but I couldn't envision anything substantial coming from it. And so, this became a repeated cycle for years. With every new job and new people, I met, I would share my music – sometimes old songs I had made years ago. People would respond to them as if they were fresh and new, loving them as though I had just created them.

Despite this positive feedback, there was a disconnect. I appreciated the support and validation, but internally, I couldn't align my self-perception with the encouragement I received. My journey with music was like a background melody to the rest of my life, ever-present but never quite taking the center stage in the way that others seemed to think it could.

1.15 The Journey of Self-Discovery and Personal Growth

Reflecting on my life journey, I see it marked by a series of challenging situations that, in retrospect, were necessary for me to realize that certain paths weren't meant for me. From ages 18 to 28, I lived a life that felt like it was constantly beating me down. I was following the conventional wisdom, working hard just to make ends meet, but it wasn't fulfilling. It felt like I was living someone else's life, not my own.

1.16 Embracing Music as a True Calling

During this period of self-examination, I began to question what came naturally to me, what I could do effortlessly at any time of the day. The answer always circled back to music. Making music was not just a hobby; it was a natural, spiritual gift. I realized that my ideas, my creativity in music, were where my true value lay. The pivotal question then became: What do I need to do to pay myself? I was torn between a job I disliked and a life I yearned for but wasn't living.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

To bridge this gap, to move from point A to point B, I understood that it wasn't just about being disciplined; I had to learn how to be disciplined. It was about acquiring confidence, learning how to train, how to learn, how to act, and how to adjust. I realized that the journey from point A to point B is essentially a cycle of continuous learning and growth. You start at point A, work towards a goal, and once you reach it, you're back at a new point A, ready to begin the process again for the next goal. It's a never-ending cycle of self-improvement and adaptation, a constant journey of discovering and pursuing my true calling.

1.17 The Path to Expertise in Music

The shift towards discipline in my life wasn't immediate. At first, I was struggling and failing repeatedly. Things weren't working out, and I had to question myself: why were my efforts not producing results? I realized it was partly due to my lifestyle and my half-hearted approach to music. To make real progress, I needed to be fully invested in every aspect, including my education.

When it came to music, my education was purely experimental; I didn't attend music school or even go to college. My knowledge was grounded in life experiences, but I lacked technical understanding. For instance, I had no idea about mixing and mastering. When I recorded music, others would handle these aspects, and I wasn't even present during the process. I was unfamiliar with common music production terms.

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1.18 Learning the Business Side of Music

For the longest time, I was just working regular jobs. You come in, you're told what needs to be done, and you do it. But then it struck me: I had to start managing my life and my music career with the same level of organization and planning as a job. In simpler terms, I needed to create an itinerary for myself, much like how people plan a vacation or how workplaces have schedules.

This meant setting specific goals, outlining the steps to achieve them, understanding the costs involved, and being disciplined about following through. It was about bringing structure and order to my approach, something that was previously lacking. This realization was a turning point, helping me to transition from a casual approach to a more professional and disciplined one in pursuing my music career.

Previously in my life, I never had a structured approach. I would just wake up, go about my day, and do whatever felt right at that moment. But then I realized that I needed to treat my life as a job, as a business. If I could wake up at 5:00 AM and get ready for a job, then I should be able to gather the same energy and dedication for myself. If I could give eight hours to an employer, then I needed to be able to dedicate eight hours to my own goals and projects.

1.19 From Dreaming to Doing: Embracing Entrepreneurship

This realization led me to learn how to make schedules and manage my time effectively. I even had to go back and relearn myself basic skills like writing, focusing on punctuation and grammar. But more than anything, it was about letting go of things that weren't helping me reach my goals. The most significant change was letting go of the idea that I needed a traditional job. I started to understand that it wasn't about having a job; it was about making money.

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Coming from a background where everyone either worked regular jobs or was on government assistance, I didn't have examples of entrepreneurship in my family. No one had ever started or run a business, so I didn't grow up with that mindset. I was always told the path to success was to go to school, graduate, and get a job. That's what I did, following the prescribed path. But many years later, I came to realize that it's not really about the job itself; it's about finding ways to generate income.

This shift in thinking was a major turning point. It opened my eyes to different possibilities and ways of living that weren't bound by the traditional job framework. It was about creating my own path and finding ways to monetize my skills and passions, especially in music, which had always been a natural and important part of my life.

1.20 Challenging the Traditional Employment Standard

This line of questioning marked a turning point in my mindset and approach to life. I started to critically assess the value of my time and labor. The job paid me \$150 a day for six days a week, but I began to wonder, why was my time valued at this amount? Why not \$350 a day? Who decided that \$150 was the worth of my day's work?

1.21 Understanding the Value of Time and Labor

These questions led me to reconsider the constraints of traditional employment. The requirement to work six days a week wasn't my choice; it was a condition set by my employer. What if I wanted more freedom or the opportunity to earn more? The job's structure was set: I could only work and earn during the hours the doors were open. What if I wanted to make money around the clock?

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Even the option of working overtime was flawed, as it led to higher tax deductions. This realization spurred me to calculate and plan. I asked myself, if they're paying me \$150 a day, is it not possible for me to make that amount on my own? This thought process was a crucial step towards independence and entrepreneurship. It was about breaking free from the traditional employment mold and exploring ways to value my time and skills on my terms.

This contemplation was about more than just financial calculations; it was a fundamental shift towards self-reliance and redefining my worth outside the confines of a job. It was the beginning of a journey towards financial and personal independence, exploring how I could leverage my talents, particularly in music, to create a livelihood that aligned with my values and goals.

1.22 From Skill Development to Financial Independence

This realization about the value of my time and labor in relation to my job led me to a pivotal moment of self-reflection and planning. I started by evaluating my skills in music, recognizing that what I had at that moment wasn't enough to get me where I wanted to be. So, I began to list out all the skills I would need to develop to achieve my goals.

In this process, a clear picture emerged: if I could develop these skills, I wouldn't need to rely on a traditional job to make \$150 a day. But my thinking went deeper. I assessed my lifestyle, bills, needs, and wants, calculating the total amount I required to meet my current standard of living, to be comfortable, and to thrive. If I made \$150 a day, I'd be at the same level as my job; \$350 a day would make me comfortable; \$1000 a day would elevate my life entirely. The question then became: what skills do I need to develop to earn \$1000 a day?

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1.23 Breaking Free from Established Constraints

This line of thinking highlighted the role of a job as a middleman. A job needed my physical presence to make money, but I was just one of many employees contributing to their profit, which was significantly more than what they paid us. This realization stemmed from my extensive experience in the workforce, believing in a dream that wasn't truly mine. I was living someone else's dream, not mine.

1.24 Removing the Middleman

By recognizing this, I started to see the potential of relying on my own abilities and talents, particularly in music. It was about removing the middleman – the job – and directly monetizing my skills and efforts. This shift in perspective was crucial. It was about taking control of my destiny, shaping my dream based on my passions and talents, and understanding the true value of my work and potential.

1.25 The Central Conclusion

After much contemplation, I reached a pivotal conclusion: I was determined to do whatever it took to become the person I was meant to be. This journey, I believe, is not just about me but about anyone who seeks to realize their inner greatness and share it with the world. The moment you share your talent, the world takes notice. People will recognize the value in what you offer and be willing to pay for it, like buying a song on iTunes for \$1.29. This process creates self-worth and value.

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1.26 Beyond Skill – The Will to Persevere

Entering my journey, I knew developing skill was essential. However, as I progressed, I realized that skill is just one piece of the puzzle. There are inevitable ups and downs, good days and bad days. Some people might support you, while others may doubt you. This path, as I've experienced, can often feel like a solitary one where you must figure things out on your own.

But beyond skill, there is something even more crucial: the will to persevere. When things go wrong, you need the resolve to keep going; when things are going right, the same resolve is necessary. The key is relentless persistence – "I will keep going," must be the mantra. Skills are important, but without the determination to persevere, they lose their value. Conversely, even if you start with little skill, continuous effort and resilience can lead to extraordinary achievements. One day, you might find yourself being recognized as one of the greatest in your field, not just because of your skill, but because of your strong will to succeed against all odds.

1.27 Embracing the Separateness of The Path

For anyone looking to transform their life significantly, a journey that will not only affect them but also their family, friends, and loved ones, I would say: Yes, it's hard. Transformative change is challenging because not everyone around you will be willing or ready to change alongside you. Many are comfortable maintaining the status quo. So, when you're in the midst of learning and growing, eager to share your insights about personal development and improvement, you might find that those around you aren't receptive. They might be focused on their immediate concerns, like paying bills, and not interested in discussions about growth or development.

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In such situations, it's easy to feel isolated. You might even doubt your path, feeling that while it resonates with you, it's perceived negatively by those around you. It's crucial at these times to recognize that not everyone shares your dream or vision. Everyone has their own life, aspirations, and paths to follow. Accepting this allows you to focus on your journey: do what you need to do, and let others do what they must.

1.28 The Solo Artist's Path

From my personal experience, being a solo artist without a group or manager has taught me a lot. While building a team and having support is essential for scaling up and elevating one's efforts, sometimes you must start alone. You begin with a blank canvas and create using your ideas, emotions, and perceptions of life. Once you've brought your vision into tangible form, people begin to take notice. They see what you've created and realize it's what they've been waiting for.

This process of starting alone and gradually building as others recognize the value of what you're creating is a powerful and often necessary part of personal and professional growth. It's about having the courage and determination to pursue your dreams, even in solitude, and trusting that eventually, others will see the worth in what you've built.

1.29 The Importance of Action

Navigating the journey of personal and professional growth, I've learned that action is crucial. Even if you initially move in the wrong direction, it's better than staying stagnant. When you're moving, even if it's not the right way, you gain the insight needed to change course. Inaction offers no such clarity; it leaves you unable to make any adjustments.

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This path demands a combination of discipline, learning, skill, and persistence. It's often a solitary journey, marked by lonely nights spent soul-searching, sometimes in tears, wondering why things aren't working out, why others don't understand or share in your dream. But the realization that this is my dream, my life, and it's meant for me, brings a certain peace. It's important not to harbor resentment or blame others because they too are living their lives and dreams.

1.30 From Speech to Action

Eventually, I grew tired of talking about my plans and ambitions. I withdrew, focusing solely on work and music. I stopped calling people, stayed off social media, and dedicated myself to my craft. I decided to prove my capabilities through actions rather than words. But then it dawned on me that before proving anything to others, I had to prove it to myself. I needed to validate my inner feelings, to confirm that I was destined for and capable of greater things. My life experiences, the hardships I endured, were not random; they were shaping me, fortifying me. Despite everything, I was still standing strong.

1.31 Shifting Towards Discipline and Intention

This realization boosted my confidence. I had come so far with an unstructured approach, but now, armed with this newfound self-belief, I was ready to embrace a more disciplined, intentional path. It was about proving to myself that my dreams and aspirations were valid, that my journey, unique to me, was valid. It was a shift from seeking external validation to recognizing and affirming my own worth and potential.

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1.32 Spiritual Awakening

The spiritual aspect of my journey became increasingly significant. I realized that something greater seemed to be guiding and protecting me. I found myself in situations like others who tragically didn't make it out. This realization led me to a profound sense of gratitude and purpose. I decided to embrace this guidance fully, to push my limits and see how far I could go, knowing that whatever experiences came my way were meant to teach and shape me into the best version of myself.

1.33 The Transformational Process of Letting Go

My pursuit transcended just making music. It was about realizing that there are people out there living the life I aspired to. The critical question was, "What do I have to do to become that person?" Initially, I didn't have an answer. Over time, I realized that it wasn't so much about changing who I was. Instead, it was about letting go – releasing my limiting thoughts, behaviors, and emotions that were holding me back mentally.

This process of letting go was transformative. It wasn't about discarding parts of myself but rather about releasing the barriers I had unconsciously built. It involved shedding the layers of doubt, fear, and self-imposed limitations to reveal my true potential and capabilities. By doing so, I began to align more closely with my aspirations and the life I wanted to lead.

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1.34 Self-Discovery and Growth

In essence, my journey was about self-discovery and growth. It was a process of unlearning and relearning, of understanding that my past experiences, challenges, and struggles were not obstacles but steppingstones to a greater purpose. This mindset shift was crucial in moving forward, embracing my path with confidence and a clear vision of who I am and what I am meant to achieve.

1.35 Embracing Self-Discovery and Letting Go

In navigating life's journey, it's important to focus not so much on the need to change, but on the necessity to let go. This concept of letting go extends beyond relationships with people; it also applies to places, habits, or even food. For instance, people often maintain toxic relationships with individuals or frequent certain places that aren't beneficial to their well-being. Similarly, unhealthy eating habits, like consuming a tub of ice cream to feel better after a bad day, are also a form of a detrimental relationship. Recognizing these patterns and choosing to let them go opens the door for new, positive experiences.

Once you start letting go of behaviors that don't serve you, you create space for healthier alternatives. For example, instead of resorting to old habits when faced with a challenging day, you might choose to go to the gym to channel your energy productively or create a piece of art, allowing your emotions to flow into something constructive. This shift in approach can lead to significant personal growth.

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Letting go paves the way for new learning opportunities. For instance, after releasing these old patterns, I found myself reading books, something I hadn't done since high school. And back then, it was a requirement rather than a choice. This newfound interest in reading is a positive step, indicating a willingness to grow and learn, to replace old habits with new, enriching experiences. This process of letting go and embracing new ways of coping and learning is a vital part of personal development and self-improvement.

Embarking on a journey of personal growth often leads to natural changes and revelations. It's crucial to be attentive to the signs and to actively monitor your own feelings and reactions. Starting with something as simple as a piece of paper to track your feelings each hour can be incredibly insightful. For example, you might discover that if you don't eat by a certain time, you become irritable. Adjusting your schedule to accommodate this need can significantly improve your mood.

Initially, you might rely on instinct without a clear understanding of how to create a structured schedule. But this process begins with the recognition that you need time away from external influences to reflect and understand yourself better. It's important to find personal space, even amidst a busy life with family and work commitments. This can be as simple as using the drive home from work as a quiet time to talk to yourself, sitting in the car for a few minutes before going inside, or finding a moment of solitude in the bathroom.

1.36 Learning to Value Personal Time and Efforts

Creating these small pockets of time for self-reflection, away from outside distractions, is vital. It allows you to connect with yourself, understand your thoughts and feelings, and make conscious decisions about your life and habits. This practice of self-observation and reflection is a key step in personal growth and development, helping you to better understand your needs, reactions, and the changes you need to implement to improve your overall well-being.

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1.37 The Realization of True Potential and Self-Worth

So, ultimately, I already knew my music was good, and this wasn't from a place of arrogance. I had received plenty of validation from others, so doubt about the quality of my music wasn't the issue. The real shift was in changing my mindset from believing that I needed a traditional job to support myself, to understanding that I needed to develop personally. I needed to become the person I aspired to be. This wasn't about chasing a fictional dream. In fact, I did my research online, looking up who the best music producers were, their earnings, and other successful figures in the industry. My research was quite exploratory; I would look up one thing, which would lead me to another, and then another.

1.38 Empowering Others Through Personal Experience

The purpose of creating this book is to provide a resource I wish I had – a single place where you can find the information you need, hopefully allowing you to progress faster than I did. Or, even if your progress isn't rapid, at least you'll have the reassurance of knowing you're on the right path, heading in the right direction. Later, in this series of books, we'll delve into the technical aspects: beat making, lyric writing, mixing and mastering, recording, and editing. We'll also explore monetization – how to earn from your art and talents.

Before anything else, it's crucial to understand that if you're aiming for consistent success over many years, the key is the value you provide to others. The greater the value you offer, the more willing people are to pay you, often without complaint, because they feel you are enhancing their lives. But before you can offer value to others, you must recognize your own worth. What makes you valuable? What are you contributing to the world?

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The idea that the highest earners are those with innovative ideas holds true. Consider the founder of Walmart: they earn far more than an employee who's been restocking shelves, even if that employee has been working double shifts for weeks. The disparity in earnings isn't just about the hours or labor; it's about the value of the idea. The person who comes up with a new concept, like a special promotion or a unique business strategy, can earn significantly more than someone performing routine tasks, no matter how hardworking they are. This difference highlights the power and value of innovative thinking and ideas in the business world.

When I talk about my natural gifts and talents in music, I mean that creating songs comes as easily to me as breathing. I can spontaneously produce a song, multiple songs, on any given day. It's like owning real estate; every song I create from an idea in my head and share on social media can generate income over years. Even a decade later, a single song might still be bringing in money. If I have a catalog of 100 songs, each contributes to this revenue stream. Even after my passing, the royalties from my music will continue to provide for my family or designated beneficiaries. This realization led me to understand that my gifts, talents, and skills could potentially earn me more than any traditional job.

I also recognized that lacking certain skills meant having to pay others to fill those gaps. Initially, I would create my own home studio, buy a beat, record my lyrics over it, and then send it off for mixing and mastering. However, as I progressed, I realized the importance of self-sufficiency. If my goal was to maximize earnings, learning to do everything myself was the key. By creating the beat, writing the lyrics, recording, mixing, mastering, distributing, and collecting revenue, I retained full control and profit. This approach worked for me, allowing me to become a one-person music production house. However, I acknowledge that this path might not be suitable for everyone; everyone's journey is unique to their circumstances and goals.

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That's precisely why I divided these books into a series. If you're interested in learning just one aspect, it's available for you. But if you're aiming to master everything, that option exists too. These books are essentially a compilation of my story and experiences. They are designed to guide you on your journey, showing you that you're not alone in your struggles and challenges. They demonstrate the process of taking control of your life and the potential to impact generations to come.

1.39 Living as a Creator: Beyond Music

This realization truly sunk in when I understood that creating real change was not just a possibility but my only worthwhile path at that moment. It became ingrained in my mind, heart, and soul that being a creator – whether in music, writing, or any form birthed from an idea in my mind and brought into the world – is my gift, my talent. It's something that didn't require much effort from me; it has always been there, and I believe it always will be. More importantly, I recognize that this gift is meant to be utilized, not just possessed. It's a responsibility to use what comes naturally to me to make a difference, to contribute something unique and valuable to the world.

CHAPTER 1: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 1: Reflective questions

1. When have you felt most disconnected from your true self in your professional life?

What passions have you set aside for the sake of job security, and how has this impacted your sense of fulfillment?

2. What familial expectations have you followed at the expense of your own desires?

How has conforming to family traditions shaped or stifled your personal identity and growth?

3. Reflect on a dream or goal that was suddenly taken away from you. How did you adapt and find new purpose?

What strengths and capabilities did you discover in yourself during this period of forced change?

4. Reflect on an experience where relationships proved to be conditional. How did this impact your trust in others?

How have these experiences influenced your approach to building and maintaining relationships?

5. Reflect on a time when perseverance was crucial to overcoming adversity. What inner strength did you discover?

How has resilience played a role in your journey, and what lessons have you learned about the power of will?

CHAPTER 1: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 1: Action guide

Step 1: Identify Your True Passions and Strengths

Specific: List out your passions and strengths. Reflect on what activities make you lose track of time or what you loved doing as a child.

Measurable: Determine how you can measure your engagement in these activities. For instance, how many hours a week do you spend on your passions?

Achievable: Set a realistic goal to gradually increase the time spent on these activities weekly.

Relevant: Ensure these activities align with your personal values and bring you joy.

Time-bound: Set a deadline, like three months, to reassess your engagement and satisfaction levels.

Step 2: Develop Resilience

Specific: Identify areas where you need to build resilience (e.g., handling criticism).

Measurable: Observe and record instances where you demonstrate resilience.

Achievable: Practice resilience-building exercises like mindfulness or journaling.

Relevant: Focus on areas that directly impact your journey towards personal aspirations.

Time-bound: Aim to see improvement in your resilience within six months.

CHAPTER 1: ACTION GUIDE

Step 3: Reinforce Your Self-Worth

Specific: Make a list of your accomplishments and qualities.

Measurable: Add to this list weekly.

Achievable: Reflect on small daily wins as well as major achievements.

Relevant: Choose accomplishments that truly matter to you.

Time-bound: Set aside time each week to update and review this list.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS OVERVIEW

Chapter 2: Striving for greatness and nothing less overview

Chapter 2 dives deep into what it means to truly aim for greatness in your own life. It's all about finding out who you really are, what you're good at, and going after your dreams with everything you've got. This chapter challenges you to think differently about success—not as something people around you decide, but as what feels right and fulfilling to you personally. It's a call to break away from the usual paths and to trust in your unique skills and desires. Here, you'll learn that being great doesn't come from outside approval but from matching your actions with your true self. This chapter is an uplifting guide that encourages you to chase what you love relentlessly and to believe in your ability to make your life extraordinary. It's about trusting your own journey, growing through what you go through, and recognizing that you have what it takes to reach greatness on your own terms.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

Chapter 2: Striving for greatness and nothing less

2.1 Redefining the Path

I always knew I was destined for more than the conventional path laid out before me: get a job, buy a house, have kids. Society often dictates that being a man involves working hard with tools. I tried it all, but it wasn't for me. I am a creator, a thinker. I thrive on using my imagination, seeing visions, and bringing them to life to experience them firsthand. Now, fixing cars doesn't interest me. Instead, I am drawn to making beats, writing lyrics, telling stories, and inspiring others.

2.2 The Creator's Mindset

If you've ever created your own music, you might understand this feeling. It's like when athletes are 'in the zone.' That's how I feel when making music. It's as if I enter a state where I'm not actively thinking; something else takes control. I'll be immersed in this state for a while, then suddenly snap out of it, amazed at what I've created. It's a natural process, like I've done it before but can't recall when.

2.3 In the Zone: Music and Sports

This experience is like what athletes like Kobe Bryant describe. They play phenomenally but aren't consciously thinking about their performance. Kobe once said he didn't realize he scored 81 points until after the game. That's how I feel when making music. It's an experience that others might relate to in their jobs or fields. Consistently, when I create music, this is the feeling I have - a sense of being entirely in the moment, almost outside of myself, fully immersed in the creative process.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.4 Pursuit of Excellence

Also, there's something about being honest and truthful with yourself. Some might call it being a perfectionist, but I don't see it that way. In my mind, I have a vision of what the best might be, whether in sports, music, food, or anything else. Having always been around music, I have a technical understanding of how it should sound – the harmonies, melodies, rhythm. When I listen to songs, I'm attuned to these elements, though unconsciously at first. If something resonates with me, it brings me joy, a certain kind of fulfillment.

2.5 Learning from the Best

Reflecting on my younger years and my influences, sports and music were predominant. In sports, my heroes were Michael Jordan in basketball and Emmitt Smith in football, among others. This leads to the question: who do I compare myself to? How do I judge whether I'm good or not? When I say, "strive for greatness," it's not about being a perfectionist or seeking flawlessness. It's about not just doing something for the sake of doing it. If I'm going to do something, I want to ensure it's done properly, in a way that fully conveys my message.

2.6 Greatness Beyond Perfection

Striving for greatness means that in any aspect of life, I look at who the best in that field are, what they've achieved, what it took for them to get there, and their mindset. There's much to learn from those who weren't the best, just as there is from the champions. From the former, you learn what not to do, and from the latter, you learn what to emulate. But it's more than just emulating their actions; their success often comes from practice and repetition.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

When I talk about striving for greatness, it's not just about surface-level appearances. It's about ensuring that from the moment I release something to the world until the end of time, it stands on its own as great, not merely as part of a passing fad or style of the moment.

Greatness isn't confined to a specific thing or person. It's more about recognizing those individuals in the world whom I, and many others, consider great. Take the example of Michael Jordan. Many people argue that he's the greatest basketball player of all time, though this often sparks debates with mentions of LeBron, Kobe, or others. The point isn't to argue about who is the greatest, but to identify what common traits these great individuals share.

This reflection on greatness led me to understand the importance of discipline. These people, whom I admire and study through books and videos, shared a common dedication to their craft. They speak of giving everything to their pursuit – their blood, sweat, tears, mind, body, soul, and time. This dedication was focused on being the best version of themselves, whether it was Jordan aiming to be the best basketball player or Tupac striving to be the best rapper.

2.7 The Legacy of Greatness

Many of these individuals are considered legends or greats, and some have been gone for years, yet they are still talked about today. That's what I mean by greatness. It requires putting everything – heart and soul – into what you do. If I'm not giving it my all, then it's not worth doing. Greatness, in this sense, is about total commitment and the relentless pursuit of excellence in one's chosen field or endeavor.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.8 Commitment to the Craft

When I was younger, I admit I just wasted time, doing things merely for fun. Now that I'm older, I engage in activities with a purpose, and if that purpose is to have fun, then I fully embrace that enjoyment. To me, greatness is more than an achievement; it's a way of being, thinking, doing, and acting. When you genuinely embody these qualities, it becomes evident to others, and they recognize and label you as great. It requires telling yourself, "I strive to be great," and pursuing that aspiration.

2.9 Finding One's Unique Style

This led me to the realization that I wanted to achieve greatness in my own unique way, style, and realm. I didn't want to be seen as a 'false prophet' of greatness, imitating or copying others. This mentality, ingrained in me from sports, carried over to my music. Initially, when I started making music, I had to find my own style. I remember creating a mix CD with about five songs, and someone commented that while they were good, they all sounded the same. That feedback was a turning point for me. It made me realize that I had to be better, not just as an artist, but as a lyricist and a writer. I needed to ensure variety and versatility in my work.

This realization made me focus on becoming the best songwriter I could be. I never wanted to hear again that my songs lacked diversity or depth. It wasn't about striving for perfection but about being intentional in how I presented my music. I aimed to create not just good music, but great music – the kind that people would listen to in their car and remember as classic hits. My definition of greatness may differ from yours, but to me, greatness is a mindset. It's about being the creator of my life and my circumstances, crafting my path with intention and purpose.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.10 Spiritual Alignment and Creation

I was raised in the church, which focused more on religious teachings, specifically about Jesus. However, my journey to spirituality is different from this religious upbringing. By "spiritual," I mean that I began to believe in things I couldn't yet see and to trust more in my intuition and feelings. It was a logical decision: if my mind, body, and spirit all felt aligned with a decision, I would follow that path. Sometimes this approach led to enjoyable experiences, and other times it didn't. But in retrospect, I can connect the dots, learn from these experiences, and understand why I needed to go through them.

When I talk about understanding that you are the creator of your experiences, I'm connecting my own dots to make sense of my life. This isn't to say that this perspective must apply to everyone; it's simply my interpretation based on my experiences. From growing up in the church and reading the Bible, to moving out at 19 and navigating street life, I've seen how I made it through situations that others did not. My understanding is that I survived because I always viewed each phase as a temporary experience, not as a permanent state.

2.11 Navigating Life's Journey

From kindergarten to the 7th grade, I changed schools almost every year. This constant change taught me to adapt to new environments without getting too attached. I never settled into the idea that a particular place was my permanent setting. This mindset carried into my adult life – understanding that each place and moment is temporary, and whoever is with me in that moment, we are there together. And if I move on and they don't, I'll find others in the new place, and we'll share that experience together. This perspective of fluidity and adaptability has been a significant part of my journey and understanding of life.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.12 Authenticity and Self-Discovery

It's both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, you never really get to settle down and call one place home. On the other, you become adept at dealing with different people and personalities. This requires becoming very observant to know when to engage in a conversation, how to fit in, and when to stay out of it, especially when you're not welcome. From a young age, I was highly observant and would often have conversations with myself. Society often labels self-talk as a sign of insanity, so I kept it hidden. But these internal dialogues helped me think through various situations, so when I experienced them, I often had an idea of how things would unfold.

2.13 Writing One's Own Story

As a kid, and then as an adult, I began to realize that many things I had thought to myself were coming true in some form. I recognized that my experiences in the streets, good or bad, were a result of my own choices and desires. In those moments, I wanted to excel, to be the best, whether in illicit activities or sports. It wasn't about competition or being better than others; it was about meeting my own standard of greatness. However, as a child, I couldn't articulate this. My inability to explain my thoughts often led adults to see me as rebellious or unwilling to follow rules.

The desire for an explanation – to understand the reasoning behind actions – was often met with dismissive responses like "do as you're told" from my parents, or "do what I say or you're out of the game" from coaches. As a child, I conceded, internalizing that perhaps I was wrong. This suppression prevented me from being my true self.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.14 The Power of Choice and Creation

Ultimately, it's not about changing who you are; it's about discovering and embracing your true self, regardless of others' beliefs or support. The journey is about finding your authenticity and living it fully, whether others understand or believe in you.

2.15 Living as a Creator

I believe it's my spirit that often puts me at odds with societal norms or the established rules. When people present rules, I naturally question them, asking why they exist. However, often, they don't offer an explanation, simply stating that's how things are done. This inclination towards questioning and understanding is a part of being a creator. Regardless of what I've been told, I've always listened to myself, or at least conversed with myself internally, even if I didn't act on those thoughts. I've always known what feels right or wrong for me, not necessarily in a moral sense, but in terms of what resonates with my soul. Some things don't align with my physical or spiritual wellbeing, and I recognize the truth when my mind, body, and spirit are in harmony, in a state of flow where I don't have to force things.

2.16 Rediscovering Childhood Beliefs

Even when I lived out of character, I was eventually guided back to the right path, which largely involved sticking to my beliefs. The beliefs I held as a child remained; I just learned how to express them better and communicate my feelings, a skill honed through life experiences. I've realized that following others' instructions without question isn't working for me, and in fact, it's detrimental. I've followed their advice, and now I'm choosing my own path.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.17 The Cost of Choosing Your Own Path

However, it's important to understand that choosing this path can lead to losing support, whether financial, physical, or emotional. People often withdraw their support when you stop conforming to their expectations. This is what I mean when I say greatness is a mindset. It's about committing to your goals, regardless of whether others help you. It's about being determined to achieve your ambitions, no matter what it takes.

2.18 The Challenges of Youth and Maturity

When I was young, I found it challenging and felt a lot of pressure. But now that I'm older, I understand that this is what it takes. If you're not ready for this kind of pressure, you can follow the prescribed path – go to college as your mother wishes, rely on her for financial support, and let her take care of your basic needs like laundry and cooking. Alternatively, you can follow your own path, which often means lacking physical support from others.

2.19 Thriving in Independence

This realization came to me when I noticed that, despite the lack of physical support, I was still making it. I was thriving, achieving, and accomplishing my goals. Even during tough times, I knew things would get better. This perspective reflects to my childhood experiences of moving from school to school. I learned to view each situation as temporary. If I didn't like it, I knew I'd be somewhere else the next year; if I did like it, I savored it, knowing it wouldn't last.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.20 Commitment to Excellence

Now, whatever I do, I aim for greatness. I give it my all, my whole self. I want my actions and creations to reflect me, to embody my essence and effort. This understanding has shaped my approach to life and my pursuits, emphasizing the importance of authenticity and commitment in everything I do.

2.21 From Luck to Spirituality

Believing in things that I couldn't see meant accepting that sometimes mysterious things happen, often working in my favor. These events don't always have a physical explanation. Sometimes, it's as simple as a stranger offering a life-changing recommendation or taking a wrong turn and discovering something transformative. I often found myself in the right place at the right time, unexpectedly, leading to positive changes in my life. When I was younger, I used to attribute these occurrences to luck, thinking I was just fortunate. But as I've grown older, my belief in luck has evolved into a sense of spirituality or the feeling of miraculous forces at play.

2.22 The Impact of Split-Second Decisions

Often, it's those split-second decisions – turning right instead of left, hesitating when I usually wouldn't – that have significantly influenced my life. It's about those moments when a different choice leads to avoiding a potential accident or when a well-laid plan doesn't work out, but the resulting situation is even better than what I had envisioned. Over time, I've come to anticipate that things will work out better than I could have imagined.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.23 The Essence of True Greatness

To me, greatness is a blend of skill, will, work ethic, mindset, and ability. It requires a harmonious combination of all these elements. If one is missing, the result may not reach the level of greatness. This is a fact of life. Everyone has their own perceptions – what resonates as a great song for one person might just be an ordinary tune for another, or even become a lifelong anthem for someone else. Greatness, therefore, is subjective and multifaceted, deeply connected to personal experiences and interpretations.

2.24 Shaping Reality Through Imagination

Drawing from my experiences in church, learning about God, reading the Bible, and surviving various life challenges on the streets, I've developed a certain understanding. In the Bible, it's said, "In the beginning, there was the Word," and it describes how God envisioned and then created the world, ending in the command, "Let there be light." In church, we are taught that we are created in the image and likeness of God. This led me to a realization: if God is the Creator, and we are made in His image, then we too are meant to create.

2.25 Embracing the Creator Within

God created heaven and earth through words and thoughts. Similarly, as a human being, I possess imagination. I can close my eyes, envision images in darkness, and then bring these visions to life. I open my eyes, write down my ideas, and develop strategies, systems, and routines to achieve my goals, thereby bringing them into existence. This is what I mean by being a creator. I believe that I am actively shaping my life.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.26 Shaping Reality with Imagination

As a child attending church, my grandmother would often say, "God knows everything you're doing before you do it," which made me think my life was predestined, that whatever was going to happen was already written. However, as I've grown and experienced more of life, my belief has evolved. I now believe that our story is written as we live it. I am convinced that I was created to be something, to actively participate in the unfolding of my life's narrative, rather than simply following a predetermined path. This belief in being a creator shapes my approach to life, emphasizing the power of imagination, thought, and action in shaping my reality.

Since I believe I was created to be something specific, I possess certain qualities that others might not have, as they were created for different purposes. However, I now understand that just because I was created to be something doesn't mean I'm confined to that path. It suggests that if I choose to be something, I can pursue that path, which is essentially set out for me. Alternatively, if I want to be something different, I can, but it may not be easy, as it diverges from my original design.

2.27 Reflecting on Strengths and Flaws

I feel like I am writing my own story as I go along. I reflect on my traits, recognizing both my strengths and what I perceive as flaws. I ask myself how I can improve, how to embrace and use these flaws to my advantage. By studying and understanding myself, recognizing my likes and dislikes, I can make changes. For instance, if I feel I am too skinny and want to be bigger, I might lift weights. Conversely, if I feel I am too big and want to slim down, I might adopt a healthier lifestyle or a regimen that promotes weight loss.

CHAPTER 2: STRIVING FOR GREATNESS AND NOTHING LESS

2.28 Creating Your Vision and Reality

This approach isn't just about physical attributes but extends to all aspects of life. My philosophy is to create a vision in my mind, open my eyes, and dedicate myself to making that vision a reality. It's about taking control of my narrative and shaping my life according to my desires and aspirations, using my natural and developed abilities to their fullest potential.

2.29 Music as a Vehicle of Life Experiences

My creations in music involve translating the experiences of my life into beats and lyrics that convey the emotions I've felt. My hope is that others can find something valuable in my music, something that helps them become the best or at least a better version of themselves. I aim for my music to inspire others to strive for their goals, drawing strength and insight from my experiences and words.

2.30 The Spirit of True Greatness

Striving for greatness, to me, means moving beyond just playing around and committing to making a significant impact. I don't believe anyone is inherently greater than anyone else. True greatness, in my view, is about being authentically yourself. It's about aligning what you say with how you feel and your actions. Being genuine, consistent, and standing firm in your truth – that is what constitutes greatness. It's not about comparing oneself to others but about realizing and embracing your own unique identity and journey. This alignment and authenticity in thoughts, feelings, and actions are what I strive for in my music and in life.

CHAPTER 2: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 2: Reflective questions

1. Describe an experience where you found yourself performing at a peak level with seemingly effortless ability. What did this reveal about your potential?

How can you more consistently access this 'zone' in your personal or professional endeavors?

2. Who are your role models, and what specific qualities in them do you aspire to emulate in your journey towards greatness?

How do you use self-assessment to measure your progress against the aspiring standards set by those you admire?

3. What kind of lasting impact or legacy are you committed to leaving through your endeavors, and how does this shape your daily actions?

Describe a time when your full dedication to a project, idea, or cause significantly influenced its outcome.

CHAPTER 2: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 2: Action guide

Step 1: Define Your Personal Greatness

Specific: Clearly define what personal greatness means to you. This might involve qualities you wish to develop or achievements you aspire to.

Measurable: Set criteria for measuring progress towards this greatness, such as milestones or specific behaviors.

Achievable: Ensure your definition is challenging yet achievable given your current situation.

Relevant: Confirm that this pursuit aligns with your core values and long-term objectives.

Time-bound: Set a timeline for achieving your definition of personal greatness, with milestones along the way.

Step 2: Cultivate Dedication

Specific: Choose a specific project or area of your life to apply relentless dedication.

Measurable: Track your daily or weekly efforts and progress in this area.

Achievable: Set realistic expectations for what dedication looks like in this context.

Relevant: Ensure this effort is directly contributing to your larger goal of personal greatness.

Time-bound: Establish a clear timeline for this dedicated effort, like three months.

CHAPTER 2: ACTION GUIDE

Step 3: Engage in Self-Discovery Activities

Specific: Plan activities that encourage self-discovery, such as journaling, meditation, or trying new hobbies.

Measurable: Set a frequency for these activities, like journaling three times a week.

Achievable: Choose activities that fit into your schedule and lifestyle.

Relevant: Make sure these activities are helping you learn more about yourself and guiding you towards your definition of greatness.

Time-bound: Commit to these activities for a set period, like six months.

Step 4: Commit to Your Passions

Specific: Pinpoint your passions and commit time to them regularly.

Measurable: Schedule specific times for engaging in these passions.

Achievable: Start with a commitment that fits easily into your current lifestyle.

Relevant: Choose passions that contribute to your overall sense of fulfillment and personal greatness.

Time-bound: Set a goal to consistently engage in your passions over a period, such as every week for six months.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING OVERVIEW

Chapter 3: Making something out of nothing overview

Chapter 3 is all about turning tough times into chances to grow, learn, and do something amazing. It's a rallying cry for anyone who's ever felt stuck or like they're starting from scratch. This chapter teaches you that with enough belief in yourself, hard work, and the drive to keep learning, you can make something incredible out of nothing. It's a celebration of creativity, showing you how to see your challenges as opportunities to think outside the box and innovate. You'll learn that success isn't just about what you're born with but also about what you can learn and how you can adapt. This chapter is an inspiring reminder that no matter where you're starting from, you have the power to change your life for the better. It encourages you to keep pushing forward, constantly grow, and never underestimate your ability to make a difference in your own life.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

Chapter 3: Making something out of nothing

3.1 The Quest for a Better Way

Reflecting now, I realize that during my struggles, I was constantly searching for a better way. I didn't know exactly how, but I was certain that the life I was leading wasn't my destined path. I recognized that creating music – making beats and writing lyrics that were poetic and told stories – was my natural gift. I knew that developing my skills in music and figuring out how to monetize it was key to taking control of my life.

3.2 Early Work Experiences and Hardships

My journey with music began at 18, but the real epiphany came when I was 30. In the intervening years, I alternated between working and not working, sometimes accepting any job I could find. I remember working for as little as \$50 a day, not per hour, for 10-hour shifts. It might sound unbelievable, but it's true. I worked at a place called Labor Work, where they used people as day laborers through contracts with various companies. At that time, I believed it was my best option, and I did it for a year or two, maybe longer. It just became a part of my daily routine.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

3.3 Lessons from Determination and Perseverance

I would catch the city bus at 4:00 in the morning, taking two different buses with a transfer in between. Arriving around 5:00, I'd wait in a large room with wooden benches, brick walls, concrete floors, and windows that didn't open. The work typically didn't start until 8:00 or 9:00 AM, so there was a lot of waiting, sometimes in a room with over 50 other people, hoping your name would be called for a job that day. If not, you could come back for the next shift starting at 2:00 PM. Often, I only had enough money to get there, so if I wasn't selected in the morning, I'd wait all day for the afternoon shift. It was a tough experience, but at the time, it seemed like the only possible option for me.

3.4 Finding Humanity in Unlikely Places

Even back then, life had its mysterious ways. Among the people at the labor work, there were those who looked out for me. They would buy me food without hesitation, even though they had as little as I did. Looking back, I see the beauty in that – people with next to nothing sharing with me, even though they had no obligation to help. They could have easily taken advantage of me, but they didn't. I realize now that it's about recognizing genuine people – 'real recognize real.' I treated them the same way; if I had something, they had it too.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

3.5 From Modest Beginnings to Ambitious Goals

This is what I mean when I talk about making something out of nothing. I went from earning \$50 a day to \$150 a day, and then I started thinking about how to make \$1000 a day. It's about developing skills to earn whatever amount I desire. By 'making something out of nothing,' I mean more than just working to pay bills and barely making ends meet. After all the hard work, I was left with nothing but body aches from physical labor. But now, 'making something out of nothing' means entering the studio with a blank slate, creating a beat, adding lyrics, and putting it out there for the world, assigning it value.

3.6 Transforming Pain into Creative Expression

Another aspect of 'making something out of nothing' is profiting from my pain, from all the failures and feelings of going nowhere. It's about turning those experiences into something tangible – starting businesses, writing books, coaching, and teaching. It's about achieving these things without any external support or encouragement, still pushing through and succeeding despite the challenges. This is the essence of creating something significant from what initially seemed like nothing.

3.7 Embracing the Belief in Positive Outcomes

When I talk about making something out of nothing, I mean it quite literally. There were times when my gas tank was nearly empty, running on fumes, but I held onto the belief that I would make it. I would tell myself, no matter what, even if it meant walking to the nearest gas station, I was going to make it.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

Often, my biggest challenges were a lack of knowledge, resources, or not knowing how to access those resources. Despite not knowing the exact path, I kept telling myself to keep going. Sometimes it was hope, sometimes a wish, but when I started truly believing that something positive was going to happen, that things would work out in my favor, they began to.

3.8 Developing a Mindset of Resilience

This belief wasn't just wishful thinking; it was a mindset shift. It was about cultivating a strong belief in myself and the journey I was on, despite the uncertainties and challenges. This mindset of perseverance and belief in the face of adversity is what I mean by making something out of nothing – it's about pushing through the seemingly impossible and creating opportunities where none appear to exist.

3.9 Navigating Uncertainty with Planning and Study

Living with the belief that something positive will happen, but not knowing when, creates an uncertain, "iffy" situation. It's about knowing change is coming but lacking control over its timing. However, this uncertainty diminishes when you start studying, planning, writing things down, and revising until your plans make logical sense. That's when the situation becomes less "iffy."

3.10 The Importance of Documenting Goals

In my journey, it wasn't just about believing in something; it was also about documenting my plans and aspirations. Months or even a year later, I would find what I had written and realize that I was still actively pursuing those plans. Discovering that I was following through on my written plans was immensely encouraging. It validated that I was on the right path, sticking to what made sense when I was in a clear state of mind.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

3.11 Balancing Belief with Active Effort

However, there can be a downside to this approach. Sometimes, being confident that something will happen can lead to complacency. There were times when I relied too much on the belief that things would work out, and I didn't put in enough effort. That's not a good approach. What I've learned is to do my best and then let life handle the rest. This means conducting thorough research, working hard, and training diligently. When life does offer that extra bit of luck or a divine gift that's beyond explanation, combining it with my efforts results in something truly great. It's about finding the balance between self-initiative and being open to external blessings or opportunities.

3.12 Intentional Creation: Beyond Natural Talent

Now, when I make something out of nothing, it's an intentional process. It always begins with a blank canvas, but it's now guided by a clear understanding of my skills and abilities. This awareness allows me to create freely within my space, without second-guessing myself or seeking external validation. Although I've become adept at creating with minimal resources, I aim to use this ability to my advantage.

3.13 Resourcefulness: A Double-Edged Sword

It's one thing to create something out of nothing when you have resources; it's entirely different when you lack resources and must strain your brain to figure out how to make something from nothing. Often, numerous attempts lead nowhere, but occasionally, you get it right. Over time, through repetition and experience, you improve.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

3.14 The Need for Training and Enhancement of Talent

I've realized that natural talent can only take me so far. This was evident even during my high school sports days. I might have been better than some kids in junior year, but by senior year, those who had access to extra training like speed training or jump training would surpass me. As a youngster, I lacked the resources for that extra training – those were luxuries. My training was playing sports in the street, from morning till night, on concrete. That was how I learned and initially became better than other kids. But as we grew up and they accessed additional training, they advanced beyond me.

This disparity in resources highlighted the importance of not just natural talent, but also the access to and utilization of additional resources and training to enhance and build upon that talent.

I realized the same thing when I started making music. It wasn't that others were inherently better than me; they simply had the knowledge or training I lacked. The only thing separating us was this difference in expertise. Despite this, I still ranked highly in everything I did, consistently making something out of nothing. However, at the point in my life when I decided to take music seriously, I recognized that I didn't want to continue relying solely on my natural talent. I had seen in other areas of my life how this approach led to others surpassing me.

3.15 Choosing Education Over Traditional Paths

Realizing the need for proper training, I considered going to college for music. In my 30s, though, I couldn't afford the tuition out of pocket, even as I juggled bills and work like driving for Uber. I investigated financial aid, but even with the assistance I was eligible for, it was still beyond my financial reach.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

3.16 Online Learning and Self-Directed Growth

So, returning to the theme of making something out of nothing, I turned to online courses, which were much more affordable than traditional college. The challenge was that the education was fragmented; one course might cover beat making, another mixing, another mastering. I had to invest my time and resources in piecing together this learning. I entered this phase with the mindset that without additional training, I wouldn't progress. But with it, I felt there would be nothing that could stop me. This belief in the power of education and self-improvement was a pivotal step in my journey, showing a commitment to evolving beyond natural talent through dedicated learning and practice.

3.17 Embracing the Journey of Self-Improvement

People already liked my music and connected with it, but what they didn't realize was that I didn't really know what I was doing. I was creating songs out of a pure desire to be creative, but without formal training. I had never played any instruments nor been taught how to write a song. This is what I mean by making something out of nothing being both a gift and a limitation. I had been relying on this ability, thinking it was sufficient. But it wasn't it was just a start.

3.18 Belief in Divine Guidance and Persistence

I believe in a higher power, which I like to refer to as the Creator. I felt like the Creator was telling me, "We won't leave you stranded; we didn't bring you this far just to abandon you." This belief became a mantra for me – that I hadn't come this far for everything to end now. There had to be more to my story.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING

3.19 Understanding the True Essence of Creativity

Creating something out of nothing is a valuable skill, but it can also be a hindrance. It's effective when you understand the basics and foundations of what you're doing. Then, you can innovate and develop your projects. However, if you lack foundational knowledge, you're essentially creating without direction. It's like baking a cake: if you have all the ingredients but don't know the right measurements, it won't turn out right. But if you know the correct measurements and understand the ingredients, you can experiment and add your twist, because you're building on a solid foundation.

3.20 The Will to Innovate and Overcome Limitations

Often when starting something new, as I did and as many others do, you begin by creating something out of nothing. This process calls upon your spirit and soul, and especially your will, even if you initially lack skill. If you're aiming to develop a skill, it requires the will to endure and process every emotion to keep moving forward. Making something out of nothing can be likened to not having all the right ingredients for a cake but knowing the measurements and understanding suitable substitutes. Knowledge is invaluable here, and ignorance certainly isn't bliss.

This realization led me to understand that I needed to learn through my own experiences, not just follow instructions given to me. There's a significant difference between creating something out of nothing and simply accepting whatever comes out of it, versus creating something out of nothing and achieving amazing results. The former might suffice in some cases, but the latter is often where true innovation and satisfaction lie. It's about actively seeking knowledge and understanding, experimenting, and learning from the process to turn limited resources into something remarkable.

CHAPTER 3: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 3: Reflective questions

1. Reflect on a moment when you realized your current path wasn't fulfilling. What steps have you taken since to align your life more closely with your unique talents?

How has your search for a purposeful path influenced your understanding of yourself and your capabilities?

2. Recall a time when you had to endure a particularly tough situation. What did this experience teach you about the value of perseverance?

How do you approach adversity now, and how has your past shaped this approach?

3. Can you remember an instance where you found unexpected support or kindness in a difficult time? How did this impact your view of human connection?

How do you pay forward the kindness you have received in your life, especially in your hardest moments?

4. How do you approach self-improvement, and what daily practices do you follow to commit to your growth?

Reflect on your journey of self-improvement. What have been the biggest challenges and rewards?

CHAPTER 3: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 3: Action guide

Step 1: Cultivate Self-Belief

Specific: Identify specific areas where self-doubt typically arises.

Measurable: Track instances where you successfully counter self-doubt with positive affirmations or actions.

Achievable: Start with small affirmations or challenges that you feel confident overcoming.

Relevant: Choose areas that directly relate to your major life goals or challenges.

Time-bound: Aim to reduce self-doubt in these areas over a period of three months.

Step 2: Develop Persistence

Specific: Select a specific goal or challenge that requires persistence.

Measurable: Set milestones to measure your persistence, such as daily or weekly tasks.

Achievable: Ensure your goal is challenging but realistic, given your current resources and abilities.

Relevant: Choose a goal that aligns with your larger life ambitions.

Time-bound: Set a deadline for achieving this goal, allowing enough time for setbacks and learning.

CHAPTER 3: ACTION GUIDE

Step 3: Pursue Continuous Learning

Specific: Identify a skill or area of knowledge you want to develop.

Measurable: Track your learning progress through milestones or completed learning modules.

Achievable: Start with beginner-level materials or courses and gradually progress.

Relevant: Ensure the skill or knowledge area is relevant to your personal or professional growth.

Time-bound: Set a timeframe for achieving proficiency, such as six months or a year.

Step 4: Embrace a Positive Mindset

Specific: Focus on a particular aspect of your life where a positive mindset can make a significant difference.

Measurable: Keep a daily journal to document your thoughts and how you reframed negative thoughts positively.

Achievable: Practice replacing one negative thought with a positive one each day.

Relevant: Choose aspects that directly impact your well-being or career.

Time-bound: Commit to this practice for at least two months to observe changes in your mindset.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB OVERVIEW

Chapter 4: Your ideas are worth more than your job overview

Chapter 4 opens your eyes to the real worth of your ideas and how they can be more valuable than any traditional job you might have. It's a call to see yourself not just as someone who does what they're told for a paycheck, but as a creator who can bring unique thoughts and innovations to life. This chapter pushes you to recognize the potential of your own intellectual property and shows you how turning your ideas into reality can lead to financial freedom and personal satisfaction beyond what any 9-to-5 job offers. You'll learn the importance of personal development, discipline, and knowledge as you navigate the path from dreaming to doing. It's all about transforming how you view your work, understanding the true value of your creations, and taking steps towards making your ideas pay off. This chapter is a powerful reminder that your thoughts and creativity are assets that can shape your future, encouraging you to take control and craft a life where you're not just working for money, but making your money work for you.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

Chapter 4: Your ideas are worth more than your job

4.1 The Power of Intellectual Property

I always knew that music was more than just an art form for me; it was a gateway. The key understanding was the concept of intellectual property. It dawned on me that people are often willing to pay more for an idea than for physical labor. My ideas are equal to equity or property; every time I develop a new idea and release it, it has the potential to generate income for years from just that single concept. The exciting part is that I have a multitude of ideas. However, an idea remains just an idea until action is taken to bring it to life.

4.2 Transition from Disorganization to Purpose

Initially, as just an artist, my approach to life was carefree and disorganized, characterized by drinking, smoking, late nights, early mornings, poor health, and bad habits. My mindset was not focused on high value. Now, I understand that I am the embodiment of value. I must invest in myself, uphold certain standards, and live with purpose. Living differently means embracing a holistic approach to life, where I recognize the worth of my ideas and the necessity of discipline and order to bring them to fruition.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

4.3 Redefining Mornings: From Indulgence to Focus

You know the saying, "It's not what you say, it's how you say it." I think this holds true in many aspects of life, but it's also about not just what you do, but how you do it. I used to start my mornings with shots straight from the bottle. In my mind, as an artist and a rapper, I was living the lifestyle associated with that image – smoking weed, drinking all day. If I was at work, I'd smoke during my lunch break. If I was off, I'd immediately go for a drink. My life revolved around physical pleasure and fun. A job provided me with the means for my extracurricular activities, and that was all I cared about. With no kids, it was just about enjoying myself.

4.4 The Epiphany of Ownership in Music

But eventually, I realized I had nothing to show for this lifestyle – no savings, no house, no car of my own. I was renting an apartment and had car payments. In the realm of music, I didn't initially understand what people meant by owning your masters. I heard artists talk about it but didn't grasp its significance. However, as I began studying and learning, I understood that owning your masters means having full rights to the final composition. This ownership allows you to do whatever you want with it – keep it, sell it to other artists, use it in commercials or TV shows. Structuring your deals properly can result in ongoing monthly royalties, much like receiving a paycheck from a job.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

4.5 Understanding the Music Industry and Masters Ownership

Then the question arose: Why doesn't everyone own their masters? This is where record labels and other entities come into play. They might offer an advance in exchange for ownership rights to the masters. Without understanding the value of these rights, many artists unintentionally give them away. This realization was a turning point in my understanding of the music industry and the importance of knowledge and strategic planning in managing my career.

4.6 Exploring Long-Term Value and Legacy

That's when I began to probe into research, trying to understand the longevity and value of owning a master recording. I learned that the rights to a master recording last for the lifetime of the creator plus 70 years. This realization made me see the long-term value and potential for legacy. It motivated me to figure out how to retain the most control and ownership over my work.

4.7 The Journey to Independence and Holistic Approach

This led to the idea of becoming an independent artist, making my music, releasing it, and collecting royalties. However, beyond music, I started to reconsider how I was using my time. Time is the one resource we can't regain; money can be earned back, relationships can be mended, but time once spent is gone forever. I questioned why I was dedicating so much of my time for relatively little financial return. Then, I revisited the idea of college, not in the traditional sense but in acquiring the knowledge needed to produce, distribute, and profit from high-quality music.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

4.8 Diversifying Monetization of Talents

Exploring the various ways to monetize my talents, I considered beat-making, songwriting, engineering, recording, mixing, mastering, and performing at shows. Another avenue is sync licensing, which involves leasing songs to TV shows, commercials, and movies. However, the path that resonated with me the most was teaching.

4.9 Teaching as a Path of Fulfillment

For me, teaching involves writing books, creating courses, and working with groups or individuals. My goal is to help others develop their skills and mindset to become independent artists in their preferred area, whether it's beat-making, songwriting, or managing the entire process of creating and profiting from their music. This approach to my career aligns with my values and offers a fulfilling way to use my time and talents.

4.10 Contrasting Creativity with Traditional Employment

The beauty of having control over your creations is, as I mentioned, the simple contrast to traditional employment. When you work a regular job, you're told to come in for a set number of days and hours each week, and you'll be paid a predetermined amount. However, with your own ideas, like making a song, the potential for income is much more varied. You can earn from social media, physical distribution, and numerous other avenues. A single song can be transformed into lyrics, a book, a tutorial, or other instructional materials. Once you write a book and publish it digitally, it can be resold continuously, around the clock.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

4.11 Realizing the Limitations of a Conventional Job

This led me to think about the limitations of a conventional job where you're only allowed to work, say, 8 hours a day. What if I created a product, like a book, and even if I sold it cheaply, if I sold one book every hour, I could still make more than at my job, without sacrificing all my time. The realization hit me: by working a job, I was trading my time and energy for what someone else deemed it was worth, whether that be \$20, \$10, or even \$50 an hour. Why was I letting someone else dictate my value?

4.12 Cultivating Self-Belief and Understanding Value

The answer was a lack of self-belief. I didn't fully believe in my skills or myself. Instead of taking the risk to start my own business and operate independently, I chose the safer route: following instructions, accepting the paycheck, and returning each week because the pay was just enough to get me through to the next. This understanding was a pivotal moment for me, highlighting the importance of self-belief and the potential of investing in and relying on my own skills and ideas.

4.13 From Consumer to Creator

It's true that I could have invested the money I earned, but I didn't know about investing in the stock market. All I understood was working and being a consumer. This led me to consider how I could shift from merely consuming to also being a creator or contributor. From then on, I made up my mind that any job that didn't involve creating something for myself and forging my own path wouldn't work for me. I had been working various jobs since I was 15, and now, at 30, I was still facing the same issues of not advancing and not being happy.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

I continued to work, but I was firmly convinced that no job would ever pay me enough or provide the life and experiences I desired as much as my own ideas could. People tend to expect to pay less for basic labor because it's widely available. But when it comes to a skilled craftsman whose price is significantly higher than average, people are still willing to pay because they recognize the value they're receiving.

4.14 Finding Value in Unique Perspectives

This realization led me to question what valuable thing I had to offer. For me, it was the way I think and view the world. I concluded that my value lies in my perspective and perception, in how I see and interpret things. Understanding this was a turning point. It helped me recognize that while labor might be cheap, unique ideas and perspectives can hold immense value. My goal became to leverage my unique outlook and experiences, translating them into something tangible and valuable.

4.15 Recognizing a Natural Gift of Compassion

No matter the job I held or even in sports, people frequently sought my advice. This became so common that I started to wonder why people were always drawn to me. For instance, when I rode the city metro bus, strangers would often end up sharing their entire life stories with me, despite my initial reluctance to listen. This made me realize that I naturally attract people who want to talk and share their experiences with me.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

4.16 Turning Natural Talent into Opportunity

This realization led me to think about the value I could offer. People naturally approached me for conversation and advice, with some even jokingly suggesting they could have paid me instead of a psychologist. Hearing this repeatedly sparked an idea: if people are naturally drawn to me and willing to share their stories, then perhaps I could offer a service or product in exchange for my advice. If I could create something valuable to offer in these interactions and set a price, I believed people would be willing to pay for it.

This thought process helped me see that what I once considered a curse – my ability to attract and listen to others' stories – was a blessing. It provided me with an opportunity to create a service or product based on my natural ability to engage with and advise people. This revelation was about harnessing my innate talents and experiences, turning them into something beneficial for both me and others.

4.17 Embracing a Natural Ability to Connect

I came to realize that people naturally approach me and open about their lives, often expressing surprise at how much they've shared with a stranger. My usual response is that I won't divulge their secrets – often, I'm as surprised as they are that they felt comfortable enough to share with me. This realization led me to see it as a natural gift. If I could combine this ability with music, offering a service, product, or some form of value, I believed people would be willing to pay for it. They had already indicated as much, but it's one thing for it to be an idea and another for it to become reality.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

4.18 The Challenge of Transitioning to New Paths

The journey from where I am now to where I want to be is critical, but it's not the most challenging part. The real difficulty lies in the transition, the steps required to achieve that end goal. This middle phase can be the hardest, filled with uncertainty and self-doubt, which can lead to hesitation and negative thoughts.

Now, I recognize my current position and have an idea of where I want to be, but the challenge lies in not knowing the exact path to get there. If you know the path, it becomes a matter of process and time. Tracking your progress, reflecting on where you started and how far you've come, can be incredibly affirming. It's about acknowledging your journey, understanding that it's a process, and giving yourself credit for the progress you've made.

4.19 Understanding the Value of Your Ideas

When I say something, I genuinely mean it. It's not about saying something because it sounds appealing. The statement "your ideas are worth more than your job" is, in fact, a profound truth. The question then becomes: How can I develop my ideas and the necessary skills to present a product or service effectively? If I can convey my message effectively, I should be able to generate income from it.

CHAPTER 4: YOUR IDEAS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR JOB

4.20 The Importance of Marketing and Audience Perception

However, even with a good service or product, if it's not marketed to the right audience, or if the target audience doesn't perceive it as valuable as you do, it still might not succeed. Success is always a blend of factors; it's never just one thing. While it's true that your ideas can be worth more than your job, great ideas alone aren't enough. They need to be acted upon, brought to life, and made valuable to others. Otherwise, they might not work. They could, but it's less likely without the right implementation and understanding of your market.

CHAPTER 4: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 4: Reflective questions

1. Consider your morning routine. How can transforming these initial hours set a positive tone for your health and productivity?

What changes can you implement to transition from indulgence to focus in your daily life?

2. Reflect on how your current or past jobs have constrained your abilities and potential. How can you overcome these limitations?

What steps can you take to realize and unleash your true value and potential outside of conventional job structures?

3. How do you develop self-belief, and how does this understanding of your personal value influence your career decisions?

What actions can you take to reinforce your self-reliance and realize your personal potential?

4. How can you shift from a consumer mindset to a creator mindset in your daily life?

What are the practical steps you can take to move towards financial independence and personal growth through creation?

5. Reflect on your unique perspectives. How can you leverage these to create value in your work or personal life?

What specific steps can you take to ensure that your unique voice and experiences are reflected and valued in your endeavors?

CHAPTER 4: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 4: Action guide

Step 1: Identify Your Unique Talents and Ideas

Specific: List down your unique skills, hobbies, or ideas that have potential for creative or intellectual property.

Measurable: Gauge your skill level or progress in each area.

Achievable: Focus on talents or ideas that you are passionate about and can realistically develop.

Relevant: Choose ideas that align with your interests and have potential market value.

Time-bound: Set a deadline to finalize your list and begin working on these ideas, like one month.

Step 2: Develop a Creator Mindset

Specific: Shift your mindset from consuming content to creating content.

Measurable: Track the time spent creating versus consuming each week.

Achievable: Start with short, manageable creation periods and gradually increase them.

Relevant: Ensure the content you create aligns with your skills and interests.

Time-bound: Aim to establish a creator routine within two months.

CHAPTER 4: ACTION GUIDE

Step 3: Acquire Necessary Knowledge and Skills

Specific: Identify the skills and knowledge needed to develop your ideas.

Measurable: Set learning milestones, such as completing specific courses or tutorials.

Achievable: Choose learning resources that match your current level and availability.

Relevant: Focus on education that directly enhances your ability to create and monetize your ideas.

Time-bound: Set a timeline for skill acquisition, like six months.

Step 4: Create a Strategic Plan for Monetization

Specific: Develop a detailed plan for how you will monetize your creative work or ideas.

Measurable: Include financial targets and milestones in your plan.

Achievable: Ensure your plan is realistic and aligns with your current capabilities and market demand.

Relevant: Your plan should focus on turning your specific talents and ideas into income.

Time-bound: Set a deadline to complete your plan and begin implementation, like three months.

Step 5: Discipline and Routine Establishment

CHAPTER 4: ACTION GUIDE

Specific: Establish a disciplined routine dedicated to creating and developing your ideas.

Measurable: Track daily or weekly hours spent on your creative endeavors.

Achievable: Start with a manageable routine that fits into your current lifestyle.

Relevant: Your routine should directly contribute to your goal of monetizing your ideas.

Time-bound: Aim to establish this routine fully within one month.

Step 6: Execute and Adapt Your Plan

Specific: Begin executing your monetization plan.

Measurable: Monitor your progress against the milestones and financial targets set in your plan.

Achievable: Adjust your strategies and expectations based on real-world feedback and results.

Relevant: Stay focused on activities that directly contribute to monetizing your ideas.

Time-bound: Set periodic review points, such as monthly or quarterly, to evaluate and adjust your plan.

Step 7: Embrace Continuous Learning and Growth

Specific: Continuously seek new knowledge and skills to enhance your creative work.

Measurable: Set goals for continuous improvement, like learning one new skill every quarter.

CHAPTER 4: ACTION GUIDE

Achievable: Choose growth opportunities that are attainable and beneficial to your creative endeavors.

Relevant: Focus on learning that enhances your ability to create, innovate, and monetize.

Time-bound: Commit to lifelong learning with regular review points for self-assessment.

CHAPTER 5: SIDE NOTE QUESTIONS TO THE READER OVERVIEW

Chapter 5: Side note questions to the reader overview

Chapter 5, "Side Note: Questions to the Reader," acts as a mirror held up to your life, asking you to look deeply into your actions, goals, and the legacy you want to leave behind. It's not just about what you're doing, but why you're doing it and who you're doing it for. These questions are meant to push you out of the comfort zone of just going through the motions and into a more purposeful way of living. They invite you to really think about the mark you want to leave on the world, how your creative work affects others, and whether you're living true to your values. It's a call to examine if your life aligns with your deepest desires and to make changes if it doesn't. This reflective journey is about more than just self-improvement; it's about crafting a life that's rich in meaning and impact. By engaging with these prompts, you're encouraged to live more intentionally, create with heart, and build a legacy that truly reflects who you are and what you believe in.

CHAPTER 5: SIDE NOTE QUESTIONS TO THE READER

Chapter 5: Side note questions to the reader

5.1 Reflecting on Legacy: Questions to Ponder

When I first started out, I heard a thought-provoking question on a podcast: "If you died today, what would you have to leave behind?" At that time, my answer was that I had nothing of physical value to leave behind. This realization led me to consider that the only legacy I could leave would be my thoughts, experiences, and the lessons I've learned in this lifetime. So, I decided that, at the very least, I could tell my own story. This way, if I'm not here to speak for myself, people will know the truth, and there won't be others speaking on my behalf.

Now, I pose that same question to you, the reader: If you died today, what would you have to leave behind? And the follow-up question: Is that enough for you?

5.2 The Importance of Legacy for Future Generations

For me, the answer lies in considering the next generation. While I don't have children of my own, I have many nieces and nephews, and I mentor kids. I realized that even if I couldn't do anything else, I could at least show them the mistakes I made and how these errors taught me to approach things correctly. For me, the "correct way" always involves having a meaningful reason or purpose. If your reasoning is strong enough, it becomes hard for anything to stop you. This concept of legacy, of leaving something meaningful behind, is what drives my actions and choices now.

CHAPTER 5: SIDE NOTE QUESTIONS TO THE READER

5.3 From Self-Development to Creating Music with Purpose

I titled my book series "Creating Music with Purpose," but it initially began as a personal self-development journey. As I read and listened to various sources, I took extensive notes, which eventually culminated in a substantial collection. I initially named this compilation "Living with Purpose." This title stemmed from the realization that every action should have a reason, especially since my previous carefree and unorganized approach to life had led to unhappiness.

5.4 Transitioning to Purposeful Music Creation

For a long time, I used these notes to guide my personal life. Then, I noticed how these principles translated into my music-making process. My approach to creating music became more structured and purposeful. This evolution led to the shift in focus from "Living with Purpose" to "Creating Music with Purpose." The idea was to live with intention and structure, enabling us to create music with purpose. When we create with purpose, we imbue our work with our experiences and emotions, providing authenticity and value.

5.5 The Power of Music to Connect and Heal

This approach is rooted in the belief that while as human beings we may share similar basic emotions, it's often challenging to express and share these feelings. Many people feel isolated with their emotions. However, if you possess the skill to articulate your emotions and share them with others, it resonates deeply when they find something that echoes their feelings. This connection through shared experiences and emotions is what gives music its true value and impact.

CHAPTER 5: SIDE NOTE QUESTIONS TO THE READER

5.6 The Evolution of Musical Intent and Impact

The ability to transform personal experiences into music that not only provides self-healing but also resonates and heals others is, to me, a form of beauty, a miracle, and one of life's unexplainable wonders. When I was going through tough experiences, I felt alone and used music as a therapeutic outlet. Surprisingly, it not only healed me but also had a healing effect on others who listened. This wasn't my original intent; initially, my music creation lacked a clear purpose.

5.7 Reflecting on Past Music and Current Purpose

In my earlier days, my music reflected the street lifestyle I was living. Looking back, I find that my old music doesn't represent who I am now. Back then, my creation process lacked a definitive purpose. It wasn't about inspiring others; it was more about having fun. While those old tracks might sound good and be danceable with clever lyrics, to me, they lack meaningful substance.

5.8 Creating Music with Intention and Influence

This realization brought me to the idea of creating with purpose. Now, when I make music, I'm conscious of the potential impact on others. I understand my ability to influence emotions through my art; what I feel when creating is often transmitted to the listener. My purpose has evolved. It's no longer just about having fun and crafting catchy lyrics. Instead, it's about educating, inspiring, entertaining, and still enjoying the process, but in a more structured and meaningful way. This change reflects a deeper understanding of my role as an artist and the power of music as a medium for connection and influence.

CHAPTER 5: SIDE NOTE QUESTIONS TO THE READER

5.9 Guiding Questions for Self-Reflection

Understand that this is a transition process on all levels, and it's about taking control of your life. With that in mind, I have some follow-up questions for you:

1. Live with purpose, so you can create with purpose. How are you living? Are you living right?
2. Are you taking the right actions to achieve your goals?
3. Do you have a clear goal in mind?
4. Consider the idea that your thoughts or ideas are worth more than your job. This involves transitioning from a worker mindset to seeing yourself as an artist who operates as a business.
5. Are you creating the lifestyle you desire?
6. What does it mean for you to let go of old habits, to unlearn and relearn?
7. Have you ever felt like going to work was killing your spirit? What skills can you learn to pay yourself more than what your job does?

CHAPTER 5: SIDE NOTE QUESTIONS TO THE READER

5.10 Encouraging Authenticity and Alignment

These questions are not meant to judge but to encourage self-analysis. This entire journey is about being honest with yourself. You may claim to want a certain lifestyle, but do you truly understand what it entails? Are you genuinely practicing what you preach, or are you just reciting what you've learned without real-life application? Have you experienced something, learned from it, and are now guiding others through similar experiences?

People can usually tell if you're not being genuine. The questions I pose are a way for you to self-reflect and ensure that your words and actions are in harmony. This alignment is crucial for authentic living and creating with purpose.

CHAPTER 5: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 5: Reflective questions

1. What do you want to be remembered for, and how are your current actions contributing to this legacy?

How do you define a meaningful life, and in what ways are you actively working to achieve that definition?

2. Reflect on the lessons you've learned from your mistakes. How can you share these to positively impact future generations?

What core values do you wish to pass on, and how can you actively mentor others to carry forward these principles?

3. Where in your life do you feel your actions and words are misaligned, and how can you address this inconsistency?

What steps can you take to live more authentically, ensuring that your lifestyle and decisions reflect your true self and values?

CHAPTER 5: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 5: Action guide

Step 1: Assess Your Current Path

Specific: Evaluate how your current lifestyle, career, and relationships align with your defined legacy.

Measurable: Create a self-assessment tool to rate alignment in different areas of your life.

Achievable: Be honest and realistic about where you currently stand in relation to your legacy goals.

Relevant: Focus on areas most important to your legacy.

Time-bound: Perform this assessment every six months.

Step 2: Implement Daily Actions Aligned with Goals

Specific: Identify daily actions that contribute to your legacy and authentic living.

Measurable: Keep a daily log of these actions.

Achievable: Actions should be small and manageable.

Relevant: Every action should have a clear connection to your larger goals.

Time-bound: Review your actions daily.

CHAPTER 5: ACTION GUIDE

Step 3: Regularly Reflect and Adjust

Specific: Regularly reflect on your progress towards your goals and legacy.

Measurable: Assess if your actions align with your set goals during these reflection periods.

Achievable: Reflection should be honest but constructive.

Relevant: Focus reflections on areas most crucial to your legacy.

Time-bound: Reflect at least monthly, adjusting your plans as necessary.

CHAPTER 6: CABLE MAN OVERVIEW

Chapter 6: Cable man overview

Chapter 6, "Cable Man," tells the story of moving from a regular job to thinking like a business owner, all from the viewpoint of someone who installs cable. This chapter is all about grabbing chances as they come, learning while doing the work, and looking for a steady place after moving around a lot. It shows how important it is to be able to adapt, learn quickly, and keep going when things get tough. This part of the book makes you think about how you handle changes in your work life, the mix of wanting new things but also wanting a place where you feel you belong. It's a real talk on the ups and downs of trying different jobs and finding what makes you happy and settled. "Cable Man" is a push to be open to changes, learn from everything, and aim for a life where you feel good about what you do and where you are.

CHAPTER 6: CABLE MAN

Chapter 6: Cable man

6.1 The Unplanned Exit: Recognizing the Signs

It was like that moment in a movie when the protagonist declares, "You can't fire me because I quit!" That's essentially what I did, though it wasn't planned or intentional. It was more the culmination of a buildup that I sensed was imminent. By this time, I had been in the same job for a while and had seen numerous colleagues come and go. So, I could recognize the signs of when it was time for someone to leave.

6.2 Life on the Road: A Cable Man's Journey

My career for about 13 years was as a home phone, cable, and internet installer. For eight of those years, I worked on the road, traveling from state to state. The company would put us up in hotels and cover our per diem, which was honestly great. Every new state brought fresh experiences and a change of scenery.

6.3 The Unexpected Path: Becoming a Cable Installer

But here comes life, with its unexpected twists. I never planned on becoming a cable man. At the time, I was working as a cashier at a liquor store. One of our regular customers would come in daily, buying either a 12-pack or sometimes a 24-pack of beer. Over time, we struck up casual conversations, gradually building a friendly relationship.

CHAPTER 6: CABLE MAN

6.4 From Casual Conversations to Career Change

Then, one weekend, he came in looking particularly happy, accompanied by his girlfriend. He was excited about his recent shopping spree, proudly showing off a new jacket. What really caught my attention, though, was when he mentioned he had just received a \$1600 paycheck for one week's work. At the time, I was earning minimum wage, so this figure seemed astronomical. I inquired about his job, and he revealed he was a cable installer and one of the highest earners at his company. He encouraged me to apply for a position there, assuring me he would help me get hired.

That evening, I went online and filled out the application. To my surprise, the next day, before even noon, I received a call from the boss. He mentioned that, although I lacked experience, the technician who recommended me had vouched for my potential and was willing to train me. When asked when I could start, I immediately said I could come in the next day. True to my word, I went in, and just like that, I landed the job. This turn of events, sparked by a chance interaction, marked the beginning of a significant change in my career path.

6.5 The Leap into a New Career: First Days as a Cable Installer

At the start of my cable installation job, I faced some challenging situations that almost led me to quit. The standard procedure for new hires involved a week of in-class training followed by two weeks of field training with an experienced technician. During the in-class training, they taught us basics like climbing ladders and using a harness. I had never climbed anything before - not a tree, not a roof - so this was an entirely new experience for me. However, I completed the in-class training and passed, enabling me to move on to field training.

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6.6 Rapid Learning and Unexpected Responsibilities

I was supposed to be trained in the field by the person who recommended me. This company was a cable contracting company, so technicians were paid based on the number of jobs completed. The person training me was handling double the workload compared to others in the company. However, during the training, I mostly fetched tools for him rather than learning the details of the job. After about five days of training with him, on what was either the fifth or sixth day, we received a call. Another technician had to leave due to a family emergency, and I was instructed to take over his route alone. Coincidentally, the technician who left also had a trainee, so the decision was made for the two trainees – me and the other new guy – to team up and complete the route together.

This sudden shift was scary. It meant stepping into a role I didn't feel fully prepared for, but it was a crucial moment in my early career as a cable installer. It was a test of adapting quickly to unforeseen circumstances and making the best of the training and knowledge I had acquired in a short time.

6.7 Transitioning from Trainee to Independent Technician

I transitioned from working at a liquor store to this new cable installation job, and within just two weeks, I found myself suddenly expected to work independently. The other trainee and I managed to get the jobs done, but it was challenging. Initially, I wasn't comfortable climbing ladders, and during my time with my trainer, I mostly handled indoor tasks like connecting cable boxes to TVs. The other trainee, however, was more comfortable with ladder work.

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At first, I attempted the outdoor tasks, but my nervousness on the ladder, especially as it got dark, cold, and windy, hindered my ability to work effectively. My hands were so cold that gripping the tools became difficult, and I remember feeling I just couldn't do it. The other trainee took over the outdoor work while I focused on the indoor tasks like setting up cable and internet and running lines. We continued this way for about a week or so, completing around five jobs a day and alternating duties.

This situation, though challenging, turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It forced me to learn hands-on and quickly. My initial training with the experienced technician had mostly involved assisting him, which didn't provide me with much practical experience. Now, in this new scenario, I was gaining real, valuable skills on the job. Despite the difficulties, this period was a crucial learning experience, accelerating my development in the field.

6.8 Navigating Early Challenges and Learning on the Job

The first day I was on my own, I faced a real challenge. My workday was supposed to start at 8:00 in the morning, but I ended up working until midnight. My last appointment, scheduled for 4:00 in the afternoon, involved setting up cable, phone, and internet for a customer. The cable and internet installations went smoothly, but there was a problem with the phone service. The customer couldn't make or receive calls, turning the situation into a mess.

By the time I finished the initial setup and realized the phone wasn't working, it was around 8:00 in the evening. When I reached out to the office for help, I was told that all the technicians had gone home, and no one was available to assist me. Not knowing what else to do, I decided to dismantle everything and start over. By the time I finished reinstalling it all, it was 10:00 at night, and the phone issue persisted.

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Another technician, who had been in the same training class as me and was new to the job, got out of bed and came to help me. We took everything apart and redid it, but the phone still wouldn't work. In a last-ditch effort, I started cutting wires and patching them together with different ones, which finally resolved the issue. That day, I was so close to quitting. I felt let down by my supervisors, who had assured me of help if needed but weren't there when I required assistance.

After this experience, I changed my approach. Instead of taking it one day at a time, I started taking it one job at a time. Some jobs went smoothly, others were tough, but eventually, other technicians began to assist me in completing jobs. It took me about two years to fully grasp the concepts and reach a point where I was the one being called for help. This period was a significant learning curve in my career and taught me perseverance and resourcefulness in the face of challenges.

6.9 Joining a New Company: The Decision to Hit the Road

At the company where I was working, a manager and a supervisor from the larger organization, which had multiple managers and supervisors, decided to start their own company. Their plan was to travel and work on the road, and they invited me to join them. Initially, I was hesitant. The idea of leaving my home, my family – my sisters, cousins, mom, aunts, uncles, and everyone I knew – wasn't appealing. However, eventually, something about the opportunity intrigued me.

CHAPTER 6: CABLE MAN

I began speaking with people who were already working on the road, and their enthusiasm and encouragement swayed me. So, I decided to join them. The experience was a significant change from what I was used to. I'm originally from Cincinnati, OH, in the Midwest, and when I first started doing cable work, it was primarily in Cincinnati and nearby areas in Kentucky, like Covington and Florence. These locations were conveniently close, with Cincinnati and Kentucky being connected by a bridge.

6.10 Adventures and Adaptations: Life Across Different States

However, working with this new company involved traveling to the South, covering various states and cities. We worked in places like Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, as well as Ohio and Kentucky. In each location, we would stay for about six months before moving to a different town or city. This new venture marked a significant shift in my career, offering diverse experiences and challenges as I worked in different regions for extended periods.

6.11 Reflecting on The Momentary Lifestyle and Desire for Change

Long story short, I spent about eight years working on the road. My journey began when I traveled from Cincinnati to Alabama. The company I worked for provided excellent support – they gave me a vehicle, paid for my hotel, food stipend, and gas. It was indeed a sweet deal.

On the day I left Cincinnati, I was layered up in a sweatsuit, a coat, a winter hat, and gloves. However, as I drove closer to Alabama, I found myself shedding layers. By the time I arrived at the hotel in Alabama, 14 hours later, the climate change was evident. The hotel was active with guys from different states, all part of the same contracting company. We were about 30 in total, and the company provided similar amenities for everyone.

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My first day there, I found my colleagues outside the hotel, barbecuing in shorts and T-shirts. It felt like a whole new world, and I thought to myself, "Yeah, this is the life for me." Over those eight years, we would sometimes take breaks to go home before hitting the road again. But as time went on, the novelty began to wear off. The hotel living – often with just a microwave for cooking and sometimes having to share a room with twin beds – started to lose its charm. I began craving a home-cooked meal and my own space. When I first started this journey, I was 22, but by the time I reached 30, my desires and priorities had shifted. I wanted something different, a change from the transient life I had been living.

6.12 Settling Down: Finding Home in Dallas, Texas

I had grown weary of the repetitive nature of my work, and this feeling was already brewing when we arrived at our last destination, Dallas, TX. I didn't particularly want to return home to Cincinnati because my experiences on the road had broadened my horizons. Dallas began to feel like home, more so than any other place we had been. It felt like where I was meant to be.

However, while in Dallas, we received the news that the company was shutting down and planning to send everyone back to their respective homes. They were even arranging plane tickets for this purpose. This announcement came shortly after the Christmas break. During the break, I had returned to the Midwest, where I was greeted by the familiar cold and freezing weather. In contrast, when I returned to Texas around New Year's, I was welcomed by warm, sunny weather, with temperatures around 80°. I had already been contemplating staying in Texas, and this contrast only strengthened my resolve.

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When the company started organizing return trips for everyone, I began to seriously consider how I could remain in Texas. This involved finding an apartment and securing a new job, both of which I successfully did, and as a result, I'm still here. I switched companies and stopped working on the road, which allowed me to work within Dallas itself. This change meant I could cook my own food, sleep in my own bed, and wake up to sunny weather every day. It was a significant and welcome change from the transient lifestyle I had been leading, and it felt great to finally settle down in a place that felt like home.

CHAPTER 6: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 6: Reflective questions

1. What new experiences have you embraced that pushed you out of your comfort zone, and how have they shaped you?

Can you recall a time when an adventure or journey offered you unexpected growth or learning?

2. Reflect on a casual conversation that unexpectedly opened a new opportunity for you. How did you leverage this opportunity?

Have you ever underestimated the power of networking? Share a moment when a simple interaction led to a significant opportunity.

3. Can you identify a period in your career where overcoming early obstacles significantly contributed to your growth?

How have the challenges you faced in the initial stages of a job or project made you more resilient and self-sufficient?

4. What does 'finding home' mean to you in the context of your career and personal life? Have you found it yet?

Share your journey of settling down after a period of change or transition. What were the key factors that influenced your decision?

CHAPTER 6: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 6: Action guide

Step 1: Identify Your Core Skills and Interests

Specific: List your key skills and interests, both professional and personal.

Measurable: Rate each skill and interest for current proficiency and passion.

Achievable: Focus on skills that are realistically developable and align with your interests.

Relevant: Choose skills and interests relevant to potential business or career opportunities.

Time-bound: Complete this assessment within one week.

Step 2: Research and Openness to New Opportunities

Specific: Research different career paths and business opportunities that align with your skills and interests.

Measurable: Identify and explore at least five new opportunities.

Achievable: Ensure these opportunities are realistic and attainable.

Relevant: Opportunities should align with your long-term career and personal goals.

Time-bound: Allocate a month for thorough research.

Step 3: Network and Seek Mentorship

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Specific: Connect with individuals in your desired field for insights and guidance.

Measurable: Aim to connect with a certain number of individuals monthly.

Achievable: Reach out to people through various platforms like LinkedIn.

Relevant: Connect with those who can offer valuable insights and advice.

Time-bound: Schedule regular networking activities each month.

Step 4: Create a Transition Plan

Specific: Develop a detailed plan for transitioning from your current role to your new career or business.

Measurable: Include clear milestones and checkpoints.

Achievable: Ensure the plan is realistic and considerate of your current responsibilities.

Relevant: The plan should be directly aligned with your career goals.

Time-bound: Set a realistic timeline for your transition.

Step 5: Balance Risk and Stability

Specific: Assess financial and personal risks associated with the transition.

Measurable: Develop a financial plan with savings goals and a budget.

CHAPTER 6: ACTION GUIDE

Achievable: Create a plan that maintains a balance between risk and financial security.

Relevant: The plan should support your transition without compromising your stability.

Time-bound: Review and adjust your financial plan quarterly.

CHAPTER 7: THE BEGINNING OF THE END OVERVIEW

Chapter 7: The beginning of the end overview

Chapter 7, "The Beginning of the End," dives into how to move up in your work life, making sure you see and use your own skills and hard work. It talks about how even if you're not officially in charge, you can still lead by helping and teaching the people you work with. This chapter shows how staying open to new chances and being humble and realistic about your career can really pay off. It points out how working well with others not only makes things go smoother but can also help everyone get better together. You'll read about how stepping up and showing what you can do can lead to bigger roles, and how important meetings and dealing with office politics can be. This part of the book pushes you to go after what you want in your job, be ready for changes, and speak up for yourself. It's all about growing in your job by recognizing your value and grabbing the opportunities that come your way, showing that you can rise up when you put in the effort and believe in yourself.

CHAPTER 7: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Chapter 7: The beginning of the end

7.1 Recognizing Talent: The Unofficial Trainer

When I started at the new company, my extensive experience quickly became evident. Other employees often called me for help, and I was usually able to assist them over the phone. Sometimes, if they needed in-person help and I was available, I would even go to their location to lend a hand. The manager took notice of this. One day, he approached me and mentioned that he had observed my informal training role. He suggested talking to the higher-ups about officially moving me up to a trainer position, which would include a pay increase.

7.2 An Unexpected Proposition: Moving Towards a Trainer Role

At first, I didn't give much thought to his proposition. I was about to leave for my first job of the day when he stopped me and discussed this opportunity. I casually mentioned my previous training experience at my old job, but I didn't hold much hope. The company had a policy that positions like trainer or supervisor required over a year's tenure, so I assumed I'd just have to wait.

7.3 Teamwork and Collaboration: A Natural Approach

However, I often found myself with free time after completing my jobs. This led me to check in with my colleagues, helping — a habit I had developed from my previous work environment. We would always team up to finish work efficiently, so we could head back to the hotel or grab a meal together. It was this mindset and practice of collaboration that I had brought with me, without any expectation of reward or recognition.

CHAPTER 7: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

7.4 Career Turn: From Employee to Leader

So, when the manager came to me with the proposition of becoming an official trainer, it was unexpected. I wasn't actively seeking this advancement; it just came to me based on how I naturally operated within the company. This development marked a significant turn in my career, transitioning from just another employee to someone recognized for their skills and leadership.

7.5 Embracing New Opportunities: A Shift in Perspective

I continued training my colleagues, and after a few months, I approached the manager to inquire about the training position. Initially, I hadn't been overly concerned about it, but as time passed and I discussed the opportunity with my girlfriend, I began to see it as a potentially great opportunity. It went from being something I hadn't given much thought to, to something I realized could be beneficial for me. Not only would I be perfect for the role, but it would also mean additional income, which was appealing since I was already helping others.

When I brought it up with the manager, he mentioned that he had already spoken to the boss and was just waiting for a response. Another two weeks passed, and then the boss visited our building. We had a group meeting, and it was announced that everyone would meet with the boss and the manager individually afterward. This was unusual, as the boss rarely visited, and when he did, it was typically just for a group meeting without any one-on-one interactions. The manager had already informed me that the boss would be coming the next day and that we could sit down and discuss the training position.

CHAPTER 7: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

7.6 The Anticipated Meeting: A Potential Career Milestone

This meeting marked a significant moment for me. It felt like a potential turning point in my career at the company, moving from an informal trainer to potentially being recognized and compensated for my efforts and skills. The anticipation of what this meeting could mean for my future at the company added a new layer of excitement and possibility to my work life.

7.7 Unexpected Revelations: A Broadening Prospect

Under the impression that the meeting with the boss would center on discussing my potential role as a supervisor, I was somewhat taken aback by the actual proceedings. It turned out that every employee was going into the office to discuss their position in the company, and several were in line for both a supervisor and a training role, not just me. This was crucial information that I felt the manager should have communicated earlier. Initially, I hadn't been particularly invested in the idea of promotion, but the manager had raised the possibility, which led me to seriously consider and even hope for it.

7.8 Navigating Workplace Uncertainty: Questioning the Process

The delay in addressing the matter and the revelation that I wasn't the only one being considered for these roles made me question the situation. It felt like something was wrong, especially given the length of time it had taken to even reach this point of discussion. Despite these concerns, I felt confident in my abilities. If it came down to employee feedback, I believed that my colleagues could attest to my skills and the help I had provided them, even when I wasn't officially in a trainer role. This gave me a sense of assurance, knowing that my contributions and the impact I had on my coworkers could speak volumes about my suitability for the position.

CHAPTER 7: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 7: Reflective questions

1. Consider a project or task where teamwork significantly improved the outcome. What did you learn about collaboration and its impact on efficiency?

How do you typically contribute to team settings in your workplace? Reflect on your approach to collaboration and its effectiveness.

2. Can you recall a transition in your career from a regular employee to a leadership position? What challenges and opportunities did this transition present?

How have you embraced leadership roles in your career, and what personal skills or attributes have been most beneficial in these roles?

3. Have you ever experienced a pivotal meeting or discussion in your career? How did you prepare for it, and what was the impact on your professional journey?

What significant meetings or interactions have marked milestones in your career? How did these events shape your professional development?

4. Reflect on a situation where you faced uncertainty in the workplace. How did you maintain self-assurance and advocate for yourself during this time?

Think about a time when workplace processes or decisions were unclear. How did you navigate this ambiguity, and what strategies did you employ to ensure clarity and understanding?

CHAPTER 7: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 7: Action guide

Step 1: Identify and Catalog Your Skills

Specific: Make a comprehensive list of your professional skills and strengths.

Measurable: Rate each skill based on your proficiency and the value it adds to your role.

Achievable: Focus on skills that are relevant and can be further developed.

Relevant: Ensure these skills align with your career goals.

Time-bound: Complete this list within a week.

Step 2: Seek Opportunities for Informal Leadership

Specific: Look for opportunities to lead projects or mentor colleagues.

Measurable: Aim to take on at least one such opportunity each quarter.

Achievable: Choose opportunities that are within your capacity but offer growth.

Relevant: Ensure these opportunities align with your career path.

Time-bound: Review and assess your leadership roles every six months.

Step 3: Enhance Teamwork and Collaboration Skills

Specific: Actively participate in team meetings and collaborative projects.

CHAPTER 7: ACTION GUIDE

Measurable: Set a goal to contribute meaningfully to each team activity.

Achievable: Develop skills like active listening and constructive feedback.

Relevant: Collaboration should contribute to both team and personal growth.

Time-bound: Evaluate your teamwork skills monthly.

Step 4: Prepare for Key Professional Meetings

Specific: Identify upcoming significant meetings and prepare thoroughly.

Measurable: Develop clear objectives for each meeting.

Achievable: Research, rehearse, and plan questions or contributions.

Relevant: Ensure your participation aligns with career objectives.

Time-bound: Prepare for each meeting at least one week in advance.

Step 5: Develop Effective Communication Skills

Specific: Work on clear, confident, and respectful communication.

Measurable: Aim for positive feedback on your communication in performance reviews.

Achievable: Practice public speaking, writing, and interpersonal communication.

Relevant: Good communication is key in all professional interactions.

CHAPTER 7: ACTION GUIDE

Time-bound: Set monthly goals for improving specific communication aspects.

CHAPTER 8: DECEPTION OVERVIEW

Chapter 8: Deception overview

Chapter 8, " Deception," dives into the tricky parts of work life, like when people don't understand each other, expectations aren't met, or you're faced with choosing right from wrong. It stresses how important it is to talk clearly, look for honesty, and stand up for yourself at work. The chapter shows how sticking to your values, even when it's tough, is key. It also talks about getting used to how things are done at your job, learning from what happens to you, and getting better at dealing with work issues. You'll see how tough it can be to be treated fairly at work and how to manage your job and your personal life. This chapter is meant to make you think about your own work journey, how you deal with issues at work, and how important it is to make choices you're proud of. It's all about growing as a person and a professional, keeping your morals high, and making sure you're treated right and keeping a good balance between work and everything else.

CHAPTER 8: DECEPTION

Chapter 8: Deception

8.1 Unveiling the Deception: A Crucial Meeting

Now it was just the three of us – the boss, the manager, and myself – seated around a round table, with the boss and the manager sitting close together on one side, facing me. The first thing the boss said caught me off guard. He expressed his surprise that I hadn't applied for a position to move up in the company. I wanted to ensure that I could speak freely without repercussions, so I asked him directly if anything I said in that meeting could lead to me being fired. He assured me that it wouldn't.

8.2 Confronting Miscommunication: Seeking Transparency

Feeling a mix of anger and a sense of being deceived, I was on the verge of confronting the manager. I turned to the manager but directed my words to the boss, explaining that the manager had told me he was discussing my promotion with him and was waiting for a decision. The boss gave the manager a look that suggested they would have a separate discussion about this later. For the time being, he shifted the conversation back to me, discussing my plans within the company and how I might fit into its future. He concluded by saying we would reconvene to talk further.

CHAPTER 8: DECEPTION

8.3 Navigating Workplace Dynamics: A Critical Turning Point

This encounter left me feeling a range of emotions. On one hand, there was an opportunity to advance and integrate further into the company's structure. On the other hand, the way the situation was handled, particularly the lack of clear communication and the apparent misunderstanding between the boss and the manager, made me question the transparency and integrity of the company's management. This moment was pivotal, marking a significant turning point in my understanding of workplace dynamics and my role within the company.

8.4 The Reality of False Promises: Navigating Corporate Games

But that wasn't the first time I'd experienced such a situation with a superior or higher-up at a job. The core issue for me wasn't just about the job or the potential promotion; it was more about how I was minding my own business, and they unnecessarily raised my hopes. It felt like they never truly intended to follow through with what they said. In my mind, I equated this to a betrayal of sorts. In a corporate environment, these games might be common, but in the streets, such manipulation of emotions could have severe consequences.

8.5 Direct Approach: Learning from Missteps

However, I always try to see the positive side and treat such experiences as learning opportunities. This incident taught me that if I really wanted something, I should have taken a more direct approach, perhaps even bypassed the manager and spoken to the boss directly. So, I began doing exactly that. I got the boss's number, and he encouraged me to reach out to him directly for any issues or needs.

CHAPTER 8: DECEPTION

8.6 Resisting Unethical Responses: A Moral Dilemma

But this new approach made me feel like I was playing childish games, going behind the manager's back, which wasn't something I was comfortable with. I could have handled it differently, but at that point, I was caught between anger and a desire to even the score. I was upset, though I didn't outwardly show it, and I tried to get even in my way.

8.7 The Illusion of a Pay Raise: Impact of Broken Promises

The promise of a pay raise, although a false one, had already started to shape my expectations and plans. I began to think about how the extra money would impact my life, the things I could do with it, and how it would improve my situation. I had created a vision in my mind based on that promise. In hindsight, I recognize that was my mistake. I learned a valuable lesson: never count on the money until it's in your hand.

8.8 Seeking Balance in Response to Injustice

But, as I said, I felt the need to even the score. For me, this meant finding ways to earn the extra income that I had been led to expect. By this point, I had been working in cable for 13 years – it was my last year in the field. Over the years, I had picked up numerous tips and tricks, some of which involved cutting corners. These methods weren't technically correct, but they worked to complete the job quickly, allowing me to move on to the next task. So, I started implementing these shortcuts, rationalizing that if the company wasn't going to compensate me fairly, I would find other ways to balance the equation.

CHAPTER 8: DECEPTION

8.9 Professional Integrity Vs. Personal Injustice

However, there's a saying that two wrongs don't make a right, and it's true in all aspects of life. Just because the company treated me unjustly didn't mean I should stoop to unethical practices. This period in my life was a significant transition, as it challenged me to change my mentality regarding dealing with disrespect. In the environment I grew up in, disrespect often led to physical confrontations as a means of resolution. But in the corporate world, the consequences of such actions are different – lawsuits or police involvement are real risks.

8.10 Adapting to Professional Norms: A New Mindset

So, instead of resorting to confrontation, I decided to 'scheme' on them, so to speak. But in hindsight, I realize this approach wasn't the best response to my situation. It reflected a struggle within me to adapt to a professional environment where disputes and grievances are handled differently than in the streets. This period was a learning curve, teaching me about professionalism, ethics, and the importance of maintaining integrity, even in the face of unfair treatment.

8.11 Evolving Self-Presentation: Learning from Experience

This entire experience was a significant lesson for me. It taught me the importance of changing my ways, my mindset, and how I carry myself. I learned to present myself in a manner that naturally discourages others from taking me lightly or attempting to manipulate me. But more importantly, I realized that I shouldn't put myself in situations where I could be exploited or disrespected.

CHAPTER 8: DECEPTION

8.12 Workplace Imbalance: The Struggle for Fair Treatment

Reflecting on my time working on the road, it was mostly fun and games, a blatant contrast to my experience in Dallas. In Dallas, the work environment felt more oppressive, like being driven too hard. When I was on the road, once the day's assigned jobs were completed, I could relax back at the hotel. However, in Dallas, finishing my route often meant being assigned additional jobs to cover for someone else who was running behind. There were times when I would finish my work by 6:00 PM, only to take on someone else's job and not be done until 10:00 PM, while the other person was already home relaxing. This imbalance in work distribution was frustrating.

8.13 Self-Reflection and Accountability: Owning My Decisions

At one point, I thought that being paid as a trainer would justify the additional work and time commitment. However, looking back, I realize that I can't blame anyone but myself for what I didn't know. I don't hold the manager or anyone else responsible; ultimately, I believe the responsibility lies with me. Despite this, at the time, I felt justified in cutting corners to compensate for what I perceived as unfair treatment and to ensure I was adequately compensated for my time and effort.

This period was a learning curve, not just in my professional life but also in personal growth and understanding how to navigate workplace dynamics. It was about finding a balance between standing up for myself and adapting to the professional standards of the corporate world.

CHAPTER 8: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 8: Reflective questions

1. Recall a moment in your professional life where you felt misled or deceived. How did you confront this situation, and what did you learn about advocating for yourself?

Think about a pivotal meeting in your career that revealed unexpected truths. How did you respond, and what impact did this have on your perception of workplace transparency?

2. Have you ever had to challenge a superior to clarify a miscommunication? How did you approach this, and what was the outcome?

Reflect on a time when you sought transparency in a confusing professional scenario. What strategies did you use, and how did they affect the situation?

3. Have you faced a moral dilemma in responding to an unfair or unethical situation at work? How did you uphold your integrity?

Consider a time when you felt tempted to respond unethically to workplace injustice. How did you navigate this, and what principles guided your decision?

4. How has your self-presentation in professional settings evolved based on past experiences? What key changes have you made?

Reflect on how learning from professional experiences has influenced your demeanor and approach in the workplace.

5. Reflect on a decision in your career that you later held yourself accountable for. What did you learn from this self-reflection?

CHAPTER 8: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

How has taking ownership of your decisions and actions in the workplace affected your professional growth and relationships?

CHAPTER 8: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 8: Action guide

Step 1: Advocate for Yourself and Your Ideas

Specific: Regularly voice your opinions, ideas, and concerns in professional settings.

Measurable: Aim to contribute constructively to meetings and discussions.

Achievable: Prepare points in advance and practice assertive communication.

Relevant: Self-advocacy is crucial for career development and personal fulfillment.

Time-bound: Set a goal to speak up in specific situations or meetings.

Step 2: Balance Adapting to Corporate Culture with Personal Integrity

Specific: Adapt to your workplace's culture while upholding your personal values and ethics.

Measurable: Reflect on situations where you successfully balanced both.

Achievable: Find common ground where your values align with the corporate culture.

Relevant: Balancing adaptation with integrity is vital for career longevity and satisfaction.

Time-bound: Regularly, perhaps monthly, assess your alignment with this balance.

Step 3: Reflect and Own Your Decisions and Actions

Specific: Regularly reflect on and take responsibility for your decisions and actions at work.

CHAPTER 8: ACTION GUIDE

Measurable: Journal your reflections and note any patterns or areas for improvement.

Achievable: Engage in honest self-reflection and seek feedback from trusted colleagues or mentors.

Relevant: Owning your actions is key to professional integrity and personal growth.

Time-bound: Dedicate time each week or month for this reflective practice.

CHAPTER 9: BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR; YOU MIGHT JUST GET IT OVERVIEW

Chapter 9: Be careful what you wish for; you might just get it overview

Chapter 9, "Be Careful What You Wish For; You Might Just Get It," dives deep into the unexpected sides of getting the job or promotion you've been chasing. It talks about how sometimes, getting what you want can bring surprises like less pay or more work than you thought, leaving you wondering if it was worth it. This chapter warns about the tricky parts of wanting more in your career and shows how important it is to really think about what a new job will mean for you, not just the good stuff but also the challenges and choices you'll have to face. It's a reminder to keep your values straight, even when you're climbing the ladder, and to think about what success really means to you. By sharing stories of tough choices and unexpected turns, this chapter encourages you to look before you leap into new opportunities, to stay true to what you believe is right, and to find a balance between work, money, and being happy with what you do.

CHAPTER 9: BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR; YOU MIGHT JUST GET IT

Chapter 9: Be careful what you wish for; you might just get it

9.1 Unexpected Twists: The Reality of a Trainer Role

My frustration was compounded by the realization that the manager had never actually spoken to the boss about promoting me, as he had led me to believe. Eventually, though, they did appoint me as a trainer. But ironically, when I finally achieved this role, the pay for trainers had been reduced. This was the same reason the previous trainer had resigned. He had initially boasted about his earnings, but then he returned to his technician role without explaining why – it turned out it was due to the pay cut.

9.2 The Irony of Achievement: Reduced Pay and Increased Responsibility

During the meeting with the boss and the manager, multiple employees, including myself, expressed interest in advancing to either a supervisory or training position. Ultimately, they chose another colleague and me to be trainers. However, instead of having just one trainer, as was previously the case, they decided to have two, which led to a change in how we were compensated. Unlike technicians who were paid per job, our payment structure was different.

9.3 The Complexities of a Dual Role: Trainer and Technician

As trainers, our duties were split – one day, I would handle office tasks and paperwork, while the other trainer would be out in the field assisting people. The next day, we would swap roles. Additionally, we were still assigned our own jobs, but these were reduced in number to allow us more time to help others.

CHAPTER 9: BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR; YOU MIGHT JUST GET IT

9.4 Letdown with Promotion: The Reality Behind the Title

This arrangement seemed reasonable on paper – fewer personal jobs meant more time to fulfill our training responsibilities. But the reality was that this new role, which I had once thought of as a desirable advancement, came with its own set of challenges and was not as rewarding as I had initially imagined. This situation was a classic example of "be careful what you wish for," as the outcome was quite different from my expectations.

9.5 The Unseen Costs of Advancement: Compromised Earnings and Increased Workload

But there was a catch to being a trainer. We had to clock in and were paid hourly for the time spent training, but when we were out in the field, we had to clock out from our trainer role and were paid per job as technicians. Naturally, the more jobs you complete, the more you get paid. So, if I wasn't doing any jobs while clocked in as a trainer, and not receiving the same salary as the previous trainer, my overall earnings were less. This was the reason the previous trainer had stepped down – he learned his pay would decrease due to the addition of multiple trainers and decided to return to his technician role.

CHAPTER 9: BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR; YOU MIGHT JUST GET IT

9.6 Frustration and Overwork: The Unending Cycle

I continued in this dual role for a while, but it turned out to be more demanding than being a technician. As a technician, I had to start work by 7:00 AM to begin my first job by 8:00 AM, after collecting my equipment and route. As a trainer, however, my day started even earlier, at 5:00 AM. I was responsible for opening the shop, turning off the alarm, and taking on additional tasks. Not only did I have to be the first one in the morning, but I also couldn't leave until the last technician had completed their route. This meant if I was in the field, I had to help them finish. If I was in the office, I had to wait to complete and send the daily paperwork to the boss before I could leave. Then, the next day, I had to be back at 5:00 AM, regardless of whether some technicians worked until midnight.

9.7 Choosing the Wrong Path: Compromising Integrity for Compensation

This cycle of trying to improve my situation, yet continually feeling taken advantage of, became frustrating. It felt like an unresolved issue that needed to be addressed. In response to this frustration and the added responsibilities without adequate compensation, I started to make wrong choices. The situation led me down a path I wasn't proud of, driven by the feeling of being undervalued and overworked.

9.8 The Risks of Shortcuts: Ethical Dilemmas and Professional Standards

I began taking shortcuts to maximize my earnings while minimizing my effort, and eventually, it caught up with me. In the world of cable contracting, as it was during my time, payment was based on the number of jobs completed and the specific tasks performed on each job. You couldn't falsify the number of jobs because they needed customer confirmation upon completion. However, the scope of work within each job offered some leeway for shortcuts.

CHAPTER 9: BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR; YOU MIGHT JUST GET IT

For instance, part of the job might involve replacing an old house box (used to protect cable connections from the elements) with a new standard one provided by our company. If the existing box appeared relatively new, even though I knew it wasn't the latest model, I would report that I had replaced it. This would earn me the additional pay meant for the replacement, and these small additions could significantly increase my income over multiple jobs and days.

I knew that quality inspectors occasionally checked our work, but I also knew that many of them were lax in their inspections. They often just conducted a superficial check, talking to the customer and examining the exterior setup without thoroughly inspecting the interior work. So, I started ensuring that everything on the outside was done correctly while taking liberties with the interior tasks, assuming they wouldn't be closely inspected.

This strategy was a risky gamble. It involved a calculated assessment of the inspectors' tendencies and a willingness to compromise the integrity of my work for financial gain. It reflected my growing frustration and disappointment with the job, as well as a response to the feeling of being undervalued and exploited by the company. However, this approach was not sustainable and carried the risk of serious repercussions if the subpar work was discovered.

9.9 Self-Reflection and Responsibility: Learning from Mistakes

Even while I was taking these shortcuts, I knew deep down that it wasn't the right thing to do. However, I felt cornered, unsure how else to claim what I believed I deserved. At the time, it seemed like the company owed me more, but my perspective has since shifted. I now understand that no one owes me anything, and how I'm treated largely depends on how I allow others to treat me. It's about how I conduct myself and present myself to the world, as this shapes the way people perceive and respond to me.

CHAPTER 9: BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR; YOU MIGHT JUST GET IT

9.10 Unforeseen Pathways: Music as an Emerging Focus

During this period of struggle and compromise, unbeknownst to me, I was transitioning towards a significant change in my life. Although I hadn't planned it, and even though music was not a primary focus at that time, it was still a part of my life. I was using beats from YouTube to create music, but these weren't my own beats that I could monetize. Nevertheless, my music was getting noticed. I would play my songs in the morning, and other employees would listen and sometimes even play them too. People started mistaking my songs for professional radio tracks. Yet, I still didn't fully grasp my potential as an artist because I was so focused on being a good employee and climbing the corporate ladder.

9.11 Pursuit of Financial Gain vs. Personal Fulfillment: Reevaluating Career Goals

I realize now that it wasn't the position itself, I wanted; it was the financial improvement it promised. I was already helping people, and the recognition or title of trainer didn't matter to me as much as the financial benefits did. If the company had maintained the original pay rate for trainers, I believe I would have excelled in that role. But then again, if things had remained comfortable, I might still be there, never having found the motivation to change and become who I am today. I probably would have continued to wish for a different life without taking any steps towards it.

9.12 Hindsight and Growth: Embracing Life's Unplanned Journeys

Looking back, I can see that everything worked out for the best. But during those challenging times, such a perspective was hard for me to accept. The journey, though difficult, was necessary for my growth and led me to where I am now.

CHAPTER 9: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 9: Reflective questions

1. Have you ever experienced a promotion or new role that came with increased responsibilities but reduced benefits? How did you navigate this paradox?

Consider an occasion where career advancement didn't align with your expectations, particularly in compensation. What insights did you gain about career growth?

2. Reflect on a professional mistake that taught you a valuable lesson. How did this experience shape your approach to future decisions?

Consider a time when you had to take responsibility for a wrong decision at work. What insights did you gain about self-reflection and accountability?

3. Have you discovered a new passion or focus unexpectedly in your career? How did this shift your professional direction?

Think about a time when an emerging interest, like music, redirected your career path. What did this experience teach you about being open to new possibilities?

4. How have you balanced the pursuit of financial gain with personal fulfillment in your career? What adjustments did you make to align with your true goals?

Reflect on a moment when you had to choose between financial security and personal satisfaction in your job. What did you choose, and why?

5. Looking back, how has an unplanned journey in your career led to personal growth? What valuable lessons did you learn from this experience?

CHAPTER 9: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

How has hindsight helped you appreciate the twists and turns in your career? What have these experiences taught you about embracing change and growth?

CHAPTER 9: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 9: Action guide

Step 1: Assess Potential Career Advancements Carefully

Specific: Evaluate the full implications of any potential career advancement, including responsibilities and compensation.

Measurable: List pros and cons and discuss with mentors or trusted colleagues to gain different perspectives.

Achievable: Seek advice from those experienced in similar roles or industries.

Relevant: Understanding the full scope of a new role ensures that it aligns with your values and career goals.

Time-bound: Set a deadline for your decision-making process to avoid prolonged indecision.

Step 2: Balance Career Goals with Personal Fulfillment

Specific: Aim to find a balance between financial goals and personal satisfaction in your career choices.

Measurable: Regularly check-in with yourself to ensure your work is fulfilling both financially and personally.

Achievable: Identify what personal fulfillment looks like for you in your career.

CHAPTER 9: ACTION GUIDE

Relevant: Achieving this balance is crucial for long-term career satisfaction and mental well-being.

Time-bound: Reassess this balance every six months or after major career decisions.

Step 3: Stay Open to New Opportunities

Specific: Remain open and adaptable to new career opportunities that may arise unexpectedly.

Measurable: Regularly update your skills and network to prepare for potential opportunities.

Achievable: Engage in continuous learning and networking within and outside your industry.

Relevant: Staying open to new opportunities can lead to more fulfilling career paths.

Time-bound: Set aside time each week for networking and professional development.

Step 4: Engage in Regular Self-Reflection

Specific: Reflect on your career path, decisions, and their alignment with your personal and professional goals.

Measurable: Keep a journal to track your thoughts and progress.

Achievable: Dedicate time each week for this reflective practice.

Relevant: Regular self-reflection ensures that your career path aligns with your values and goals.

CHAPTER 9: ACTION GUIDE

Time-bound: Schedule a weekly or monthly reflection session.

CHAPTER 10: I WILL RIDE UNTIL THE WHEELS FALL OFF OVERVIEW

Chapter 10: I will ride until the wheels fall off overview

Chapter 10, "I Will Ride It Until the Wheels Fall Off," tackles the tough side of dealing with the outcomes of your choices at work. It's about trusting your gut when big changes or choices come up in your job. This chapter shares how standing up for yourself and making decisions based on what you believe is right, especially when times get tough, is crucial. It talks about the hard feelings that come when you feel let down or not valued where you work, and the importance of taking time to think about what you really want during times of change. It shows the need to find a balance between making money now and following your dreams for the future, even when you have to adjust to new ways of working with people. This chapter is a reminder that it's okay to face challenges head-on, to use these moments as chances to grow, and to keep a balance between what you need today and what you're hoping for tomorrow. It's all about using your own judgment, staying true to yourself, and being ready to move forward, no matter what comes your way.

CHAPTER 10: I WILL RIDE UNTIL THE WHEELS FALL OFF

Chapter 10: I will ride until the wheels fall off

10.1 Premonition of Change: The Unsettling Call to the Office

The situation at my job reached a crucial moment when I was on site and another employee was sent to inform me that the manager wanted me to come to the office. I was in the middle of a job and had another one lined up, but I was instructed to head to the office immediately after finishing my current task. When I tried to confirm this with my manager through texts and calls, he didn't respond at first. However, when he finally answered my call, he instructed me to skip my next job and come straight to the office. At that point, I had a strong hunch about what was about to happen.

10.2 Confronting Reality: The Certainty of Being Caught

Earlier that morning, the boss had questioned me about a job from the previous day. By then, I had been regularly claiming to have completed tasks that I hadn't done. His questioning caught me off guard, and in response, I fabricated a story. He pointed out discrepancies in my job report, indicating that the quality inspectors had found that I hadn't completed all the tasks I claimed. In that moment, under pressure, I falsely blamed the new guy who was training with me, suggesting that he had made errors in closing out the job.

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10.3 The Final Day: Anticipating the Inevitable

After this conversation with the boss, when the manager called me back to the office, I knew it was likely the end of the line for me at this job. Despite telling the manager I would come after completing the job, I had already finished and decided to head home, calling my girlfriend to let her know. The realization that my time at this job was probably over was clear, but I decided to see it through to the end, expecting to be fired but ready to face whatever came my way. This moment symbolized the culmination of my actions and decisions at this job, a reckoning of sorts for the shortcuts and dishonesty I had engaged in.

10.4 Taking Control: Deciding to Leave on My Terms

The events unfolded starting early in the morning, around 8:00 AM, as I began my work route. Throughout the day, there was an unusual silence from my manager; he didn't communicate with me at all. It wasn't until around 3:00 PM that another employee, seemingly out of the blue, came to my location. Initially, I thought he was just nearby for another job, but he clarified that he was there specifically to tell me that the manager wanted to see me. This was odd and signaled to me that something was wrong, especially considering the manager's earlier avoidance of my calls and texts.

10.5 The Drive Home: A Journey of Reflection and Decision

Given my years of experience, I was familiar with the company's procedures, particularly regarding the termination of employment. The office was a 30-minute drive from my home without traffic, and at that time of the day, it could easily turn into an hour's journey due to rush hour. The fact that I was already an hour away from home, considering my current location and the distance to the office, added to my worry.

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Typically, the company's process for letting someone go involved asking them to come to the office, clean out their work truck, and then arrange for someone to pick them up. Foreseeing this, I called my girlfriend, who was still at work and wouldn't be off until 5:00 PM. It would take her another hour to reach the office. The thought of waiting there from 3:00 PM to around 6:00 PM was not appealing to me.

I had already sensed that morning that they might be onto me, especially after the manager's questioning. So, when the time came to head to the office, I instead decided to go home, having already finished the job I was on. I informed my girlfriend about the situation and told her that I was on my way home. She was already aware of the potential issues at work, as I had briefed her about my suspicions earlier that day. This moment marked a turning point, a realization that the path I had been on was coming to an end, and it was time to face the consequences of my actions.

At this point, I had a clear idea of how I wanted to handle the situation, fully aware of the company's typical approach towards dismissing employees. Despite telling the manager that I was on my way to the office, my actual plan was to head home. The drive was about an hour, and as I neared my home, about 10 minutes away, the manager began calling and texting me. He noticed my prolonged absence and texted to question why I hadn't arrived at the office yet.

10.6 Asserting Independence: Choosing to Quit Rather Than Be Fired

Upon reaching home, I finally responded to his text. I informed him that I was quitting and warned that the work truck should be picked up or it would be towed. This warning was somewhat of a bluff, as my apartment building did have a vehicle registration system in place, but the truck was already registered and wouldn't have been towed. However, I used this to assert some control over the situation, a kind of retribution for the way I felt they were going to dismiss me.

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So, technically, I wasn't officially fired. There was no formal declaration of my termination, but it was evident that things were heading in that direction. This move was my way of taking charge of the situation, ensuring that I left on my own terms, although in a somewhat confrontational manner. It marked the end of my time with the company, a closure that was as much about asserting my dignity as it was about responding to their actions.

10.7 The Reality of Suspension: Avoiding a Vulnerable Position

The company had a practice of suspending employees, an approach that often left many workers in a precarious situation. When suspended, employees were instructed to clear out their trucks and arrange for someone to pick them up, as they would be temporarily without employment and pay. This suspension could last for a period as dictated by the company, typically a couple of weeks, but without any financial compensation.

10.8 A Sense of Betrayal: Personal Complaints and Professional Dissatisfaction

In my case, I was determined not to find myself in such a vulnerable position, waiting helplessly for someone to pick me up. I recall an incident where a colleague was fired in the morning. I offered him a ride home to spare him the indignity of waiting, but he declined, opting to call his grandmother for a ride instead. The image of a grown man having to rely on his elderly grandmother for transportation struck me as particularly demeaning. I was resolved not to let myself be subjected to a similar situation.

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10.9 The End of an Era: A Reflective Goodbye to Cable Work

However, the day of my departure from the company came somewhat unexpectedly, although I wasn't entirely shocked. I had a sense that the company would eventually catch on to my actions. My attitude towards my job had changed significantly by this point. I began to take things personally, suspecting that the manager might have had a vendetta against me. While I couldn't be certain of his motives, these suspicions heavily influenced my feelings towards my work and the energy I put into it. My care for the job diminished as I perceived a growing dislike or targeted negativity from management.

While I maintained a professional demeanor with customers, never allowing my frustrations to affect how I treated them, my dissatisfaction was evident in the quality of my work. My integrity as a diligent employee, once a point of pride, began to disappear. I understood the repercussions of my actions, yet I was uncertain about the timing and nature of the inevitable outcome. To some extent, I was indifferent, almost welcoming the relief of ending my association with the company.

10.10 Facing Uncertainty: Anxiety About the Future After Cable Work

After 13 years as a cableman, the abrupt end to this chapter of my life stirred a mix of anxiety and uncertainty about my future. The prospect of being "blacklisted" in the industry loomed over me. This term refers to the practice of companies sharing records of an employee's misdeeds, thereby hampering their chances of employment in similar roles elsewhere. I grappled with the likelihood of my past actions hindering future opportunities in cable work. Yet, alongside these concerns, there was a part of me that felt ready to leave it all behind. My thoughts began to shift from worrying about the impossibility of continuing in the same field to a growing realization that I no longer desired to pursue this line of work.

CHAPTER 10: I WILL RIDE UNTIL THE WHEELS FALL OFF

10.11 Financial Realities: The Immediate Need for Stability

At the time of losing my job, I wasn't in a mindset to be my own boss or think like an entrepreneur. My primary concern was securing financial stability before my final paycheck from the previous job. With no savings and zero credit, largely due to my life on the road and reliance on cash transactions, I found myself at a loss. Being in Dallas, far from my family in Cincinnati, amplified the feeling of isolation. My girlfriend's support was invaluable, but it also introduced new challenges.

10.12 Relationship Dynamics: Support and New Challenges

She witnessed the toll my job took on me and supported my decision to leave it, but as we started living together, the dynamics changed. It wasn't just about me anymore. While returning to Cincinnati was an option, it didn't align with my principles. I couldn't abandon the support and commitment she offered. This period marked a turbulent phase, reminiscent of my earlier days hustling for daily survival. Now, I had to adapt this approach to support not just myself, but also my partner who had chosen to stand by me.

10.13 Music on Hold: The Delay of Artistic Pursuits

Music, though a passion, wasn't a feasible option yet. I lacked the necessary equipment, skills, and knowledge to pursue it as a career. My focus had to be on immediate solutions for financial sustenance, leaving my musical aspirations on the back burner for the time being.

CHAPTER 10: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 10: Reflective questions

1. Reflect on a moment when you faced the consequences of a dishonest action. What did this experience teach you about accountability and integrity?

Have you ever been in a situation where avoiding the truth only delayed the inevitable? How did facing reality change your perspective on honesty in professional settings?

2. Describe a situation where you chose to leave a job or role on your own terms. How did this decision impact your sense of control and autonomy?

Have you ever had to decide between staying in a diminishing situation or leaving with your dignity? What factors influenced your decision?

3. Describe a career phase that ended for you. How did you find closure and what did you learn from this reflective ending?

Have you ever had to say goodbye to a significant chapter in your career? What emotions did you experience, and how did you embrace this transition?

4. Reflect on a time when immediate financial stability was a priority in your career decisions. How did you balance your immediate needs with long-term goals?

How have financial considerations influenced your career choices during times of uncertainty? What lessons did you learn about rational decision-making?

5. How have significant career changes affected your relationships? What new dynamics did you have to adapt to?

CHAPTER 10: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Think about a time when support from others was crucial during a career transition. How did this support or lack thereof influence your journey?

6. Have you ever had to put a passion or creative pursuit on hold for practical reasons? How did you feel about this delay, and how did you eventually return to your passion?

Reflect on a time when balancing practical needs required postponing your artistic or creative aspirations. How did you maintain your connection to these pursuits during the delay?

CHAPTER 10: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 10: Action guide

Step 1: Trust and Act on Your Intuition

Specific: Learn to recognize and trust your intuition, especially regarding career decisions.

Measurable: Reflect on past decisions where intuition played a role and assess the outcomes.

Achievable: Practice mindfulness or meditation to enhance self-awareness and intuition.

Relevant: Trusting your intuition is key in making decisions that align with your true self.

Time-bound: Set a routine for daily mindfulness practice, aiming for at least 5 minutes a day.

Step 2: Navigate Emotional Impacts in the Workplace

Specific: Develop strategies to handle feelings of betrayal or being undervalued.

Measurable: Use journaling or counseling sessions to process workplace emotions.

Achievable: Find a mentor or counselor to discuss and navigate these feelings.

Relevant: Managing emotional impacts is crucial for maintaining professional relationships and personal well-being.

Time-bound: Check in with yourself or your mentor monthly to assess and manage workplace emotions.

Step 3: Balance Immediate Needs with Long-term Aspirations

CHAPTER 10: ACTION GUIDE

Specific: Create a plan that balances financial stability with pursuing your passions.

Measurable: Develop a budget that includes savings for future aspirations while meeting current needs.

Achievable: Identify potential side projects or hobbies that align with your passions.

Relevant: Balancing immediate needs and long-term goals leads to a more fulfilling career.

Time-bound: Set monthly financial goals and review your progress.

Step 4: Embrace Uncertainty and Change

Specific: Cultivate a mindset that welcomes uncertainty and change as opportunities.

Measurable: Reflect on your response to change and identify areas for growth.

Achievable: Read books or attend workshops on change management and resilience.

Relevant: Embracing change is vital for personal and professional development.

Time-bound: Set a goal to try one new experience related to your career each month.

CHAPTER 11: ALL THE WHEELS FELL OFF OVERVIEW

Chapter 11: All the wheels fell off overview

Chapter 11, "All the Wheels Fell Off," is about coming to terms with where your decisions have led you, especially at work. It's a deep dive into realizing when things aren't working out and being open to changing direction. This chapter talks about how sometimes, the way we learn to handle our feelings when we're young can affect how we deal with people and situations as adults, both in and out of the workplace. It's a call to pay attention to the signs that it's time for a change and to learn from what others have gone through. This story celebrates the move towards a life that's more about what makes you happy and thankful, rather than just sticking to the same old path. It's all about understanding yourself better, learning from the ups and downs, and going after a life that fills you with joy, freedom, and appreciation. The chapter encourages you to listen to those nudges towards something better and to take active steps in creating a future that's true to what you really want, both in your job and your personal life.

CHAPTER 11: ALL THE WHEELS FELL OFF

Chapter 11: All the wheels fell off

11.1 The Warning Signs: Recognizing the End of a Chapter

I was aware that my job was nearing its end. Initially, my assistance was driven by genuine kindness, but the prospect of advancement and increased pay began to cloud my judgment. The realization of being misled was the first warning sign. The later promotion to a supervisor role, paired with reduced pay, was a significant blow. The call to the office, signaling my imminent termination, confirmed my suspicions. I was wrong in my approach, and this experience reinforced my belief in karma. The consequences of my actions, though delayed, eventually caught up with me, leaving me in a more challenging position than before.

11.2 Emotional Detachment: A Double-Edged Sword

Despite the setback of no longer receiving a paycheck, I didn't despair. Instead, I contemplated my next move. My childhood, characterized by frequently switching schools, had honed my ability to detach emotionally from people and situations. This trait has its positives and negatives. On one hand, it allows me to adapt and move on quickly; on the other, it has led to a lack of long-term friendships outside of family. Unlike those who maintain lifelong friendships from childhood, my connections are predominantly with family members who transcend the traditional friend role. This unique aspect of my personality and life experience shapes how I navigate relationships and challenges.

CHAPTER 11: ALL THE WHEELS FELL OFF

11.3 The Nudge from Life: Urging Towards Change

At the same time, my nature and thought process demand significant alone time for thinking, being, and creating. This roundabout journey seems to be life's way of nudging me towards a realization. It's as if life is saying, "You've long felt the need to move on and sensed that something greater awaits you. Since you didn't take the initiative to seek it out, circumstances will force you into action." By this point, I had acknowledged my desire not to work for others, yet I was aware of my need for income. At that moment, I lacked other options, but deep down, I knew this path wouldn't lead to fulfillment. This realization might explain why subsequent endeavors post-cable work were short-lived. They served their purpose temporarily, but I couldn't envision them as long-term careers. Likewise, during my cable work, I couldn't see it as my lifelong occupation.

11.4 Lessons from Others: Glaring Reminders of Life Choices

I've always held respect for others, particularly for one individual who significantly impacted my journey. However, his situation also served as a stark reminder. In my twenties, while working in cable, I met a man who was 70 years old, still strenuously climbing ladders every day. Tragically, he passed away - alone and away from his family, during one of our road trips, dying in his sleep. This event profoundly affected me, reinforcing my resolve not to end up in a similar situation. Additionally, there was another colleague, 60 years old, who seemed younger, perhaps in his forties, in his physicality and energy in cable work. Yet, despite his age, he was still financially dependent on his mother, even for rent payments. It was a startling revelation for me, further emphasizing that I couldn't envision myself in this line of work for the rest of my life.

CHAPTER 11: ALL THE WHEELS FELL OFF

11.5 Aiming for a Better Position: The Drive for Office Work

That's why, when the manager mentioned advancement in the company, I thought, "Okay, if I'm going to do this job for the rest of my life, at least I can aim for a position where I'm in the office, making money like the manager." I noticed he never really helped in the field; he just delegated tasks and earned the most. So, in my mind, I'm thinking, "If I have to continue this work, I might as well strive to get out of the field." In the field, the conditions are relentless: whether it's freezing, scorching, or pouring rain, the expectation is to work. The only exception is during lightning. Customers are adamant about their services; they express frustration if told the job can't be done, mentioning their long waits and the inconvenience of rescheduling.

11.6 Embracing a New Life: The Transition to Enjoyment and Freedom

Now, my life is different. I wake up and engage in activities I enjoy. For instance, after hitting the gym, I take my dog to the park. Observing people hard at work while I'm enjoying my time, I feel grateful. It's a complete contrast to what my life could have been. However, this transition to the lifestyle I lead now wasn't swift or smooth. It was a prolonged journey to realize that music was the key to gaining control over my life and shaping it the way I wanted.

CHAPTER 11: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 11: Reflective questions

1. Reflect on a time when you experienced warning signs that a significant phase in your life was coming to an end. How did you react to these signs, and what did you learn from the experience?

Consider a moment in your career or personal life when you had to accept the consequences of your actions. How did this acceptance impact your future decisions and personal growth?

2. Can you identify a 'nudge' from life that prompted you to make a significant change? How did you respond to this nudge, and what transformation followed?

Recall a time when you realized your true desires and potential. How did this self-realization guide you towards making life-altering decisions?

3. Reflect on a lesson you learned from observing someone else's life choices. How did this observation influence your own path and decisions?

Have you ever witnessed someone else's life as a reminder of what you do or don't want for yourself? How did this awareness shape your future aspirations?

4. Describe a time when you aspired to improve your position at work. What motivated this drive, and how did you go about achieving your goal?

Have you ever made a practical career choice based on observations in your workplace? How did this decision align with your personal and professional aspirations?

CHAPTER 11: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

5. Reflect on a period when you transitioned into a more fulfilling phase of life. What steps did you take to embrace this new chapter?

Consider a moment when you achieved a sense of personal enjoyment and freedom. How did this achievement affect your sense of gratitude and perspective on life?

CHAPTER 11: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 11: Action Guide

Step 1: Learn from Others' Experiences

Specific: Actively seek stories and lessons from others' professional journeys.

Measurable: Read books, listen to podcasts, or have conversations focused on career experiences.

Achievable: Engage with at least one new resource or person each week.

Relevant: Others' experiences provide valuable insights for our path.

Time-bound: Dedicate one year to gather diverse perspectives.

Step 2: Embrace Personal Enjoyment and Freedom

Specific: Identify activities and paths that bring you joy and a sense of freedom.

Measurable: Note how much time you spend weekly on enjoyable activities.

Achievable: Integrate at least one activity that brings joy into your weekly routine.

Relevant: Personal enjoyment is key to a fulfilling life.

Time-bound: Establish a balanced routine that includes enjoyment within six months.

Step 3: Pursue Fulfillment in All Spheres

CHAPTER 11: ACTION GUIDE

Specific: Seek fulfillment in personal relationships, hobbies, and work.

Measurable: Evaluate your fulfillment levels in these areas regularly.

Achievable: Make small, consistent changes towards a more fulfilling life.

Relevant: Balance in all life areas is crucial for overall well-being.

Time-bound: Aim for noticeable improvements in life fulfillment within one year.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS OVERVIEW

Chapter 12: Life's lessons overview

Chapter 12, "LIFE'S LESSONS," dives into how to make your way through the tricky parts of work culture, keeping true to yourself while also fitting in and speaking up when needed. It talks about the balance between sticking to your values and adapting to new places, and how important it is to communicate well, even when your hard work isn't seen the way you hoped. This chapter is also about wanting a life where you call the shots, choosing to rely on yourself rather than just playing it safe. It's about becoming who you really are, learning from everything that happens to you, and finding simpler ways to live well.

The chapter goes further into the idea of walking your path alone, getting rid of old habits that don't help anymore, and taking lessons from the past. It stresses the need to keep growing, changing, and pushing forward, no matter what comes your way. It's a call to see life as a series of lessons that help you grow, change, and become stronger and more skilled. This part of the book is a roadmap for dealing with the ups and downs of work and life, reminding you to stay true to what drives you and to never stop learning and getting better.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

Chapter 12: Life's lessons

12.1 The Worker's Dilemma: Misjudging the Corporate Ladder

What I've learned is that the role of a worker wasn't fitting for me. With extensive experience, skills, and knowledge, I felt deserving of a higher position. I suspect the manager may have seen me as a threat to his job, although that wasn't my intention at all. I was simply striving to earn more, but perhaps I misjudged the situation. My reaction to the circumstances wasn't ideal. A more appropriate response could have been to resign or return to my previous role. This experience taught me to be more strategic and considerate in my actions.

12.2 Adapting to Corporate Culture: The Struggle with Authority and Respect

There's a saying, "Never outshine the master," which I either forgot or chose to ignore. Colleagues often sought my help, and I assisted. However, I would bypass the manager and report directly to the boss, which, in hindsight, was unsettling. Coming from a background where respect is supreme, adapting to the corporate culture, where roles are clearly defined and one is expected to stay within those limits, was challenging for me. Eventually, I realized I was no longer willing to play a diminished role, to underplay my capabilities to make others feel secure. But it also became clear that I'm not one to blindly follow others' directives without questioning their legitimacy. This journey has been a significant learning curve in understanding workplace dynamics and my own personal growth.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

My learning style predominantly revolves around experiential knowledge. When someone shares information with me, especially if it's of significance, I'm inclined to research it thoroughly later. This isn't a matter of distrust; rather, it's about gaining a deeper understanding. However, this approach sometimes doesn't sit well with others. In various settings, be it work, sports, or even with family, there's often an expectation to just follow instructions. But this creates a contradiction, as the same people who demand obedience to rules also expect you to go above and beyond without additional recognition or compensation.

12.3 Exceeding Expectations: The Misinterpretation of Effort and Skill

My intent is not to outdo others; I'm simply focused on enjoying and making the most out of life. My approach often results in outputs that surpass the norm, primarily because I invest time in studying and paying attention to details. Unfortunately, this can be misconstrued by others as arrogance or an attempt to overshadow them. I believe it's more about their perception, seeing my efforts as superior, which might trigger feelings of insecurity or threat. This leads to attempts to undermine my confidence or downplay my accomplishments.

12.4 Communication and Conflict: Navigating Workplace Dynamics

In my journey, I've realized the importance of effective communication and made efforts to hone these skills through research and practice. I've observed that many people haven't invested similarly in developing their communication abilities. This disparity becomes evident in different environments. In certain circles, there's a mindset that any form of disrespect must be met with retaliation, often escalating to varying degrees of conflict. Equally, in corporate settings, the hierarchy is plain – the superior dictates and the subordinate complies, with disagreement often leading to repercussions.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

However, my approach favors understanding and dialogue to resolve misunderstandings or disagreements. I strive to lead with love, empathy, and open conversation. In the past, my preference wasn't always towards discussion, especially when I sensed the other party's reluctance to engage in meaningful dialogue. Their approach often didn't involve open communication, so I felt compelled to adapt to their methods, though more efficiently.

12.5 Challenging Authority: Seeking Clarity in a Hierarchical World

A recurring challenge for me has been my relationship with authority figures. It's not about a desire to defy or resist authority per se; rather, it's about seeking clarity and ensuring that actions and directions make sense before committing to them. My inquiries are often misconstrued as challenges to authority or experience, which is not my intention. I simply seek a deeper understanding before proceeding. Ultimately, my goal is to live life on my terms, navigating spaces in a way that aligns with my values and aspirations, and finding a way to make this possible is a key part of my journey.

12.6 The Search for Independence: Craving for a Self-Determined Life

I don't have a mentor to guide me with the wisdom of their experiences, but I'm aware that the life I aspire to is attainable. I see glimpses of this in the world, assuming these people are leading the happy lives I yearn for. This period in my life feels like the right time for this transformation. I believe that the trials I've endured were necessary for my growth and understanding. If I hadn't faced these challenges, I wouldn't have reached the realizations that now drive me. My actions were born out of desperation, motivated by the understanding that no one else would come to my rescue.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

My deepest desire has always been freedom – the freedom to live life on my terms, without external dictates of my value, the liberty to travel, and the ability to spontaneously enjoy life with my family without being tethered to a conventional work schedule. This yearning led me to question the very foundations of our societal structure, particularly the emphasis on monetary compensation. Historically, people engaged in bartering, trading goods, and services based on mutual need and skill, long before the concept of money was introduced. This realization shifted my perspective: it's not just about monetary gain but enhancing my skills and value so that I can engage in meaningful exchanges, whether monetary or otherwise.

Yet, even with this new understanding, I faced a dilemma. After my dismissal (or resignation, depending on the perspective), I found myself at a crossroads. I could either move forward, despite the uncertainty, or retreat to the safety of my family's support. Returning to live with my mother or sisters, though a possible safety net, didn't align with my vision of independence and self-sufficiency. To me, it wasn't a consideration, not even slightly. My focus remained steadfast on forging ahead, developing myself further, and navigating my path to the freedom I so deeply craved.

12.7 At the Crossroads: Choosing Self-Sufficiency Over Safety Nets

Having been away from my family for a considerable time, I've watched my sisters' children grow up from afar. This observation brought me to a significant realization: What could I offer them as a role model? This became my driving motivation. The next time they see me, I aim to be a genuine embodiment of my ideals and aspirations, independent of societal expectations. My journey became about self-discovery and transformation, transcending beyond mere financial or job-related goals.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

12.8 Defining Your Destination

I realized that it was crucial to understand who I wanted to be and to actively work towards becoming that person. It wasn't just about where I was at that moment; it was about where I wanted to go and how to get there. Without these life-altering experiences, I might have continued on a path without purpose, potentially ending up as a cable technician, unfulfilled and disconnected from my true self.

12.9 Overcoming Barriers

Looking back, the stress and challenges I faced seem insignificant compared to the growth they stimulated. The key question became: What am I willing to do to achieve my goals and become the person I aspire to be? I realized that the only barriers to my progress were the actions I was unwilling to take. However, I set clear boundaries: I would not harm others for personal gain, compromise my soul, or degrade myself for financial success.

12.10 Embracing Necessary Sacrifices

I committed to doing whatever it takes, investing my time, energy, and spirit, persisting until I achieved my goals. And once those goals were reached, I would set new ones, continually striving for improvement. My aim is to gain the freedom to live, create, and express on my own terms, while being self-reliant and supportive of those around me. This mindset, I believe, is essential for anyone on a similar journey: a willingness to take risks and embrace the necessary sacrifices, understanding that our actions impact not just our lives but those of the people around us.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

12.11 Understanding Personal Motivations

In life, there's an essential shift from 'I should do it' or 'I will do it tonight' to a firm 'I must do it.' This mindset shift is a clear sign of commitment. It's about telling yourself that no matter what, you must achieve your goals, believing intensely in your path as the only way forward. From the lessons I've learned, my question to you is: Why are you doing what you're doing? Are your actions a result of your own visions and desires, or are they dictated by societal norms, family expectations, or employer demands?

Consider how you feel in your activities. Do you find yourself immersed and losing track of time, or are you constantly watching the clock, craving to be elsewhere? Being trapped between your current state of being and your aspirations, yet unsure how to bridge the gap, is a common dilemma. The willingness to do whatever it takes is crucial, and often, what you're not willing to do can be the very obstacle preventing you from becoming who you want to be.

12.12 Evolving into Your True Self

Transformation isn't about becoming a different person; it's about evolving into the person you're meant to be. This evolution involves letting go of aspects of your old self that no longer serve you—whether it's habits, people, places, or even mindsets. It's about daily reaffirmation, maintaining focus, a positive mindset, and the right energy. Remember, while many aspects of life are beyond your control, you can always manage your emotions and reactions.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

12.13 Mastering Emotions and Reactions

Controlling thoughts can be challenging, but embracing and understanding them is key. Reflect on the influences shaping your thoughts. Are they genuinely yours, or are they echoes of others' opinions? This self-analysis is vital in determining if your path aligns with your true self or if it's a trajectory set by external influences.

12.14 Interpreting Experiences as Lessons

In the journey of self-discovery and growth, the way we interpret our experiences significantly influences our path. Initially, I grappled with conflicting thoughts - feeling internally empowered yet externally restrained. This contrast often manifested in my life, urging me to conform and "stay in my place." Such constraints are not the life I aspire to live. I desire for freedom of thought, action, and being.

12.15 Embracing Life's Continuous Learning Process

The turning point for me was when I started viewing these experiences as lessons rather than problems. Instead of asking, "Why is this happening to me?" I shifted to, "What is happening, and why?" This change in perspective was crucial. It allowed me to detach personally from the events and seek deeper meanings and lessons within them.

I noticed a pattern of repeated cycles in various aspects of my life, be it relationships or professional endeavors. It became clear that these recurrences were due to unlearned lessons. Just like in school, if you don't master the curriculum of one grade, you're bound to repeat it. I began to approach life as a series of tests, where each challenge was an opportunity to learn and grow.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

I realized that passing these life tests doesn't mean the end of challenges. Much like advancing through school grades, each level of life introduces new lessons and complexities. Recognizing this, I embraced the continuous learning process, understanding that each stage of life demands new understanding and adaptation. This approach has transformed my outlook, enabling me to navigate life's challenges with a mindset geared towards growth and evolution.

12.16 Simplifying Through Understanding

In our pursuit of mastery, the realization that improvement and deeper understanding of our craft are pivotal becomes increasingly apparent. The knowledge of how things work simplifies the process and makes it easier to navigate situations, especially when outcomes don't align with our expectations. It's a recognition that, at times, things will inherently deviate from the plan – such is the nature of life and work.

12.17 Solitude in the Journey

In creating these books, my aim isn't to do the work for others, but to share my understanding and assure them they aren't alone. My journey felt solitary, marked by a perception that no one could comprehend my struggles. This isolation influenced not only my demeanor but also the work and content I produced. My music from that period echoes this sentiment – a mix of resilience and resentment stemming from a sense of abandonment. However, in retrospect, this solitude was what I needed, even though it felt overwhelmingly like I was navigating my path without support.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

Being alone meant that I had to rely on myself to create and find fulfillment in my work, without the immediate feedback or understanding from others. Often, when sharing my creations, the lack of engagement or understanding from others was evident – seen in their distant gazes or disinterested tones. This lack of connection and understanding can be disheartening, yet it's an fundamental part of the journey. It's about finding strength and motivation within, despite the external lack of support or understanding, and continuing to evolve and refine one's craft.

12.18 The Unlearning Process: Shedding Survival Habits for Personal Growth

My path to self-mastery and self-development was primarily about unlearning and relearning. Much of what I had absorbed from street life was about survival, often manifesting in ways that were far from compassionate. This required me to consciously shed these survival-oriented habits and forge a new mindset and environment, one more aligned with my aspirations in music and personal growth.

This transformation wasn't externally imposed; it stemmed from an inner call. I recognized that certain ways of living felt naturally wrong, while others resonated deeply, feeling just right. This realization became my compass, guiding me towards a life grounded in thorough research, planning, and the wisdom gained from experience. It was about learning from role models, not just current influencers but figures across different eras, to understand the universal aspects of human struggle and triumph. This diverse approach provided a broader perspective, illustrating how certain patterns and challenges have persisted throughout history.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

12.19 History as a Teacher: Assembling Wisdom Across Eras

Watching documentaries and clips from as far back as the 1920s, I was struck by the similarities in human experiences across time. It reinforced the idea that while our surroundings and circumstances might change, the core elements of our journey often remain constant. This realization was empowering, as it connected me to a legacy of resilience and adaptability, encouraging me to persist and evolve along my path.

12.20 Revisiting the Basics: Foundation for Transformation

In my journey, I found myself revisiting the basics, similar to Neo's awakening in "The Matrix," where a wealth of knowledge suddenly became accessible. This return to foundational learning at the age of 33, many years after leaving high school, became a quest to understand everything from the roots of language to the origins of well-known people like Rolls Royce and Walmart. I realized that all creations, much like a house, rely on a solid foundation. Regardless of their eventual appearance or complexity, this foundational integrity is crucial; without it, the structure, no matter how impressive, is doomed to eventual collapse.

12.21 Recognizing Life's Cycles: The Key to Change and Growth

This new phase of learning was exhilarating, focusing on subjects that directly benefited and transformed my life. It became clear that life is a series of cycles, some beneficial, others detrimental. The key is recognizing these patterns. If a cycle is favorable, nurture and continue it. If it's harmful, it's essential to break it and create a new path. This is where real change occurs – in the recognition and alteration of these life cycles. Failure to do so can lead to chronic problems, frustrations, or a lifetime of unhappiness, often self-inflicted due to a lack of self-awareness.

CHAPTER 12: LIFE'S LESSONS

12.22 Continued Progress: Moving Forward with Resilience and Skill

I offer these insights not just as a reflection of my path but as signposts for others. They might serve as warnings to change course or affirmations that you're on the right track. The critical thing is to keep moving forward. Stagnation or premature termination of your journey, often due to a lack of resilience, skill development, or perseverance, spells the end of growth. My hope is that my experiences, and the lessons derived from them, can be a source of inspiration and guidance for others on their own paths to self-realization and fulfillment.

CHAPTER 12: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 12: Reflective questions

1. Recall a situation where your personal values conflicted with the corporate hierarchy. How did you navigate this conflict while maintaining your integrity?

Think about a time when you struggled with authority in the workplace. How did you manage to find a balance between respect for authority and staying true to your own beliefs?

2. Think of a time when you faced a conflict at work. How did you use communication to resolve it, and what did you learn about empathy in the workplace?

What strategies have you found effective in navigating workplace disagreements and ensuring your perspective is understood?

3. Think of a challenging experience in your life. How did you interpret it as a lesson, and what personal growth resulted from this interpretation?

What strategies do you use to turn difficult experiences into opportunities for learning and personal development?

4. Reflect on an area of your life that became simpler once you gained a deeper understanding of it. How did this knowledge lead to improvement?

How do you approach complex situations or concepts with the goal of simplifying them? Can you provide an example where this approach was successful?

5. Describe a time when you experienced solitude in your personal or professional journey. How did this solitude contribute to your self-reliance and creative development?

CHAPTER 12: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

How do you view solitude in the context of your life's journey? Do you see it as a necessary part of personal growth?

CHAPTER 12: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 12: Action guide

Step 1: Develop Effective Communication Skills

Specific: Improve your communication to be clear, respectful, and assertive.

Measurable: Track the outcomes of your interactions to assess your communication effectiveness.

Achievable: Take a course or read books on effective communication.

Relevant: Good communication skills are essential for resolving conflicts and misunderstandings.

Time-bound: Set a goal to enhance your skills over three months.

Step 2: Master Your Emotions

Specific: Learn to recognize and manage your emotions, particularly in challenging situations.

Measurable: Reflect on your emotional responses in a daily journal.

Achievable: Practice mindfulness or other emotion-regulation techniques.

Relevant: Emotional intelligence is vital for personal growth and workplace success.

Time-bound: Work on this consistently for a year.

CHAPTER 12: ACTION GUIDE

Step 3: Learn from History and Past Experiences

Specific: Analyze historical events and personal past experiences for valuable lessons.

Measurable: Note down insights and how they apply to your current life.

Achievable: Read history books, biographies, or reflect on your past decisions.

Relevant: History and past experiences are rich sources of wisdom.

Time-bound: Dedicate time each week for this study or reflection.

Step 4: Recognize and Break Life's Negative Cycles

Specific: Identify any negative cycles or patterns in your life.

Measurable: Keep a record of recurring issues or situations.

Achievable: Seek professional help if necessary to understand and break these cycles.

Relevant: Breaking negative cycles is crucial for growth and development.

Time-bound: Aim to identify and start addressing these cycles within six months.

Step 5: Commit to Continuous Progress

Specific: Define what continuous progress looks like in your personal and professional life.

Measurable: Set specific benchmarks for progress.

CHAPTER 12: ACTION GUIDE

Achievable: Regularly update your skills and knowledge.

Relevant: Continuous progress is essential for long-term success

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN OVERVIEW

Chapter 13: Pizza man overview

Chapter 13, "The Many Faces of Work," shares stories about rolling with the punches when your job life throws curveballs. It's about seeing the good in jobs you never thought you'd do and finding ways to grow from every experience. This chapter talks about why it's okay to leave a job that doesn't fit with where you want to go in life, reminding us that it's important to do work that helps us grow and feel fulfilled.

It also gets into the struggles of sticking to traditional job roles when you really want to be your own boss and do things your way, driven by your own dreams and ambitions. The story wraps up with a push towards self-improvement, showing how learning and getting better at what you do can lead you towards being the best version of yourself. It's a nudge for everyone to take a second look at their career choices, to be open to change, and to always keep moving forward towards personal goals and independence. This chapter is all about the journey of finding what work means to you, grabbing hold of new chances, and making the most out of where they might lead.

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN

Chapter 13: Pizza man

13.1 Pizza Man: An Unexpected Turn

Following my departure from the cable company, I found myself in a state of urgency, needing a source of income. My last paycheck from my previous job had arrived, and desperation set in. Coincidentally, a new pizza place was opening right next to my apartment. I had watched its construction, anticipating its opening as a customer, never imagining I'd be an employee. Yet, driven by necessity, I noticed their "Now Hiring" sign and applied for a delivery driver position. To my surprise, I was hired the same day, a swift turn of events that both solved an immediate need and wounded my pride.

My aspirations for a career progression had been ruined, and I was back to a job reminiscent of my high school days. The pizza place, preparing for their pre-grand opening, called me that afternoon to work. Despite my reservations, the promise of immediate pay swayed me. My first shift was a mere four hours, yet I managed to earn \$100 in tips, a small but significant victory in my new reality.

In the initial weeks, there was a shortage of delivery drivers, so I often handled multiple orders simultaneously. The area I served was conveniently compact, encompassing schools, residential areas, and office buildings, all within a 10-minute radius. This proximity allowed for efficient deliveries, and to my relief, the tips were consistently generous, ranging from \$60 to \$100 nightly. The community's appreciation for a new pizza establishment in their neighborhood was obvious, reflected in their generosity. This unexpected venture into pizza delivery, though humbling, became a crucial lifeline during a turbulent period in my life.

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN

13.2 A Night to Remember: The Super Bowl Shift

During my duration as a pizza delivery driver, my most memorable and lucrative shift was on Super Bowl night. That day, I had committed to a double shift from 10 am to midnight. By 11:30 pm, I had already accumulated \$150 in tips, a commendable feat considering the gradual slowdown in orders as the night progressed. The staff, anticipating the end of the shift, had begun the closing routine, ready to head home.

Unexpectedly, at 11:40 pm, a last-minute delivery order came through. Initially hesitant, I agreed to make the delivery on the condition that I could head straight home afterward, without returning to the restaurant for clock out procedures. The manager consented, kindly allowing me to clock out remotely and even take home a complimentary pizza and wings. My excitement wasn't just about the earnings of the day but also the prospect of enjoying a well-earned meal at home.

Upon reaching the customer's residence, I was greeted with an unexpectedly generous gesture. As I handed over the pizza, the customer, rummaging through his pocket, pulled out a stack of \$100 bills. Although his wife had already tipped me \$50 via the app, he handed me an additional \$100 bill. The surprise and joy I felt were indescribable; such generosity was rare and deeply appreciated.

This extraordinary night culminated in a total of \$300 in tips, a significant boost for me. Following the Super Bowl, my earnings returned to the usual range of \$60 to \$100 per night, but the memory of that exceptional shift remained vivid. Working 4-5 hours daily, seven days a week, and living right next door to the pizzeria, I found a rhythm that worked for me. The bi-weekly paychecks, combined with the nightly tips, ensured my bills were covered with a little extra to spare. This experience, while a departure from my previous career, taught me valuable lessons in humility, hard work, and the unexpected kindness of strangers.

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN

13.3 Shifting Roles and Rising Tensions

Initially, my job at the pizza place was straightforward – delivering pizzas. However, the management soon expanded our responsibilities to include tasks inside the restaurant. I was hesitant about this shift in duties, as it diverged from what I had initially signed up for. My new role encompassed answering phones, operating the cash register, and even making pizzas.

The situation became more complex when I realized these additional responsibilities were causing me to miss out on lucrative deliveries. This issue wasn't exclusive to me; other drivers faced similar challenges. We noticed a pattern: some drivers were selectively taking orders that already had prepaid tips, while disregarding others. If an order didn't include a prepaid tip, they would subtly pass it to an unsuspecting driver busy with front-end tasks.

I grew suspicious of these tactics and decided to keep a closer eye on the situation. My observance paid off when I caught a colleague attempting to switch one of my orders. He pretended he was innocent, claiming it was a mere accident, but I had observed him employing the same strategy with others. This led to a confrontation involving the supervisor. Although I managed to reclaim my delivery, the atmosphere had grown tense.

The pizza place began experiencing a slowdown in business, intensifying the competitive environment among the drivers. Disputes over modest tips, sometimes as little as \$5, became frequent. This tension highlighted a significant shift from the earlier days of plentiful tips and camaraderie. It was a simple reminder of the changing dynamics in a workplace and the challenges that arise when financial pressures mount.

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN

13.4 The Decision to Leave: A Tipping Point

Even though I didn't resign immediately, I could sense where things were heading at the pizza place. I had already registered as an Uber and Lyft driver, contemplating a shift in my career. Moreover, I began to feel increasingly out of place; at 30 years old, I was working alongside high school students. A particularly jarring aspect was that one of our managers, a mere 17 years old, was running the show. She was the daughter of the franchise owners, taken out of school and homeschooled to manage the business. Her lack of people skills was evident.

One incident that set my decision to leave occurred while another older colleague and I were waiting in the back room for more deliveries. The young manager approached us with a rough demeanor, instructing that one of us had to take out the trash and the other clean the bathroom. She offered no further direction and simply walked away.

This experience was a tipping point for me. It wasn't just her request – it was the way it was delivered. It made me realize that this job, which was initially just a means to earn some money, was slowly draining my spirit. So, after finishing my shift, I made the decision to quit. It was a moment of clarity, recognizing that this environment was not conducive to my personal and professional growth. The realization that it was time to pursue something more fulfilling and in line with my aspirations became unmistakably clear.

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN

13.5 From Delivery to Discovery: Embracing Change

Reflecting on my time as a pizza delivery driver, I realize now that the job fulfilled its purpose at that moment in my life – it was a means to an end. My primary goal was to earn money, and in that sense, I achieved what I set out to do. The decision to take the job wasn't driven by careful thought or planning. It was a spur-of-the-moment choice, fueled by the urgency of job hunting and financial desperation. When I saw the "now hiring" sign, I applied on impulse and was hired on the same day. This quick solution to my immediate financial need led me to become complacent and settle into the role.

However, this period of my life also highlighted a significant disconnect between my actions and my aspirations. Despite having grander ideas of success and a desire to engage more with my music, I was still entrenched in survival mode, perhaps more so than ever before. Initially, I was conscious of my age and the job I was doing. I felt a sense of embarrassment – to the point where I would change out of my work shirt in the parking lot to avoid being seen by acquaintances.

Over time, though, this sense of self-consciousness faded. I grew accustomed to my role and began to care less about how it was perceived by others. This change in attitude was a subtle yet telling shift. It indicated a level of comfort with my situation, but also a resignation to the reality of my circumstances. My focus was solely on the practical need to earn money, even though it meant sidelining my creative aspirations and deeper ambitions for a while.

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN

13.6 Challenging Traditional Roles: Beyond the Counter

Reflecting on my experience, I realized that my tolerance for being treated poorly was non-existent, regardless of the compensation. This realization reinforced my belief that creators, those who bring ideas and innovation to the table, are often more valued than mere laborers. Observing the supervisors, bosses, and managers, I noticed their primary role was often just to delegate tasks – frequently the tasks they preferred not to do themselves. This approach to leadership didn't align with my understanding of what good leadership should be, shaped by my background in sports where I frequently played the role of a team captain.

This difference in leadership styles led me to often step in and offer advice or take initiative. However, doing so reminded me of the saying, "Never outshine the master." This saying highlights a fundamental aspect of traditional employment – understanding and sticking to one's designated role, which often means simply following instructions without question. This concept often conflicted with my perspective on leadership and teamwork, emphasizing the differences between my values and the typical hierarchical structure found in many workplaces.

13.7 The Path to Self-Development: Beyond Money

Reflecting on my experience at the pizza place, I realized that money wasn't my focus. Instead, it was about the opportunities and resources that money could provide. While working there, my mind was elsewhere; I spent my delivery drives immersed in music, listening to instrumental beats and writing lyrics. These moments sparked a deeper understanding and comfort with the idea of pursuing my passion rather than just a paycheck.

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN

13.8 Embracing Self-government: The Drive for Self-Mastery

At this juncture, one thing became clear to me: I no longer wanted to work under a manager or supervisor. I yearned for the flexibility I had enjoyed while doing cable work, where most communication with my supervisor was over the phone, and I had control over my daily routine. This realization led to a profound shift in how I viewed my work ethic and commitment. I began to question myself: Why was I willing to wake up at 5:00 AM or work double shifts for someone else's business, but not for my own ventures? This self-reflection became a personal challenge, a call to apply the same level of dedication and effort to my endeavors as I had previously devoted to others' businesses. I recognized the need for a fundamental change in my approach, focusing on investing my time and energy into building my own path and future.

13.9 The Journey Begins: Seeking Knowledge and Growth

Reflecting on my first steps towards self-development and personal growth, I recall how I started by exploring books and learning goal-setting techniques. This journey wasn't instantaneous; it evolved progressively. My curiosity was often piqued by unfamiliar terms mentioned in YouTube videos, prompting me to research these concepts on Google. This process of discovery led me down various paths, continually discovering new information. I found myself absorbed in this learning process, beginning each day with educational videos and often falling asleep to them.

CHAPTER 13: PIZZA MAN

At this phase, my focus wasn't on music but solely on personal development and self-improvement. It was during this exploratory phase that I stumbled upon the concept of self-mastery. The idea of harmonizing the mind, body, and spirit, and gaining a deeper understanding of myself, struck a chord within me. Even though I didn't fully grasp what achieving self-mastery entailed, the concept resonated profoundly with me. It felt like the right path, something that would bring about significant change in my life.

CHAPTER 13: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 13: Reflective questions

1. Recall an instance where your hard work in a job led to a particularly rewarding or memorable experience. What did this teach you about the value of dedication and effort?

How has a specific event or busy period in your work life shown you the rewards of commitment and hard work?

2. Have you ever reached a tipping point in a job where you realized it no longer aligned with your growth? What factors influenced your decision to leave?

Reflect on how you identified that a job was draining your spirit. What steps did you take to move towards more fulfilling opportunities?

3. How have transitional jobs played a role in your personal and professional growth? What insights or discoveries did these roles bring?

Consider a time when a job was merely a steppingstone in your career. How did you use this period to reflect on and grow towards your aspirations?

4. When have you realized that personal passions and development were more important than monetary gain in your career? What drove this realization?

Think about how focusing on personal development has impacted your career choices. What shifts have you made to align your work with your passions?

5. Recall the initial steps you took towards self-improvement. What motivated you to start this journey, and what have you learned about yourself?

CHAPTER 13: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

How has your curiosity and willingness to learn contributed to your personal growth and understanding of self-mastery?

CHAPTER 13: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 13: Action guide

Step 1: Pursue Work That Contributes to Personal Growth

Specific: Seek job roles that align with your personal values and professional aspirations.

Measurable: Evaluate job satisfaction every three months to ensure alignment with personal growth.

Achievable: Conduct informational interviews or job shadowing to gain insights into roles that could contribute to your growth.

Relevant: Finding fulfilling work is key to long-term career satisfaction and personal development.

Time-bound: Aim to be in a role that contributes to your growth within one year.

Step 2: Challenge Traditional Employment Roles

Specific: Explore alternative work models like freelancing, entrepreneurship, or remote work.

Measurable: Dedicate time each week to learn about and prepare for alternative work models.

Achievable: Attend workshops or webinars on self-employment or consult with a career coach.

Relevant: Shifting away from traditional roles can lead to greater autonomy and job satisfaction.

CHAPTER 13: ACTION GUIDE

Time-bound: Set a target date to begin a transition to a new work model within the next year.

Step 3: Begin a Journey Towards Self-Improvement

Specific: Identify areas for personal and professional development.

Measurable: Track your progress in these areas through a journal or with a mentor.

Achievable: Engage in activities that promote growth, such as reading, attending courses, or joining a professional group.

Relevant: Personal improvement is essential for adapting to changes and achieving career satisfaction.

Time-bound: Set ongoing goals with specific checkpoints every six months.

Step 4: Seek Independence in Your Career

Specific: Develop a plan to achieve greater self-government in your career, whether through self-employment or negotiating flexibility in your current role.

Measurable: Regularly assess your level of self-sufficiency and job satisfaction.

Achievable: Work towards independence by setting up a side business, negotiating telecommuting options, or transitioning to freelance work.

Relevant: Autonomy often leads to higher job satisfaction and personal well-being.

CHAPTER 13: ACTION GUIDE

Time-bound: Aim to achieve your desired level of freedom within two years.

CHAPTER 14: MY PATH TO INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW

Chapter 14: My path to independence overview

Chapter 14, "Ridesharing: My Path to Independence," shares the author's journey from working for someone else to being their own boss through ridesharing. This story is about discovering the freedom and responsibility that come with running your own show. It shows how seeing yourself as a business can make you more aware of how you use your time and help you live a better life. The chapter highlights the perks of setting up your own daily routine, finding a balance between work and the rest of your life, and taking charge of your own path.

It also talks about how working for yourself can make you feel more satisfied and fulfilled because you're doing things your way. The importance of having clear goals and acting professionally, even in jobs like ridesharing, is discussed, along with staying true to your values, no matter where you work. Lastly, it emphasizes learning from everything you do and using tools like keeping track of your daily choices to understand yourself better and make smarter decisions. This chapter is a push for anyone thinking about self-employment to see the potential benefits for their personal growth and freedom.

CHAPTER 14: MY PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

Chapter 14: My path to independence

14.1 Embracing a Business Mindset: The Rideshare Journey Begins

After leaving the pizza place, I shifted my focus to ridesharing, working with Uber, Lyft, Door Dash, and Uber Eats. This marked a significant change in how I viewed myself and my work – I started treating myself as a business. This involved precisely tracking my activities, creating timesheets to record what I did every hour. Initially, there was no specific goal for this self-monitoring; it was more about maintaining a log of my hourly actions. Over time, this process helped me refine my daily routine and gain a better understanding of myself.

I noticed patterns in my emotional states and energy levels throughout the day. For instance, I realized that around 3:00 PM, I consistently felt tired. To counteract this, I scheduled my workouts at that time. Engaging in physical activity helped prevent me from submitting to tiredness. This self-checking was rooted in logic. In a job setting, inventory is tracked, and in my case, time was my most valuable inventory. I firmly believed that time was irreplaceable, so I aimed to make my work time justifiable with the monetary value I received. This strategy was about more than just earning money; it was about creating opportunities to invest in myself. If my bills were covered, I didn't need to work every day of the week. This freed up time for family, personal study, and activities that benefitted me on a personal level, rather than just contributing to a company's profit.

CHAPTER 14: MY PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

At that time, I wasn't entirely sure of my future direction, but I knew one thing for certain: if I wasn't dedicating all my time to making money, I could enjoy other aspects of life. This realization marked the beginning of a significant transition. I decided that becoming a rideshare driver would be ideal. The process was straightforward – I signed up online, used my own vehicle, and the platform provided a ready client base. This endeavor became my first real attempt at treating myself as a business entity.

14.2 Creating a Personal Schedule: Mastering My Time

I established a routine: waking up, working out, eating, and working at specific times. This structure allowed me to take control of my daily habits and routines. Since I was no longer obligated to a traditional job, I had the freedom to engage in activities that I enjoyed. For instance, between Uber trips, I would earn some money, cash out, and then spend time at Half Price Books to pick up information on lyric writing. During Uber Eats deliveries, my dog would accompany me in the back seat, and we'd visit the dog park between trips.

14.3 Discovering Freedom: A New Way of Life

Living this lifestyle every day solidified my resolve to never return to a corporate job. The freedom and enjoyment I experienced in my new routine were too valuable to give up. The contrast between this newfound independence and the constraints of a traditional job was simple, and I loved my life too much to go back to the old ways.

CHAPTER 14: MY PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

14.4 Envisioning My Future: From Thought to Reality

At that point, I began to envision creating my own future. I remember distinctly thinking about how I'd like to spend my days back when I was delivering pizzas or working as a cable installer. And then it dawned on me: I was living out those thoughts. This realization made me understand that whatever I imagined and worked towards could eventually become my reality. Therefore, I started being more intentional about how I utilized my time, believing that I was actively shaping my future.

14.5 Professionalism in Ridesharing: Beyond Driving

Even though Uber, Door Dash, and Lyft weren't my businesses, they offered me a platform to represent myself professionally. I began to contemplate: how could I present my best self to customers every day? Drawing upon the adaptability and people skills honed during my cable installer days—where I interacted with a variety of personalities in their homes—I applied these skills to my rideshare driving. This approach, I believe, contributed significantly to the generous tips I received while delivering pizzas. I engaged with customers proactively, sending them updates via the app, like notifying them when I was five minutes away, or addressing any missing items from their order. For instance, when a customer's desired soda wasn't available, I bought it at a gas station, which was greatly appreciated and reflected in their tips.

This personal touch mirrored my experience in cable installation. In a job not typically associated with tipping, I often received gratuities. It transcended just being a job. I would arrive at a customer's home to find them upset, but by the time I left, we'd be conversing like old friends, and they'd be offering me food or drinks. These experiences reinforced the impact of personal connection and the value of exceeding expectations in any service role.

CHAPTER 14: MY PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

14.6 Consistency and Change: The Struggle in Varied Jobs

You know, no matter the job, my spirit remains consistent at the beginning. It's like a fresh start each time, where I believe I can make a difference. But as time passes, I often feel a disconnect, particularly when my standards of operation and treatment of employees differ from those around me. This regularly leads to conflicts in personality and work environment. For me, the issues and problems at work often surpass the financial benefits. I find myself not wanting to endure these difficulties for the sake of money.

14.7 Self-Reflection: Learning from Every Experience

However, I tend to circle back to the notion that the responsibility lies with me. In every situation, I feel it's my fault for placing myself in that environment, but I also view it as a learning experience. I've learned to be more observant and mindful of the events in my life, especially since I've started recording and tracking my daily activities. This allows me to see, in a tangible form, the decisions I make and their rationale. I question why I spent an hour on one task and only 30 minutes on another, and whether I should reallocate my time more effectively. Although I'm not entirely sure of what I'm doing, I rely on my instincts; if it feels right in my mind, body, and spirit, that's the path I choose.

CHAPTER 14: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 14: Reflective questions

1. Reflect on a time when you had to shift your mindset to view your work or personal projects more professionally. How did this shift impact your approach and results?

Consider the concept of treating yourself as a business. How might adopting this perspective change the way you manage your time, skills, and resources?

2. Think about your current daily routine. How could establishing a more structured schedule enhance your productivity and personal fulfillment?

What are the potential challenges and benefits you might face in creating and adhering to a personal schedule, especially if self-employed or pursuing independent projects?

3. How would greater freedom and flexibility in your work life impact your overall well-being and lifestyle?

Reflect on a scenario where gaining more independence in your work could lead to a significant improvement in your quality of life. What steps can you take to make this a reality?

4. Recall a time when adding a personal touch to a service-oriented role made a difference. What impact did this have on your relationships with clients or customers?

How can you incorporate professionalism and proactive engagement in your current role or future endeavors to enhance the experience of those you serve?

5. How often do you reflect on and analyze your personal decisions and actions? What insights have you gained from this self-reflection?

CHAPTER 14: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Consider implementing a regular practice of tracking your activities and decisions. How might this contribute to more effective time management and life choices?

CHAPTER 14: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 14: Action guide

Step 1: Transition to Self-Employment

Specific: Determine a viable self-employment path based on your skills and interests.

Measurable: Create a detailed business plan with specific milestones to track your progress.

Achievable: Start with small, manageable goals to gradually transition into self-employment.

Relevant: This step aligns with the goal of gaining autonomy and control over your career.

Time-bound: Set a timeline for your transition, such as planning to be self-employed within the next year.

Step 2: Create a Structured Daily Routine

Specific: Develop a daily schedule that balances work tasks, personal time, and self-care.

Measurable: Review and adjust your schedule weekly to ensure it's productive and balanced.

Achievable: Implement time management techniques like the Pomodoro Technique or time blocking.

Relevant: A structured routine is vital for balancing work and personal life in self-employment.

Time-bound: Aim to establish and follow this routine consistently for a month.

CHAPTER 14: ACTION GUIDE

Step 3: Utilize Intention and Visualization

Specific: Regularly visualize your career and personal goals to maintain focus.

Measurable: Set aside time each day for visualization and reflection.

Achievable: Use tools like vision boards or journaling to aid in visualization.

Relevant: Visualization aligns your subconscious with your conscious goals.

Time-bound: Incorporate daily visualization into your routine for at least three months.

Step 4: Maintain Professional Conduct

Specific: Uphold high standards of professionalism in all aspects of your self-employment.

Measurable: Receive and review feedback from clients to gauge your professional conduct.

Achievable: Attend workshops or seminars on professional development.

Relevant: Professionalism is crucial for building a successful self-employment career.

Time-bound: Continuously assess and improve your professional conduct over six months.

Step 5: Align Work with Personal Ethics

Specific: Ensure that your work aligns with your personal values and ethics.

Measurable: Evaluate each project or client against your personal value system.

CHAPTER 14: ACTION GUIDE

Achievable: Turn down work that conflicts with your personal ethics.

Relevant: Alignment with personal ethics ensures satisfaction and integrity in your work.

Time-bound: Review your work ethics alignment quarterly.

CHAPTER 15: RIDE SHARE DRIVER OVERVIEW

Chapter 15: Ride share driver overview

Chapter 15, "Ride Share Driver," gives a real look into the ups and downs of driving for a rideshare service. It talks about the freedom this kind of job offers, like choosing when and where you work, but also the tough parts, like not always knowing how much you'll make or dealing with safety worries. The story shines a light on the deep conversations and connections you can have with passengers, turning everyday rides into chances for genuine interaction and, sometimes, even offering advice.

This chapter doesn't shy away from the hard truths of independent work, like the financial ups and downs and staying safe on the job. But it also shows how this work can teach you a lot about people, life, and yourself, proving that every job has something valuable to offer. It's a reminder that, no matter what kind of work you do, you can find meaning in it and use it to grow. This chapter encourages readers to think about the importance of understanding, flexibility, and knowing yourself in any job, and how every experience, no matter how small it seems, can help shape who you are.

CHAPTER 15: RIDE SHARE DRIVER

Chapter 15: Ride share driver

15.1 The Independent Driver: Starting the Rideshare Journey

As a rideshare driver, I utilized my car for various services: Uber for transporting people, Uber Eats, Lyft, and Door Dash. I felt a sense of independence, like I was my own boss. This experience was my first attempt at implementing my ideas about providing value to customers. Conveniently, a car wash near my home offered a \$20 monthly pass, allowing unlimited washes. So, I washed my car two or three times daily, ensuring it was always clean and smelled good. I provided water and gum for riders, enhancing their experience.

15.2 Enhancing the Rider Experience: Beyond Driving

My background in customer service and interacting with customers across various jobs made me comfortable initiating conversations. For example, a simple "How are you doing?" could open dialogue. If a passenger responded briefly and didn't engage further, I'd sense their desire for quiet and offer to play music. But often, this question led to meaningful conversations, making trips seem quicker and more enjoyable.

Most passengers were respectful and polite. While I had some unpleasant experiences, I never had to ask anyone to leave my car. However, there were instances where I had to firmly set boundaries, like when a lady complained about the car's scent and wanted to ride with the windows down. I regularly used car air freshener after each ride, which usually gained compliments. But in her case, I was prepared to offer her the option of another driver if she was dissatisfied. It was interesting to observe how some people, seemingly having a bad day, would initially act out but change their attitude upon realizing I wasn't one to tolerate disrespect. This expectation shaped my approach to such situations.

CHAPTER 15: RIDE SHARE DRIVER

15.3 A Positive Influence: Shaping the Energy in My Car

I developed a mindset where I aimed to positively influence the energy in my car, regardless of a passenger's initial mood. My strategy was to create an atmosphere that reflected my own energy, hoping to elevate my passengers to a similar level. This involved careful selection of words and tone. For example, if a rider expressed having a bad day, I'd counter with a perspective, such as the value of being alive, which often shifted the atmosphere to a more positive one.

15.4 Unexpected Connections: More Than Just a Ride

This approach led to interesting interactions. Passengers would sometimes suggest that I could be a therapist or mentor, especially when deeply moved by our conversations. One memorable instance involved a woman from Europe. As a Black American man, I sensed her preconceived notions about me might have been influenced by media portrayals. However, as we spoke, her reaction indicated a shift in her perception. She was visibly surprised by my confidence and articulation. By the end of the ride, she was in tears, deeply affected by our exchange.

15.5 The Universal Impact of Connection

This experience significantly boosted my confidence. Her background as a business professional from Europe, evident from her formal attire and appearance, made me realize the universal impact of my interactions. Whether conversing with individuals in the ghetto or corporate executives, my ability to connect and affect people remained consistent. This realization was inspiring, affirming the value of my communication skills and personal approach.

CHAPTER 15: RIDE SHARE DRIVER

15.6 Deep Conversations in Unexpected Places

One night, which proved to be quite unusual and reflective of the saying that life can be unpredictable, I had an older couple as passengers, likely in their mid to late 60s. Throughout the ride, we engaged in deep conversation. I shared with them my journey through various jobs and my aspirations for the future. I mentioned that my efforts were aimed at making a difference in my family's life. However, the wife, looking at me intently, suggested that my impact would extend far beyond my family – she believed I was destined to make a significant difference in the world. Her words struck me as they confidently predicted greatness in my future, despite barely knowing me.

15.7 A Chance Encounter and a Prayer

Then, unexpectedly, they asked if they could pray for me. At first, the request seemed odd – there we were, sitting in my car outside their house, holding hands in the dark, praying together. But after the prayer, I began to comprehend the kind of influence I had on people. This incident reminded me of my teenage years when, despite my youth, I often found myself engaged in profound conversations with strangers on the bus.

At that time, these interactions used to irritate me – I couldn't understand why these deep, philosophical discussions would happen so spontaneously. But during my time as a rideshare driver, engaging in meaningful conversations with passengers became a goal. I aimed to ensure that every ride was a positive experience, not just for me but also for my passengers.

CHAPTER 15: RIDE SHARE DRIVER

15.8 The Impact of Meaningful Exchanges

This experience with the older couple was one of many instances where my interactions with passengers turned into something deeper than a simple commute. It was as if each ride presented an opportunity for a life-changing philosophical exchange. The insightful impact of these interactions wasn't lost on me, and it was reflected in the generous tips I often received. This reinforced my belief in the power of meaningful human connections and the unexpected ways in which we can touch others' lives.

15.9 The Counselor on Wheels: Potential for a New Career

But that's when I began to seriously consider becoming a counselor or life coach. The frequent suggestions from passengers that they would pay me for advice nudged me towards this path. I started delving into the idea more deeply, focusing on personal development and learning about life coaching. One key principle I resonated with was the concept of 'practicing what you preach.' This approach felt natural to me as I was sharing insights based on my real-life experiences.

15.10 Respecting Boundaries: Digging into Personal Topics

In my conversations with passengers, I always tried to be respectful and sensitive, especially when delving into personal topics. For instance, once a lady shared her struggles with trying to conceive. I gently suggested the idea of adoption, not to persuade her, but to offer a perspective she might not have considered. By the end of our conversation, she seemed more open to discussing adoption with her husband. My strategy was to ask questions that encouraged them to explore their feelings and thoughts more deeply.

CHAPTER 15: RIDE SHARE DRIVER

15.11 Finding My Footing: Rideshare as a Steppingstone

However, even as I toyed with the idea of life coaching as a profession, I was aware of the responsibility it entailed. The prospect of being deeply involved in others' lives and managing their energy felt overwhelming. My primary motivation at that time was still financial, but the skills I was developing – an understanding of human behavior and a knack for approaching different personalities – were invaluable. These skills were honed through my time as a cable installer, where I learned to adapt to various household dynamics.

Beyond the monetary aspect, my stint as a rideshare driver was a significant learning experience. It boosted my confidence and provided external validation, reaffirming my capabilities in this new venture. Although I was still experimenting and unsure of the outcome, these experiences were shaping my path and reinforcing my belief in my potential.

15.12 The Rideshare Economy: Navigating Financial Uncertainty

While doing rideshare, I faced uncertainty in my daily earnings, a clear contrast to the predictability of a regular job where I knew exactly what my paycheck would be. Some days, I'd make \$100, other days \$50, and sometimes as much as \$300. The inconsistency meant I always had to seize every opportunity, often spending my day in parking lots between rides, avoiding the downtime of returning home.

This work style eliminated my previous job concerns about restricted working hours and pay limits. With rideshare, I could work as many hours and days as I wanted, effectively determining my income. However, the rideshare apps had a driving time cap for safety, requiring a break after a certain number of hours – around 12 to 16 hours, though I can't recall the exact limit. After reaching this threshold, a break of 6 to 8 hours was required before resuming.

CHAPTER 15: RIDE SHARE DRIVER

To avoid this limitation and maximize my working hours, I started juggling multiple apps. If one app forced a break, I'd simply switch to another and continue working. This strategy allowed me to maintain a steady flow of income, adapting to the fluctuating nature of the rideshare economy.

15.13 A Balancing Act: Maximizing Hours and Income

In my role as a rideshare driver, I experienced the independence of being my own boss, but the demands quickly escalated. I juggled multiple apps simultaneously, accepting whichever ride came first and toggling between apps to maximize my trips. To the apps, my driving hours appeared shorter than they were due to this strategy.

15.14 The Risks of Overworking: Safety Concerns on the Road

My typical day began with early morning airport trips, often taking 45 minutes to an hour. Sometimes, I'd immediately pick up another passenger from the airport, leading to extensive travel across the Dallas metroplex, from one end to the other. If no immediate trip followed an airport drop-off, I faced an hour-plus drive back to my neighborhood, far from the airport.

Afternoons involved transporting people from work or school, shifting to Uber Eats deliveries at dinner time. My schedule became so intense that I sometimes worked for 24 hours straight without sleep, driven by the necessity to meet bill payments. On one occasion, reaching my financial target only after a full day of continuous work, I realized my capacity for such endurance.

CHAPTER 15: RIDE SHARE DRIVER

However, this routine posed serious risks. There were moments when I dozed off at the wheel on the highway, waking up to find myself several exits ahead or veering from one lane to another without any recollection. The danger of potentially causing a serious accident loomed over me, but the need to sustain my basic needs – food and bills – kept me persisting in this survival mode. Despite the financial benefits, this lifestyle left me deeply dissatisfied and unhappy.

CHAPTER 15: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 15: Reflective questions

1. Think of a service experience where you went above and beyond. What motivated you, and how did it impact the person you were serving?

How can small gestures or conversations enhance experiences in your current role or daily interactions?

2. Can you recall a situation where your positive attitude significantly influenced someone else's mood or experience?

How do you manage to maintain a positive outlook in challenging work environments, and what effect does this have on those around you?

3. How do you think effective communication and genuine interaction can break down barriers in your personal or professional life?

Consider a time when an interaction changed a preconceived notion you had. What did this teach you about the power of connection?

4. Have you ever had a profound conversation in an unexpected place? What did this experience teach you about the value of open communication?

How can you create an environment in your life or work that encourages such meaningful exchanges?

5. How do you approach sensitive topics in conversations, ensuring respect and empathy?

CHAPTER 15: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Reflect on a time when you navigated a delicate conversation successfully. What did this teach you about empathy and understanding?

6. Have you ever faced health or safety risks due to overworking? How did you address this issue?

What measures can you take to ensure that your pursuit of financial stability doesn't compromise your health and safety?

CHAPTER 15: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 15: Action guide

Step 1: Embrace Independence in freelance Work.

Specific: Identify opportunities within freelance Work that allow for independent decision-making and flexible schedules.

Measurable: Set a target for the number of gigs or hours you want to complete each week.

Achievable: Start with a manageable workload and gradually increase as you become more comfortable.

Relevant: Independence is a key benefit of gig work, offering control over your work-life balance.

Time-bound: Evaluate your progress and adjust your targets monthly.

Step 2: Develop Exceptional Customer Service Skills

Specific: Aim to enhance each client's experience with excellent service.

Measurable: Track feedback from customers through ratings and reviews.

Achievable: Attend customer service workshops or online courses to improve your skills.

Relevant: Good customer service leads to higher ratings and more work opportunities.

CHAPTER 15: ACTION GUIDE

Time-bound: Set a goal to reach a specific rating or number of positive reviews within three months.

Step 3: Manage Financial Uncertainty

Specific: Develop a budget and savings plan to manage the fluctuating income of gig work.

Measurable: Track your earnings and expenses daily or weekly.

Achievable: Set aside a percentage of your earnings for savings or emergency funds.

Relevant: Financial planning is crucial for stability in the gig economy.

Time-bound: Review and adjust your financial plan each month.

Step 4: Explore Personal Growth and Skill Development

Specific: Identify areas for personal growth, such as communication or empathy, through your freelance experiences.

Measurable: Keep a journal to track insights and lessons learned.

Achievable: Apply these insights to improve your interactions and service.

Relevant: Ridesharing offers unique opportunities for personal development.

Time-bound: Set aside time each week for reflection and journaling.

Step 5: Embrace the Unpredictability of freelance Work.

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Specific: Adapt to the varied nature of ridesharing and be open to new experiences.

Measurable: Note how you handle unexpected situations or challenges.

Achievable: Stay flexible and adjust your approach as needed.

Relevant: Adaptability is a key skill in the gig economy.

Time-bound: Reflect on your adaptability skills monthly.

CHAPTER 16: SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL OVERVIEW

Chapter 16: Spinning out of control overview

Chapter 16, "Spinning Out of Control," shares a gripping tale of how a close call with danger can completely change how you see your life and what you do with it. The author talks about a moment when a near-miss car accident made him stop and think about how short life really is and how important it is to do what you love. This chapter is a powerful reminder that sometimes it takes a big scare to show us what we're really meant to do.

It's a story about finding the courage to chase after your dreams, in this case, music, even when it seems risky or uncertain. The author's leap towards following his heart, driven by a brush with death, is both moving and motivating. It shows that facing up to the possibility of not being around forever can push us to make bold choices and follow our passions without waiting. This chapter is a call to listen to that voice inside telling you to go after what makes you truly happy, reminding us all that life is too precious to spend on things that don't light us up inside.

CHAPTER 16: SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL

Chapter 16: Spinning out of control

16.1 The Fateful Night: A Close Call

One fateful night, around two in the morning and during rain, I found myself in a risky situation while driving. Attempting to navigate cautiously, my car began to hydroplane. Alone on the highway, and in the car, I spun uncontrollably towards a temporary concrete barrier erected for construction purposes.

16.2 A Moment of Reckoning: Escaping Disaster

In those dreadful moments, as I braked and closed my eyes, I braced for a terrible impact, convinced it was the end for me. Miraculously, as I approached the barrier, an unexpected gap appeared. The concrete wall that seemed an inevitable point of collision had a break just where I was headed. I came to a halt in this open space, narrowly avoiding disaster.

16.3 Rethinking Priorities: The Drive for Music

Prior to this incident, I had already been contemplating quitting rideshare driving. Despite its financial necessity, my heart wasn't in it. My passion was elsewhere - in music. I had been frequenting a local studio, working with a producer who lived nearby. Over the year, I had recorded 20 songs, crafting them during lunch breaks. These sessions boosted my confidence as a lyricist, and the positive feedback from online uploads fueled my ambition. However, a major hurdle remained: the beats I used were not my own. I neither created nor owned them, rendering my songs legally unusable for commercial purposes.

CHAPTER 16: SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL

16.4 A Shift in Direction: Embracing My Passion

That near-miss on the highway was a turning point. It strengthened my determination to pursue music full-time, though the path to achieving this remained unclear. I quit rideshare driving, only to face the onset of Covid shortly afterward. This unforeseen development added another layer of complexity to my already challenging journey.

CHAPTER 16: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 16: Reflective questions

1. Reflect on a moment in your life that felt like a close call. How did this experience change your perspective or approach to life?

Have you ever had an experience that made you reevaluate what's truly important in your life? How did this experience influence your subsequent decisions and actions?

2. Consider a time when you narrowly avoided a disaster. What immediate thoughts or realizations came to you in the aftermath?

How do you think surviving a potentially life-threatening situation might affect your long-term life goals and the way you prioritize them?

3. Can you identify a passion or dream that you've put on hold? What would it take for you to pursue this passion more actively?

How might a sudden realization of life's unpredictability motivate you to reassess and realign your current life goals with your true passions?

4. Reflect on a time when you made a significant life change to pursue a dream or passion. What fears or challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?

What steps can you take to start moving towards a dream or passion that you've been hesitant to pursue, especially in the face of uncertainties or societal expectations?

CHAPTER 16: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 16: Action guide

Step 1: Reassess Life Priorities

Specific: Identify what truly matters to you. This might be relationships, career goals, personal well-being, or hobbies.

Measurable: Create a list of your top five priorities.

Achievable: Ensure these priorities are things you genuinely care about and can realistically focus on.

Relevant: This step is about aligning your daily life with your deepest values and passions.

Time-bound: Complete your reassessment within a week of the life-altering event.

Step 2: Develop a Plan of Action

Specific: Outline detailed steps for achieving your goals.

Measurable: Break down each goal into smaller, measurable tasks.

Achievable: Ensure each step is actionable and within your capabilities.

Relevant: Each action should directly contribute to achieving your goals.

Time-bound: Assign deadlines to each step.

Step 3: Embrace Courage and Determination

CHAPTER 16: ACTION GUIDE

Specific: Commit to facing challenges and uncertainties head-on.

Measurable: Reflect on and journal any fears or hesitations you encounter and how you overcome them.

Achievable: Tackle challenges in a step-by-step manner.

Relevant: Overcoming fears is essential for personal growth and achieving your goals.

Time-bound: Regularly review your challenges and progress every week.

Step 4: Implement and Adjust Your Plan

Specific: Start working on your action plan.

Measurable: Track your daily or weekly progress.

Achievable: Adjust your plan as needed based on practical realities and new insights.

Relevant: Flexibility is key to effectively implementing your plan.

Time-bound: Review and adjust your plan monthly.

Step 5: Celebrate Progress and Reflect

Specific: Acknowledge and celebrate each small achievement towards your goals.

Measurable: Mark each completed task or milestone in your journey.

CHAPTER 16: ACTION GUIDE

Achievable: Choose simple and meaningful ways to celebrate, like sharing your progress with a friend.

Relevant: Celebrating progress keeps you motivated and acknowledges your effort.

Time-bound:

Take time each month to celebrate and reflect on your journey.

CHAPTER 17: COVID THE TURNING POINT OVERVIEW

Chapter 17: Covid the turning point overview

Chapter 17, "The Turning Point," dives into the big shake-up and deep thinking caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It's about the tough spot of having to choose between making money driving people around and staying safe. This chapter really gets into the struggle of deciding whether to get unemployment money, changing how you see asking for help, especially when jobs are hard to come by because of the virus. It's a story that a lot of folks can relate to, showing how many had to deal with new situations and rethink what they thought about getting aid from the government.

This part of the book also talks about choosing to live healthier and not wanting to go back to the old ways once the pandemic is over. It shows how tough times can actually help you grow, figure out what's really important, and change your life for the better. It's a powerful look at how we can all find new paths and become stronger when everything around us is changing. This chapter is all about finding the courage to change your life during uncertain times, showing that it's possible to come out on the other side better and more focused on what matters most.

CHAPTER 17: COVID THE TURNING POINT

Chapter 17: Covid the turning point

17.1 Confronting the Pandemic: A Driver's Dilemma

During the onset of Covid-19, I found myself at a crossroads with my rideshare driving. Initially, I hadn't officially quit, but in my mind, I had already moved on. However, the pandemic brought new regulations for drivers, including restrictions on the number of passengers and mandatory safety protocols like masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer.

17.2 Personal Health Scare: Suspecting Covid

Around this time, I fell ill. Though it was diagnosed as a common cold through an online checkup, I suspected it might have been Covid. This illness reinforced my reluctance to continue driving, fearing for both my health and that of my passengers.

17.3 Rethinking Unemployment: Overcoming Stereotypes

Then came the opportunity for unemployment benefits. At first, I was hesitant. My perception of unemployment was tainted by negative stereotypes, and I didn't want to be viewed in that light. However, a fellow rideshare driver changed my perspective, explaining that unemployment was essentially a return of the money I had already contributed through taxes.

CHAPTER 17: COVID THE TURNING POINT

After some contemplation, I applied and received unemployment benefits without issue. Initially, I was secretive about being on unemployment, even lying to acquaintances about still working. But as I noticed significant positive changes in my life, my attitude shifted. With my bills paid and financial worries eased, I embraced a healthier lifestyle. My days began with gym visits, followed by healthier eating habits and meal prepping. I found more time to spend with family and friends.

17.4 Resolved to Change: A New Direction

This new way of living made me realize how much I didn't want to return to my old job and lifestyle. I became determined to do whatever it took to avoid reverting to my previous way of life, marking a pivotal moment in my journey.

CHAPTER 17: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 17: Reflective questions

1. Reflect on a time when external circumstances, like the pandemic, forced you to reevaluate your career or life choices. How did you adapt to these changes?

What lessons did you learn about flexibility and resilience in your professional life during unprecedented times like the Covid-19 pandemic?

2. How have personal health scares or concerns influenced your decisions about work and lifestyle?

In what ways did the pandemic make you reassess the balance between your job risks and personal health?

3. Have you ever had to challenge your own biases or societal perceptions about financial assistance or unemployment? What led to this change in perspective?

How can overcoming stereotypes about unemployment or financial aid be beneficial in times of personal or widespread economic hardship?

4. Can you think of a moment in your life that prompted a strong resolve to change your direction, like the author's experience during unemployment?

What factors or realizations have motivated you to seek a better quality of life and avoid returning to less satisfying conditions?

CHAPTER 17: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 17: Action guide

Step 1: Address and Overcome Internal Conflicts

Specific: Identify and confront your internal conflicts regarding changes in your life due to the pandemic, such as applying for unemployment benefits.

Measurable: Keep a journal to track your feelings and thoughts about these changes.

Achievable: Seek information and talk to trusted individuals to understand and overcome your internal conflicts.

Relevant: This step helps in reconciling with the new realities imposed by the pandemic.

Time-bound: Aim to have a clearer understanding of your position within a month.

Step 2: Redefine Your Priorities and Lifestyle

Specific: Assess and redefine your priorities, focusing on health, career, and personal values.

Measurable: Make a list of new priorities and how they differ from your pre-pandemic priorities.

Achievable: Ensure these new priorities are realistic and aligned with your current situation.

Relevant: Redefining priorities helps adapt to the changing world while maintaining personal integrity.

CHAPTER 17: ACTION GUIDE

Time-bound: Complete this reassessment within two months.

Step 3: Embrace New Opportunities for Growth

Specific: Identify new opportunities for personal and professional growth that have arisen due to the pandemic.

Measurable: List down at least three new opportunities you can explore.

Achievable: Choose opportunities that are realistically attainable given your current resources and constraints.

Relevant: Embracing new opportunities helps in personal development and adapting to change.

Time-bound: Start exploring these opportunities within the next three months.

Step 4: Regular Self-Assessment and Adjustment

Specific: Continually assess how well you are adapting to the changes brought on by the pandemic.

Measurable: Regularly reflect on your feelings and experiences in your journal.

Achievable: Be honest and open in your self-assessment.

Relevant: Regular self-assessment ensures that you are on track with your adaptation and growth.

CHAPTER 17: ACTION GUIDE

Time-bound: Conduct a self-assessment every month.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION OVERVIEW

Chapter 18: The realization overview

In Chapter 18, "The Realization," you'll walk through eye-opening experiences and big moments that could change how you see your own life. This part of the book shows you the tough sides of certain jobs, like the dangers of manual work or the unpredictability of driving for a rideshare service, and how these jobs can really wear you down, both body and mind. It's a wake-up call to think about the work you do and whether it's worth the risk to your health.

It's about learning from your past, finding clear vision in tough times, and always working to get better at what you love. Discipline here isn't just about strict rules; it's about aligning your mind, body, and spirit to unlock your true creative potential. By the end of this chapter, you'll see the journey from just performing music to producing it, facing all the ups and downs along the way. This chapter is your guide to growing your skills, evaluating yourself honestly, and mastering your craft, encouraging you to embrace discipline, creativity, and the journey toward becoming your best self.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

Chapter 18: The realization

18.1 Confronting Risks: Life as a Cable Installer

In my reflections, I realized the extent of the risks I had been taking while working as a cable installer. Every day presented a new danger, not just from the elements, but also from the physical demands and unforeseen hazards of the job.

One significant risk was using a 32-foot ladder, which was a daily requirement regardless of weather conditions. Despite my obedience to safety protocols, there were times when the ladder would slip, leaving me dangling in my harness. I had to work in all kinds of weather – rain, snow, and even ice, which made the ladder even more untrustworthy.

Beyond the ladder, I faced encounters with various animals that posed their own threats. Whether it was aggressive dogs, snakes, bees, wasps, rats, or roaches, each presented a unique challenge. I often had to venture into cramped, uncomfortable spaces like attics, where I would come face to face with rats. Even opening a house box for cable work could reveal a nest of hornets or a hidden snake.

All these experiences contributed to a constant sense of danger on the job. It was a realization that the risks I was taking for what I considered 'chump change' were significant. The hazards I faced daily in my cable work were real and potentially life-threatening.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

18.2 The Hazards of Ride Sharing: Accidents and Close Calls

In my experiences with ride share driving, I encountered several accidents, none of which were caused by me. One incident occurred while I was waiting at a red light. I was in the first lane on the left, where the two left lanes were designated for turning, and the two right lanes for going straight. My light was still red, but when the light for the right lane turned green, the driver behind me, perhaps mistaking their signal, collided into the back of my car.

Another incident happened while I was parked and waiting for a rider outside a building. A car backed into me despite me honking the horn to alert them. It was baffling because the car had a large backup camera – they should have seen me. When I checked the other vehicle, I saw they had kids inside. The riders I was waiting for witnessed the accident as they exited the building. Although I intended to report the incident to the ride share company, the passengers reported it first. Fortunately, in both instances, no one was injured. These experiences added to the stress of the job, highlighting the unpredictability and risks involved in ride share driving.

18.3 The Dangers of Drowsy Driving

While driving for ride share services, I faced several challenges, the most alarming of which was falling asleep at the wheel. There were times when I could sense sleepiness creeping in. I'd try to fend it off by yawning, rolling down the windows for cold air, or turning up the music loudly. Despite these efforts, there were moments when I lost track of time and couldn't recall how I reached a particular location. This was frightening because I couldn't be sure if I had inadvertently run a red light or nearly caused an accident.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

18.4 A Life-Changing Spin: Rethinking My Path

The most disturbing experience was when my car spun out of control on a rainy, dark night on the highway. The situation was intensified by the fact that if there had been other vehicles close by it could have resulted in a much worse outcome. This incident profoundly affected me, emphasizing the risks I was taking. It led me to question the value of risking my life for jobs I didn't even enjoy. This realization hit me hard, as I recognized that my actions were primarily driven by the need to make money, to cover bills, and to provide for my girlfriend, myself, and my dog.

18.5 Solace in Songwriting: My Creative Refuge

Despite the challenges of these jobs, whether it was cable work, Uber driving, or pizza delivery, I found relief in writing lyrics. In between work, I would take out my notebook and pour my thoughts into songs. This creative outlet offered me a sense of purpose and enjoyment, contrasting totally with the risks and dissatisfaction of my day jobs.

18.6 The Struggle of Independent Music Creation

In 2015, I settled in Dallas after ending my on-the-road work. There, I connected with a local producer and over a year, I recorded 20 songs, which I had written during my time as a cable worker. However, our collaboration ended as he faced personal issues and couldn't commit to producing, mixing, and mastering my work.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

18.7 My Journey on SoundCloud and ReverbNation

I decided to share these songs on social media platforms like SoundCloud and ReverbNation. Initially, I wasn't focused on making music for public consumption; it was more about expressing myself. I sourced beats from YouTube, converting them to MP3s for my use. This approach wasn't intended for commercial gain but was driven by a personal desire to record my written material.

18.8 Confronting the Realities of Music Production

On ReverbNation, where I registered as being from Cincinnati, Ohio, my local ranking started around #600. Over a few months, it impressively climbed to #1 in my area. This progress was tracked by local listenership, although the exact criteria and geographic divisions weren't clear to me. While reaching the top rank was a moment of pride, it was alleviated by the realization that the beats I used weren't legally mine. Therefore, when I uploaded my songs to YouTube, the platform flagged my account, stating that my content couldn't be monetized.

This limitation, combined with the loss of my producer, led to a halt in my recording activities. I was aware that, without original beats or a producer, my potential to monetize and officially release my music was significantly restricted.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

18.9 A Shift in Professional Focus

During my time working as a cable installer in Dallas, my focus shifted away from music. My approach to music creation was primarily as a lyricist; I was interested in rapping and singing hooks rather than in producing, mixing, or mastering tracks. Although I was confident in my musical abilities, believing in the quality of my work, I still felt lost in the music industry. This sense of uncertainty stemmed from my limited perspective, focusing only on the lyrical aspect and not the broader scope of music production.

18.10 Bittersweet Recognition

When my tracks gained popularity on ReverbNation, ascending to the #1 spot, it was a significant moment for me. It wasn't just the approval from family and friends that mattered, but also the positive reception from a broader, unknown audience on social media. This achievement sparked a realization that I needed to change my approach to music, but I was hindered by a lack of knowledge in other aspects of music production like beat making and audio engineering.

As I lacked a clear direction in music, I concentrated on my cable installation job, particularly in a trainer role. However, when this path didn't pan out as expected, I transitioned to working at a pizza place and later as a ride-share driver. These decisions followed my success on ReverbNation, a time that was bittersweet for me. Despite the recognition, I was aware that my music's potential was limited because I had used beats without legal rights, leaving me uncertain about how to legitimately monetize my work. This dilemma meant that even though my music was appreciated, it wasn't fully exploitable in a commercial sense.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

While I was focused on creating music for myself, expressing my thoughts, emotions, and feelings through lyrics, I realized the necessity of certain equipment for music production. I understood the basic requirements: a laptop or computer, and a digital audio workstation (DAW) for recording. My lack of knowledge in editing meant I had to devise a plan: acquire a computer, create beats, record at home, and then outsource the mixing and mastering.

During my years working on the road with cable, I predominantly dealt with cash transactions. When I decided to get the required equipment for my music, I realized new computers were quite expensive. This led me to consider a rent-to-own option. Such places offer items on a payment plan rather than a lump sum purchase. However, these plans often incur high interest, resulting in a total cost significantly higher than the original price. For example, a \$2000 item might end up costing much more through weekly payments over an extended period.

The idea of acquiring a computer through a rent-to-own scheme wasn't initially in my plans. It came about when my girlfriend received a flyer from a rent-to-own store and decided to look for a TV. I accompanied her without the intention of getting a computer, as my previous online search at this store showed they didn't have the model I wanted. However, upon entering the store, I was surprised to find the exact computer model I desired prominently displayed. My girlfriend noticed my interest and suggested we get the computer, which we did, even though it meant not purchasing the TV she had initially planned to buy.

18.11 Starting from Scratch

I embarked on my music creation journey largely self-taught, assembling knowledge from observing others set up their studios or adjust their equipment. This unofficial learning led me to understand the essentials for a home studio setup.

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18.12 Navigating Financial and Technical Hurdles

I acquired an Apple desktop computer and, through resourcefulness, found a cracked version of Fruity Loop Studio, a popular digital audio workstation (DAW). Although this software typically requires a purchase, I managed to access it illegally for free. Additionally, I experimented with GarageBand, another DAW, which was available for free. During this phase, I continued to practice with beats downloaded from YouTube, using them as a tool to refine my skills.

18.13 Striving for Better Sound Quality

Despite recognizing the poor quality of my self-produced music, I created about ten songs and uploaded them to SoundCloud as "Taking Over the City Volume 2." This collection followed the twenty songs I had previously recorded with a producer in Dallas, titled "Taking Over the City Volume 1." Surprisingly, even with the subpar quality, these new songs gathered positive feedback. While working in cable in Dallas and later in El Paso, Texas, my coworkers and others began showing interest in my music, leading to unexpected requests for performances and inquiries about accessing my songs.

The challenge for me wasn't the music itself – I had a natural affinity for creating lyrics and melodies. Instead, the complexities of mixing and mastering were discouraging. My initial setup was basic at best, with a USB microphone instead of the more suitable condenser microphone and lacking an audio interface.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

In my pursuit to improve the sound quality, I came across online recommendations to purchase vocal chains, purportedly to achieve a sound quality similar to popular artists like Drake, Migos, and Chris Brown. I invested in these vocal chains, hoping for a significant improvement. However, the result was still unsatisfactory, highlighting my limited understanding of sound engineering and the intricacies of music production.

18.14 Confronting Life's Realities

During this period, while employed at the cable company, my situation began to deteriorate, particularly after I was appointed as a trainer but subsequently faced a pay cut. My struggles with mastering the intricacies of mixing and mastering in music production led me to make a drastic decision. In a bid to manage my financial obligations, I pawned the computer I had acquired through a rent-to-own arrangement. Unfortunately, I found myself unable to retrieve it from the pawnshop and was still liable for the payments to the rental company. This situation was compounded by the fact that the rental account was in my girlfriend's name, as I had no credit history and had used her credit for the purchase.

18.15 Navigating Financial Hardships

My journey into debt deepened, starting from 2015 and stretching into 2020. This period of financial hardship and introspection coincided with my time on unemployment due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It gave me an opportunity to reflect deeply on my life's trajectory. I realized that a constant element in my life, during the chaos, had always been music. This realization prompted me to question my approach to life. I acknowledged that my 'go with the flow' attitude, which had been enjoyable during my road-working days, was now proving detrimental. It led me to ponder on the potential outcomes if I were to adopt a more deliberate and planned approach to my life and career, particularly in relation to my passion for music.

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18.16 Reflecting on Future Possibilities

At this moment, I began to ponder deeply about my potential future self, considering what I could possibly become. This reflection stemmed from my exhaustive work routine up until then. As a contractor in the cable industry, there was a relentless push to acquire additional jobs, not just for personal gain but to enhance the company's reputation and secure more contracts.

18.17 Challenges of a Contractor

My typical day, even before taking on the role of a trainer, was extremely demanding. As a trainer, it required me to start my day extraordinarily early. I would wake up at 3:30 AM, allowing enough time to get ready and have breakfast before leaving at around 4:30 AM to arrive at work by 5:00 AM. My responsibility was to open the warehouse, which involved various tasks such as paperwork and distributing equipment to other technicians. This would last until about 8:00 AM, by which time all technicians were expected to be on their first job.

My personal workday would begin around 9:00 AM and typically extend until 10:00 PM. This schedule included a combination of training duties and completing my own assigned tasks. If a trainee encountered an issue on a job, I was responsible for assisting them, either by directly solving the problem or guiding them through it. Additionally, I had my own set of jobs to complete, which were supposed to be more manageable yet often turned out to be quite challenging. Unforeseen issues like malfunctioning equipment could easily disrupt the smooth flow of these jobs.

By the time I got home, usually around 10:30 PM, I was exhausted. My evening routine often involved unwinding with a beer and playing video games until I fell asleep, sometimes even in my work clothes, only to repeat the same grueling schedule the next day.

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18.18 Shifting Gears in Life

When I transitioned to being a ride-share driver, I began to reshape my habits to better represent myself. I made a conscious decision to disconnect from video games, going as far as unplugging my console and stowing it under the bed. I even took photos of it to sell on Facebook Marketplace, feeling a strong need to eliminate this distraction from my life.

18.19 Adopting Healthier Habits

Additionally, I stopped consuming alcohol. This change wasn't just about striving to be a better person; it was a practical decision influenced by my new job. Being responsible for driving customers meant I couldn't afford the risk of drinking and driving. Moreover, the after-effects of alcohol consumption started to conflict with my work routine. Whenever I drank, I noticed a reluctance to return to driving, or I would delay starting my shifts to ensure the alcohol had fully left my system. This interruption to the lifestyle I was trying to cultivate made it easier for me to let go of alcohol. It wasn't a matter of disliking drinking or facing issues with it; rather, it was about recognizing that it was an obstacle in the path to achieving my goals and the vision I had for my future.

18.20 Learning from a Near Disaster

I was already undergoing a transformation when I spun out of control on the highway. That incident jolted me into a different mindset, making me realize that if I was going to take risks, they needed to yield significant rewards. It wasn't about avoiding work or disliking my job, but about earning money on my own terms. Despite this realization, I was uncertain about how to achieve this at that moment.

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18.21 A Pause in the Fast-Paced Life

When the COVID-19 lockdown began, it offered an extraordinary opportunity for peace, quiet, and self-reflection – something I hadn't experienced in over a decade of continuous work. Initially, my focus was on enjoying life; I spent my earnings freely without saving. Every Friday, after getting paid from my job on the road, I would immediately buy new clothes, shoes, pants, shirts, hats, jackets – whatever caught my eye. During our six-month stays in various cities, I would leave behind clothes and other items, as it was impractical to lug everything around while traveling. It was a carefree time with no dependents to support, filled with work, partying, and meeting new people in different cities.

18.22 Facing New Challenges

However, once I settled in Dallas, life became more complicated. I had an apartment and a car with monthly payments, leading to accumulating debts with the computer, pawn shops, rent-to-own stores, and my girlfriend. I found myself increasingly trapped in a cycle of debt and obligation.

18.23 Rethinking Decisions and Directions

I realized that much of what I had been doing was based on what I had been told, rather than my own research or informed decisions. This became evident when I purchased a car. At the dealership, I merely mentioned what I could afford and the brand I wanted. Without much thought, I accepted the car they suggested after a test drive. I didn't choose the color or investigate other options. My surprise at being approved for the car purchase highlighted my lack of understanding about credit and other financial matters.

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This realization extended beyond just the music. It became clear that I needed to focus more on learning and perfecting my craft. However, the constant pressure and stress of being far from home, without a support system, made it difficult to even think straight, let alone focus on music. Every moment felt critical, and the need to earn money was always pressing.

18.24 Navigating the Demands of a New Job

Ridesharing seemed like a solution at first, but it came with its own set of expenses. I had to cover gas, oil changes, tire replacements, and tolls in Texas. Soon, a significant portion of my day was consumed with just covering these necessary expenses before I could even start making any profit from driving. This financial strain further compounded the stress and urgency of my situation.

While the freedom of not having a boss or a fixed job to clock into every day was appealing, the reality of ridesharing presented its own set of challenges. Unlike my previous cable job, where the truck, gas, and route were provided, everything in ridesharing was my responsibility. The option to rent a car was there, but it came with its own complications, such as an initial down payment and a weekly payment that had to be met before I could access my earnings.

This system meant that if I wanted to make \$1000 in a week and the rental cost was \$300, I couldn't cash out until I had covered the car payment. Even necessities like fuel for the car would be inaccessible until that threshold was reached. I decided to use my own car to avoid these complications, but this led to increased maintenance costs like frequent oil changes.

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18.25 Recognizing Past Mistakes

I began to realize that I had a pattern of diving into things without proper research or planning. This approach repeatedly led me into situations where I felt stuck, yet somehow, I would always find a way to resolve these issues. However, these solutions often left me in a state of stress, financial instability, confusion, lack of confidence, fear, and isolation. I recognized the need for a change in approach, understanding that thorough research and planning were essential for any future endeavors to avoid ending up in the same challenging situations.

18.26 Finding Clarity in Crisis

When COVID-19 struck, it provided me with an unexpected opportunity to pause and reflect. I realized that pursuing music was essential for me, in some way or form. However, as someone who doesn't see themselves primarily as a performer, I pondered over what role I could play in the music industry. My plan was to enhance my skills in various areas, including beat making, lyric writing, vocal recording, mixing, and mastering. This improvement would not only help me create higher quality music for myself but also showcase my abilities to offer services to others.

18.27 Evolving from Performer to Producer

My first mixtape, created with a producer, had above-average quality. To the average listener, it sounded great, but those with a professional ear in mixing and mastering could pinpoint minor flaws. It was not perfect, but it effectively showcased my skills. In contrast, the second mixtape, which I attempted on my own, was of poor quality. The flaws were glaring, including audible room noises, uneven vocal levels, and misaligned ad-libs and backing vocals. It was a blatant reminder of my technical limitations.

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This situation mirrored an earlier time in my life when I fell behind in athletics as my peers received advanced training. I saw a parallel in my music journey. I knew people, even from my own past, who were progressing in music, and I believed I wasn't inferior in terms of creating a well-rounded song. My strength lay in writing and singing, and I was confident in these skills. The gap, as I saw it, was in the technical knowledge they possessed, which I lacked.

18.28 Embarking on a Journey of Skill Development

I concluded that to reach my goals, I needed to fully understand every aspect of music production. This meant diving deep into the technicalities and acquiring the knowledge that set others apart in the industry. It was a commitment to not just being an artist but also mastering the craft behind the art.

In this period of soul-searching, I embraced the realization that talent alone has its limits. Shifting my focus from relying solely on innate ability, I began to concentrate on skill development. While exploring YouTube for tutorials on mixing and mastering, I stumbled upon an advertisement for Udemy, a platform offering a variety of courses. My search for music-related courses led me to one that particularly caught my attention. This course promised to teach how to produce professional-quality music from home.

18.29 Assessing Musical Abilities

One segment of the course involved evaluating oneself across various musical skills, such as beat making, lyric writing, recording, editing, mixing, and mastering. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated limited ability and 5 represented proficiencies, I confidently rated myself a 5 in lyric writing. However, for most other skills, I had to humbly acknowledge my level at 1.

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18.30 Exploring Diverse Paths in Music

Interestingly, the course also discussed various career paths in music beyond performing, such as education and management. This resonated with me, considering my experiences across different jobs and the frequent suggestions from people that I could be a good psychologist or counselor. It sparked the idea of becoming a music educator. Instead of pursuing a path as a performer, manager, or promoter, teaching music seemed to align more with my journey and aspirations. I envisioned this path not only to improve my music but also as an opportunity to offer services – whether recording, mixing, mastering for others, or teaching them to do it themselves.

18.31 The Art of Self-Evaluation: Beginning with the End in Mind

Even at that point, I recognized my lack of proficiency in certain areas, but I was inspired by the concept of "beginning with the end in mind." This approach prompted me to evaluate my status, my desired destination, and the path to bridge the gap between the two. I had a clear understanding of where I stood, thanks to a period of self-examination. This period involved revisiting memories from childhood, high school, and early adulthood, which helped me piece together the journey that led me to my current situation.

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18.32 Defining the Dream: Researching Paths to Success

Next, I focused on defining what I truly wanted. To gain clarity, I turned to the internet, exploring the works of independent artists, top beat makers, and renowned lyricists. I delved into lists of the top rappers, absorbing the attributes I admired in them. This research wasn't just about admiration; it was a deliberate process to mold my aspirations. I noted the qualities I appreciated in these artists and the aspects of their lifestyle that resonated with my goals. Equally, I identified the elements I didn't find appealing and chose to steer clear of them. This process was like assembling a puzzle, picking pieces from various sources to construct a clearer picture of who I wanted to become and the life I aspired to lead.

18.33 Investing in Knowledge: The Power of Paid Resources

I relied heavily on YouTube for gathering information, sifting through numerous videos to extract valuable insights pertinent to my situation. However, when I discovered Udemy and paid for a course that precisely addressed my needs, I became captivated by the idea of paying for information. This led me to invest in a variety of resources related to music – from books at Half Price Books to eBooks, covering topics like beat-making, mixing, mastering, and lyric writing. Essentially, if it was about music, I was interested in purchasing it.

18.34 From Theory to Practice: Building a Home Studio

As I engaged with these courses, I diligently took notes, and the same went for all the books I read. Once I felt I had grasped the essential knowledge and began applying it in practice, I realized I had compiled a substantial amount of information. By then, I had pieced together my own studio setup, opting for a more budget-friendly approach compared to rent-to-own schemes. I purchased a modestly priced laptop for \$300 and equipped it with the necessary accessories like a microphone and headphones.

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18.35 The Comprehensive Guide: Documenting the Music Production Journey

My learning wasn't just theoretical; it was hands-on, as I practiced in tandem with my studies. Eventually, I consolidated all my notes into a digital format, resulting in a comprehensive guide. This guide spanned from the initial steps of selecting the right equipment and setting up a studio space to the final stages of distributing music digitally and collecting royalties. In essence, it encapsulated the entire journey of music production, from inception to completion.

18.36 A New Procedure: Discipline in Daily Life

During this period of intense learning, I also became highly disciplined in organizing my daily schedule. I established specific times for waking up, going to bed, eating, walking the dog, exercising, and studying. My life revolved around this structured routine, with no time allocated for gaming, drinking, or socializing. This cycle of walking the dog, working out, and studying became my new normal, like how I used to play video games relentlessly. Whether I was studying, reading, or engaged in online courses, I'd often fall asleep in the middle of it and resume immediately upon waking. This phase marked a significant development in my discipline and understanding of self-mastery.

18.37 Redefining Discipline: Beyond the Militaristic Approach

In my journey, the concept of discipline transformed. Initially, I viewed discipline as a militaristic enforcement, reminiscent of a drill sergeant's strict regime. However, I came to realize that discipline is the ability to do what needs to be done, even when one doesn't feel like doing it. It means sticking to commitments, like going to the gym three times a week, even on days when the motivation is lacking. Discipline, in my understanding, is about ensuring that one's actions are in harmony with their emotions and thoughts.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

18.38 The Journey to Self-Mastery: Harmonizing Mind, Body, and Spirit

Self-mastery, to me, signifies control over one's mind, body, and spirit, ensuring they work in unison. Often, people may possess strength in one aspect but lack in others. For instance, a person can have a strong mind or spirit, radiating positivity and joy, yet their physical health might not align, indicated by obesity or other health issues. Conversely, someone might have an impressive physical appearance – tall, handsome, muscular – but struggle with mental health issues, leading to a disconnect between their physical and mental well-being. This realization reinforced my understanding that self-mastery involves harmonizing the mind, body, and spirit to achieve a balanced state of being.

18.39 Embracing Self-Mastery: The Key to Creative Freedom

Upon understanding self-mastery, I realized that my dissatisfaction with life stemmed from my lack of control over my thoughts, actions, and spirit. By 'spirit,' I mean my inability to self-motivate and inspire, allowing external influences to adversely impact my internal state. Recognizing the need to take command of various aspects of my life – my mind, body, spirit, finances, and relationships – became crucial for my growth. This self-governance was essential to produce the best music possible, free from the mental burden of stress, particularly when learning new skills. I couldn't effectively study if preoccupied with looming bills or if I was trapped in a job that brought me unhappiness, resorting to alcohol as an escape from my problems.

CHAPTER 18: THE REALIZATION

18.40 Beyond Skill Achievement: Addressing Personal Challenges

Identifying and addressing my challenges became more important than acquiring new skills. Attaining self-mastery, which entailed gaining control over physical, mental, spiritual, and financial aspects, became paramount. This control would allow me to create freely, immerse myself in my work, and experience the flow state without external distractions. Providing for my family was also vital to feel secure and undistracted while engaging in music production.

18.41 Envisioning a New Path: From Musician to Educator

At this stage, I saw potential in offering services like mixing and mastering to others and creating courses and books to teach music production. For the first time, I had a clear vision of my goals and a roadmap to achieve them. This realization marked a turning point where I understood the necessity of mastering myself and my life to succeed in my pursuits.

CHAPTER 18: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 18: Reflective questions

1. In pursuing your passion, what legal or technical challenges have you encountered, and how have you addressed them?

How has the journey of learning the business side of your passion changed your approach to it?

2. Reflect on a time when financial or technical barriers challenged your pursuit of a passion. How did you overcome these hurdles?

What strategies do you use to manage financial constraints while pursuing your artistic or creative goals?

3. How do you balance the pursuit of your passions with the practical demands and responsibilities of life?

What compromises or adjustments have you made to continue following your passion amidst life's practical challenges?

4. How do you work towards harmonizing different aspects of yourself (mind, body, spirit) in pursuit of your goals?

What does self-mastery mean to you, and how do you apply this concept in your life and career?

5. How do you conduct research and gather information to define and pursue your dreams or career goals?

CHAPTER 18: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

What role has strategic research and planning played in your pursuit of success in your chosen field?

6. How have you invested in your education or skill development, and what impact has this had on your career or personal growth?

What factors do you consider when deciding to invest in paid resources for learning and development?

CHAPTER 18: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 18: Action guide

Step 1. Confronting Risks: Life as a Cable Installer

Specific: Identify and list specific risks associated with your current job.

Measurable: Set measurable safety goals to minimize these risks.

Achievable: Establish achievable strategies to improve your work environment and safety.

Relevant: Ensure these strategies are relevant to your job and well-being.

Time-Bound: Set a time-bound plan for implementing safety measures, like within the next 3 months.

Step 2. A Life-Changing Spin: Rethinking My Path

Specific: Reflect on your current career path and envision an alternative that aligns with your passion.

Measurable: Create a list of desired changes and track progress.

Achievable: Start with small, manageable changes towards your new path.

Relevant: Ensure these changes lead to personal fulfillment.

Time-Bound: Set a deadline for when you want to make significant progress, like one year.

Step 3. A Shift in Professional Focus

CHAPTER 18: ACTION GUIDE

Specific: Transition from hobbyist to professional in your chosen field.

Measurable: Set goals for income or professional milestones in your area.

Achievable: Begin by taking small, paid gigs or collaborations.

Relevant: Ensure these steps contribute to your growth.

Time-Bound: Set a target to establish yourself professionally within two years.

CHAPTER 19: LOSSES OVERVIEW

Chapter 19: Losses Overview

In Chapter 19, "Losses," you're taken through the hard but important lessons that come with facing setbacks in life and work. This part of the story shows how the tough times we go through aren't just roadblocks; they're actually crucial steps that help us grow stronger, learn to adapt, and keep pushing forward. It talks about the importance of starting from scratch when needed, using grit and smart planning to get back on your feet.

You'll see how chasing what you want affects not just your job but your health and your relationships with family. It's a real talk about the sacrifices made for dreams and how they can strain the bonds with those we care about. The chapter gets into how hard it can be to share your big dreams with others and the need to rely on yourself while also being open to support.

"Losses" touches on the tough truth that going after your goals can sometimes mean walking the path alone, but it also shows how understanding yourself deeply can give you the strength to keep going. And instead of just chasing money, it encourages looking for ways to really make a difference. This chapter is packed with guidance on turning losses into steppingstones for success, showing that the best victories are the ones that bring real meaning to our lives and the lives of others.

CHAPTER 19: LOSSES

Chapter 19: Losses

19.1 Navigating Challenges: The Struggle with Losses

This period proved to be incredibly challenging, perhaps even more so than learning music creation itself. During this time, I encountered significant losses. Initially, I had to secure a loan to purchase a computer for my music production. However, as I navigated the complexities of using it, I often felt like I was wasting time due to my lack of understanding. This led me to pawn the computer to cover urgent bills, despite still being responsible for the loan repayments. Unfortunately, I couldn't afford to retrieve the computer from the pawnshop, resulting in its loss and leaving me still liable for the loan.

19.2 Rebuilding from Scratch: A Strategic Approach

Determined to rebound from this setback, I adopted a more strategic approach to rebuild my studio. I began to explore various platforms like Facebook Marketplace, Offer Up, Five Miles, and even Guitar Center. Bit by bit, I acquired the necessary equipment. I found an audio interface in one place, a microphone from another, and a pop filter elsewhere. This methodical process eventually led to the successful reconstruction of my studio, piece by piece.

CHAPTER 19: LOSSES

19.3 Health and Wellbeing: Facing Physical and Mental Struggles

In addition to the loss of studio equipment, my health began to deteriorate, leading to more frequent hospital visits. I experienced various physical ailments, such as swelling feet, painful nodules on my back, thinning and receding hair, and persistent sinus infections. Over-the-counter medicines were ineffective, often necessitating emergency room visits. My lifestyle, focused solely on surviving financially, took a toll on my wellbeing. The doctors informed me that I was pre-diabetic, and I noticed a general sluggishness in my body, difficulty in breathing, and a tight feeling.

19.4 Distance and Disconnection: Strained Family Relationships

During this challenging period, my relationships also suffered. My family, residing a thousand miles away in Cincinnati, Ohio, was distant while I was in Dallas, Texas. The lack of financial resources made visits home impossible. Consequently, I began to avoid communication with my family, feeling ashamed of my financial and emotional state. I had left home with aspirations of success, but the reality of my situation was far from what I had envisioned or what I believed my family expected of me. I worried that revealing my struggles would alter their perception of me, possibly leading to negative judgment or criticism.

Amid these challenges, I clung to the hope that I would eventually turn things around and present my true self to my family, aligning my reality with my self-perception. However, this process of recovery and self-realization took much longer than I initially anticipated.

CHAPTER 19: LOSSES

19.5 Lost Time, Growing Pains: Missing Family Milestones

The passage of time brought significant changes, particularly noticeable in my nieces and nephews. Once infants, they had grown into high school students, and I had missed their childhoods. They would reach out to me, sharing updates about their lives, sports events, school activities, and inquiring when I would return home for occasions like Christmas or summer vacations. Each time, I found myself fabricating excuses, as my circumstances prevented me from visiting. This reality often left me in tears, feeling trapped in a cycle of attempts and failures, with my efforts seemingly leading nowhere.

19.6 Seeking Understanding: The Challenge of Sharing My Vision

As I shared my aspirations with others, their inability to grasp my vision often led them to advise me to return to conventional employment. Eventually, I chose to keep my plans to myself, which proved challenging. In moments of failure, I longed for someone to confide in for comfort, and in moments of success, I wished to share my joy. Reaching out to cousins and old friends who had interests in music, I proposed collaborations and shared my ideas, hoping to work together. However, their responses were often noncommittal or flaky, failing to materialize even in something as simple as a video call.

CHAPTER 19: LOSSES

19.7 Self-Reliance: Realizing the Path Ahead

This pattern of letdowns led me to a realization: the responsibility to initiate and progress my plans rested solely on my shoulders. I acknowledged that my success needed to be evident before others would consider joining me. Initially, this was a painful realization. Knowing my capabilities in music, I couldn't understand their hesitance. But upon reflection, I questioned what tangible achievements I had offered to inspire their confidence. What had I done for them? What had I created or brought to life? This self-analysis made me understand that to gain support and collaboration, I first needed to demonstrate my commitment and success through my actions and achievements.

In truth, my accomplishments were minimal; I had created a couple of mixtapes that I never actively promoted due to not owning all the rights. Beyond that, there was nothing concrete or tangible to demonstrate why others should believe in my vision and follow me. Recognizing this gap, I understood the need to make my vision a reality, to create something substantial that others could see and believe in, rather than just relying on their imagination based on my explanations.

19.8 Inner Conversations: The Importance of Self-Examination

I began to engage in deep reflection, often conversing with myself in solitude. I would pose questions and ponder the answers, writing them down and becoming more attuned to my emotions and reactions. When I found myself upset, I would analyze the trigger, acknowledging how certain interactions or comments impacted my mood. Aware of these patterns, I prepared myself to either infuse positivity into these situations or to decisively avoid people or circumstances that brought negativity.

CHAPTER 19: LOSSES

19.9 Sole Responsibility: Accepting the Lone Journey

This process led to the fading of many relationships. It wasn't a matter of resentment towards those who didn't share my belief; rather, it was an acknowledgment that I needed to focus solely on my own energy. Every resource I had was stretched thin – finances, nutrition, knowledge, everything was at its bare minimum. I realized the journey ahead was mine alone to undertake, a challenging truth to accept. The realization that I was solely responsible for actualizing my vision, without external assistance, was a difficult but necessary acceptance on my path.

19.10 Empowerment Through Self-Knowledge: A New Understanding

Reflecting on my journey, a key realization was the importance of self-knowledge. As I delved deeper into understanding myself, I convinced myself that I was tailor-made for the challenges I faced. My survival and perseverance through various trials reinforced my belief that I was destined to continue this solitary path. I recognized that each job transition, each hurdle, was a nudge towards self-realization, a test of my commitment to my own aspirations.

Realizing that remaining in those jobs would have signified a surrender of my self-belief, I chose to forge ahead independently. This phase marked a shift in my mindset: I began to prioritize the creation of value over the pursuit of monetary gain. I understood that before I could offer value to others, I needed to cultivate it within myself. This phase of my life became solely about personal enhancement and growth, removing the focus from external achievements or validation from others. My goal was clear – to improve and invest in myself, as this was the foundation upon which I could build value for others.

CHAPTER 19: LOSSES

19.11 The Shift in Focus: Creating Value Over Wealth

In asserting control over my life, I embraced the notion that I am solely responsible for my circumstances. Recognizing that any dissatisfaction in my life was my own doing, I committed to finding solutions independently. Mastering this approach meant not only taking responsibility for my actions but also becoming a source of resources for others. My goal shifted from personal wealth accumulation to equipping others with the knowledge and tools to empower themselves. This was particularly crucial for talented individuals lacking technical skills, helping them level the playing field and take charge of their lives.

The journey wasn't just about losses; it was a path to self-discovery and understanding my true purpose. This newfound clarity was pivotal in developing discipline, confidence, and an inclination towards training. It wasn't merely about mastering skills or achieving goals; it became about personal growth and the ability to impact others positively.

CHAPTER 19: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 19: Reflective questions

1. Reflect on a significant loss or setback you've experienced. How did it shape your resilience and approach to future challenges?

What lessons have you learned from facing and overcoming obstacles in your pursuit of passion?

2. Can you recall a time when you had to start over or rebuild something important in your life? What strategies did you use to overcome this challenge?

How has the process of rebuilding from a setback taught you about resourcefulness and strategic planning?

3. How have your career choices affected your relationships with family? What emotions and challenges have you faced due to this?

In what ways have you tried to maintain or rebuild connections with your family despite distance or emotional barriers?

4. What are some important family moments or milestones you've missed due to career commitments? How have you coped with this loss?

Reflect on the sacrifices you've made for your career. How have they impacted your personal relationships and your feelings about your career choices?

5. Have you faced moments in your life where you realized your journey towards a goal must be undertaken alone? How did you come to terms with this realization?

CHAPTER 19: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

What have you learned about yourself and your goals through the process of undertaking a solo journey?

6. Describe a time when you shifted your focus from primarily seeking wealth to creating value. What prompted this change, and how has it affected you?

In what ways have you found fulfillment and success by focusing on providing value to others rather than solely on financial gains?

CHAPTER 19: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 19: Action guide

Step 1. Health and Wellbeing: Facing Physical and Mental Struggles

Specific: Define clear health goals (physical or mental).

Measurable: Track your health improvements (e.g., stress levels, fitness).

Achievable: Incorporate activities like exercise, meditation, or therapy.

Relevant: Choose health goals that support your overall well-being.

Time-Bound: Aim for noticeable improvements within a set period, like 3 months.

Step 2. Inner Conversations: The Importance of Self-Introspection

Specific: Allocate time for regular self-introspection.

Measurable: Keep a journal to track your thoughts and growth.

Achievable: Use tools like meditation or therapy for deeper introspection.

Relevant: Ensure that self-introspection contributes to your personal development.

Time-Bound: Dedicate a specific time each week for this practice.

Step 3. Empowerment Through Self-Knowledge: A New Understanding

Specific: Identify key areas for self-improvement.

CHAPTER 19: ACTION GUIDE

Measurable: Track your progress in these areas.

Achievable: Engage in activities that promote self-knowledge and growth.

Relevant: Choose self-improvement goals that empower your journey.

Time-Bound: Set periodic check-ins for self-evaluation, like every 3 months.

CHAPTER 20: GAINS OVERVIEW

Chapter 20: Overview

Chapter 20, "Gains," takes you through a powerful story of growing beyond just making money to creating a life filled with purpose and impact. This chapter starts with how we see ourselves and how that view shapes everything we do. It talks about the magic of believing in yourself and how changing your mindset can change your life.

You'll learn the importance of setting clear goals and making sure what you want really matters to you. It's about making every day count, using smart planning, and staying disciplined to reach your dreams. The chapter shows how mastering yourself, learning from when things don't go right, and keeping on trying are key to making big things happen in your life.

It's also a peek into why the story was shared – to help others find their way without stumbling over the same hurdles. The big message here is to look beyond just making money and to start building something that's truly valuable, both to you and the people around you. It's about finding success in bringing goodness into the world and making your ideas last.

"Gains" is all about discovering who you are, what you can do, and how to make your life and work mean something more. It's a chapter packed with wisdom on how to turn challenges into chances to grow and how to live a life that's rich in more ways than one.

CHAPTER 20: GAINS

Chapter 20: Gains

20.1 Understanding Self-Image: Lessons from Psycho-Cybernetics

During my journey, I researched deeply into music creation and self-development, consuming a wealth of information through books and videos. A particularly impactful moment was discovering an interview with Dr. Maxwell Maltz, author of "Psycho-Cybernetics." Dr. Maltz, a plastic surgeon, observed that even after he corrected patients' physical disfigurements, many still struggled with internal feelings of insecurity. This highlighted to me the profound importance of self-image and the realization that it's flexible – our mind shapes our perception of ourselves, and in turn, influences how others perceive us.

20.2 Realizing the Power of Intentional Direction

Dr. Maltz's book introduced techniques for cultivating a positive self-image, summarizing the concept of psycho-cybernetics as the conscious direction of oneself towards a desired goal. This resonated deeply with me, as I reflected on my past. I realized that for many years, I lacked direction; I didn't set goals or consider my future aspirations. This lack of intentional self-direction, I concluded, was a fundamental issue in my life.

CHAPTER 20: GAINS

20.3 Redefining Desires and Goals: A Conscious Shift

It's not just about stating what I want; it's the realization that my previously vocalized desires weren't truly beneficial. For instance, if I decided to have a beer after work, I would inevitably follow through, regardless of the time. Similarly, if I set my sights on new clothes or shoes, I'd research them, fixate on the details, and make the purchase. This pattern showed me that I have consistently achieved what I set my mind to, but I hadn't been aiming for the right things. Recognizing this, I understood the power of consciously redirecting my desires towards more constructive goals.

20.4 Building a Positive Self-Image: A Journey of Transformation

The key now is to reconstruct my self-image to align with who I aspire to be, achieved through intentional direction of my thoughts and actions. If negative thoughts arise, I challenge them, asking myself if they are valid and if they serve my current moment. For example, worrying about a bill due next week doesn't help me today. Instead, my focus should be on seeking solutions, not dwelling on problems. I remind myself of past successes to maintain momentum. Every effort, every thought, and action must be purposeful, aimed at elevating my life and moving me closer to my goals. Anything that doesn't contribute to this progression needs to be let go. This approach has taught me to channel all my energy, effort, and resources into meaningful pursuits that reflect my true aspirations.

CHAPTER 20: GAINS

20.5 Embracing Purposeful Living: The Significance of Daily Intentions

Not just having a purpose but waking up each day with the specific intention of improving at something. This process involves taking action, receiving feedback, and refining efforts. I discovered the importance of setting goals, establishing routines, discarding bad habits, and forming new ones. Surprisingly, at 33, I encountered the concept of SMART goals for the first time. These taught me how to categorize and prioritize my goals, organizing them in a way that each achievement lays the groundwork for the next.

20.6 The Path to Consistency: Implementing SMART Goals

To achieve these goals, consistency is crucial. I began tracking my daily activities, hour by hour, evaluating whether each action brought me closer to my goals. If not, I would either eliminate that activity or reschedule it, ensuring everything I did was aligned with my objectives. This approach didn't rely on mood or feelings; it was about sticking to a predetermined plan. This method transformed my life, allowing me to operate almost on autopilot, without wasting time pondering my next move.

20.7 Taking Control of Life: Lessons in Self-Mastery

Through this disciplined approach, I learned to take control of my life, which now enables me to assist others. While I can't reclaim the time lost during my days as a cable installer or pizza delivery man – times when I struggled just to pay bills, fuel my car, or afford a meal – I now have something valuable to share. The experiences and knowledge I've gained are tools for building a better future, different from the past, offering new, more fulfilling experiences.

CHAPTER 20: GAINS

20.8 The Value of Persistence: Learning from Failures

For me, it was worth it because I needed to learn, and I was thrust into that situation unexpectedly. I hadn't planned to quit my job, nor did I have a detailed action plan. I just dove in; if I succeeded, great, if not, I learned from it and kept trying. Countless times I failed – hundreds, thousands, perhaps even millions of times. But I never stopped trying until I finally started getting things right. So, yes, I think it was worth it for me. However, I wouldn't wish this path on anyone else. If I had known better, I could have done better, perhaps avoiding some of the pain and heartache I experienced or building stronger relationships with others.

20.9 Sharing Knowledge: The Purpose of the Book

This book is essentially about that – it's a guide so that others don't have to endure what I went through. It's here to offer guidance, whether you're trying to avoid similar pitfalls or find a quicker way out of a situation like mine. That's the essence of this book.

20.10 Shifting Priorities: From Money to Value

Overall, I believe my heart was in the right place, but my main issue was that I was constantly chasing money. I wasn't particular about the job if it paid, and my focus on the money was purely to cover my bills. Now, the priority in my endeavors isn't money but the value I provide and receive. I recognize that if I offer significant value, compensation, whether money or otherwise, will follow. When developing products or services, I consider if their value justifies the price I'm asking.

CHAPTER 20: GAINS

20.11 Understanding Value and Pricing: A New Perspective

Understanding the distinction between cost and price was pivotal. The cost is the investment needed to create something, while the price is what a consumer is willing to pay. This perspective shapes how I value my work. Fundamental questions drove my journey, such as what legacy I would leave behind, how I could pay myself, and why others should determine the worth of my time. These questions led me to focus on creating immense value, considering the time, money, energy, help, and sacrifices involved.

20.12 Expecting Success: The Confidence of Providing Value

Now, I can offer a product or service of high value and charge, accordingly, making in one transaction what I used to earn in a day. This approach allows me more time to create new experiences for myself and others. These questions I posed to the universe were answered throughout my journey, reinforcing my confidence. I'm not just hoping for success; I expect it because the intent behind my products and services is to bring transformative value to others' lives, a process I've experienced firsthand. This isn't plain speculation; it's a path I've walked myself.

CHAPTER 20: GAINS

20.13 Monetizing Ideas Sustainably: The Final Goal

As this book series progresses, the final installment will focus on money. The preceding books will have covered mindset change, skill mastery, and applying learned knowledge through daily training. This approach is like practicing a sport or rehearsing in a choir. The mindset prepares you for upcoming challenges, while the knowledge and skills teach the technical aspects and terminology. The true progress, however, lies in the training – the repetition, the attempts, failures, adjustments, and eventual success. Providing value to others through services or products will lead to financial gain. It's crucial to differentiate between selling a product or service that leaves customers feeling shortchanged and one that offers immense value, ensuring their return because they know you can resolve their issues.

The primary goal is to monetize your ideas sustainably, meaning throughout your lifetime and even 70 years afterwards. Whether it's through music royalties, book sales, or course enrollments, the key is to create lasting value. In contrast, traditional jobs pay only for the time worked; if you don't work, you don't earn. But if you develop a skill and present it to the world in a way that resonates and genuinely aids others, you will achieve abundance.

CHAPTER 20: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Chapter 20: Reflective questions

1. Reflect on a time when your self-image significantly influenced a personal or professional decision. How did it shape the outcome?

How have you actively worked to reshape your self-perception, and what impact has this had on your life?

2. What steps have you taken to cultivate a more positive self-image, and how has this journey transformed you?

How do your daily thoughts and actions contribute to building and maintaining a positive self-image?

3. How do you ensure that each day is lived with purpose and intention? Give an example of how this approach has benefitted you.

What routines or daily practices have you established to maintain a focus on your goals and intentions?

4. What are some key lessons you've learned from taking control of your life's direction?

Can you share an example of how mastering a particular aspect of your life led to significant personal growth?

5. Reflect on a failure that later proved to be a valuable learning experience. How did it contribute to your personal growth?

CHAPTER 20: REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

How do you maintain persistence and resilience in the face of setbacks or failures?

6. How do you assess the value of your work or services, and how has this perspective influenced your career or business decisions?

Can you share an experience where understanding the difference between cost and price was crucial in your professional life?

CHAPTER 20: ACTION GUIDE

Chapter 20: Action guide

Step 1. Understanding Self-Image: Lessons from Psycho-Cybernetics

Specific: Identify aspects of your self-image you want to improve.

Measurable: Set criteria for gauging changes in your self-perception.

Achievable: Practice daily affirmations or mental visualizations.

Relevant: Ensure these changes align with your overall personal goals.

Time-bound: Aim to observe noticeable changes in self-image in 3 months.

Step 2. Embracing Purposeful Living: The Significance of Daily Intentions

Specific: Define daily intentions that align with your life goals.

Measurable: Keep a daily log of actions taken towards these intentions.

Achievable: Ensure daily actions are manageable and realistic.

Relevant: Choose intentions that contribute to your overall purpose.

Time-bound: Review and adjust your daily intentions every month.

Step 3. The Path to Consistency: Implementing SMART Goals

Specific: Clearly define what consistent actions you'll take.

CHAPTER 20: ACTION GUIDE

Measurable: Track your daily, weekly, or monthly progress.

Achievable: Set realistic and manageable consistency goals.

Relevant: Ensure these actions directly contribute to your larger goals.

Time-bound: Regularly evaluate your consistency, such as weekly.

Step 4. The Value of Persistence: Learning from Failures

Specific: Identify specific areas where persistence is needed.

Measurable: Track instances of overcoming obstacles.

Achievable: Develop a resilience-building strategy like reflection or mentorship.

Relevant: Ensure persistence is targeted towards meaningful goals.

Time-bound: Set periodic reviews of your persistence, like every quarter.

CHAPTER 21: REFLECTION AND TRANSITION

Chapter 21: Reflection and transition

As we come to what feels like the end of our shared journey within these pages, it's obvious that this conclusion is really just a beginning. To mark this transition, let's explore some guiding principles and reflections that might guide the path ahead:

Be careful in nothing; be dangerous: Approach life with boldness rather than caution in areas where risk can lead to growth. Being 'dangerous' means stepping out of your comfort zone to pursue what truly matters.

From nothing to something to everything: These words encapsulate the journey of growth and achievement. Starting from ground zero, with persistence and hard work, you can achieve your fullest potential.

I am powerful: Acknowledge and embrace your inner strength. This affirmation is a reminder of your ability to influence your life and the world around you positively.

24 hours in a day; don't waste my hours: Time is the most precious resource. This emphasizes the importance of using each day purposefully towards your goals and aspirations.

I don't have to change; I just have to let go: Personal growth often requires releasing old habits or beliefs rather than transforming into someone else.

How can I help myself right now? Encourages immediate self-care and problem-solving, focusing on actionable steps for improvement.

If I can't help myself, I can't help anyone else: Highlights the necessity of self-care as the foundation for supporting others effectively.

CHAPTER 21: REFLECTION AND TRANSITION

Don't wait for permission; take over now: Motivates taking initiative in your life, emphasizing independence and proactive decision-making.

Stay focused; focus is most important: Concentration on your goals without distraction is crucial for achieving success.

What is my relationship with this particular experience? Invites contemplation on personal connections to experiences, encouraging deeper understanding and learning.

Just speak, improvise; don't write; the spirit will advise: Suggests trusting your intuition and spontaneity in communication and creation.

Act first and correct as you go along: Advocates for action over perfection, learning through doing, and making adjustments as needed.

Stop criticizing yourself: Calls for self-compassion and the termination of self-judgment, fostering a healthier self-image.

Speak louder; raise the volume of your voice; don't yell; let all your strength loose: Encourages confident self-expression and the sharing of your truth without aggression.

Let people know when you like them; give love, show love, give compliment: Promotes open-heartedness and the importance of positive reinforcement in relationships.

Focus; always give full attention and best effort: Emphasizes the value of dedication and alertness in every endeavor.

Don't let quality suffer: Reminds to maintain high standards in work and personal actions.

CHAPTER 21: REFLECTION AND TRANSITION

Perception is the way you view life. Perspective is from what angle are you viewing life; these both are your unique value: Differentiates between your outlook on life and the unique viewpoint you bring, underlining the importance of both in shaping your experiences.

Take full responsibility for your life and rewrite your own story: Encourages ownership of your actions and the power to redefine your narrative.

Forgive yourself and forgive others: Stresses the healing power of forgiveness, enabling you to move forward without the weight of past injustices.

The best thing that you can do for others is to become the best version of yourself, with the understanding that you cannot give what you don't have: Highlights the importance of personal development as a foundation to effectively helping and loving others.

This is not an overnight process, and you must purposely work on yourself: Acknowledges the time and intention required for genuine self-improvement.

Don't give up; keep following the plan: Serves as a rallying cry to persist in your efforts toward growth and fulfillment, regardless of obstacles.

Each of these points serves as a symbol, guiding us through the complexities of life with wisdom, courage, and a deep sense of purpose. As you move forward, may you carry these insights as tools for navigating your journey with intention and grace.

CHAPTER 22: FUTURE BOOKS IN THE SERIES

Chapter 22: Future books in the series

The "Creating Music with Purpose" series embarks on an unmatched journey designed to transform aspiring artists into independent music professionals who can confidently navigate the industry. This seven-book series is not just a collection of instructional texts; it's a comprehensive, interactive roadmap tailored to guide you through each key phase of your music career development.

Starting with Book 1, readers are invited to explore the foundational mindset shift required to transition from traditional employment to making music creation a full-time career. It emphasizes the importance of viewing oneself as a business entity, setting the stage for a series focused on growth, self-representation, and strategic life balance.

As you progress to Book 2, the series travels into the technical realm, guiding you through setting up your home music studio. This book covers everything from room selection and acoustics to equipment installation and mastering your digital audio workstation (DAW), ensuring you're well-equipped to produce music of the highest quality.

Book 3 focuses on the art of hip hop beat making, offering a hands-on approach to composing beats that resonate. By studying sampling, the piano roll, and the step sequencer, readers will develop a solid foundation in hip hop production, preparing them for the nuanced craft of lyric writing introduced in Book 4.

With "Writing Lyrics," Book 4 invites you into the world of storytelling and emotional expression through songwriting. It provides tools and techniques for writing lyrics that truly represent your artistic identity, enhancing your ability to connect with listeners on a deeper level.

CHAPTER 22: FUTURE BOOKS IN THE SERIES

Book 5 shifts the focus to audio recording and editing, a crucial skill set for any music artist. This book breaks down the recording process, from microphone setup to the final edit, empowering you with the knowledge to produce polished, professional-quality tracks.

In Book 6, "Hip Hop Mixing and Mastering in a Digital Audio Workstation," the series takes you deeper into the production process. Here, you'll learn to refine your tracks, achieving the perfect balance and clarity that define professional recordings, setting the groundwork for the final installment.

Book 7, "Artist Career Development," climaxes the series by transforming readers from musicians into music entrepreneurs. This book covers brand creation, digital distribution, music publishing, and understanding royalties, completing your transformation into a fully independent music artist.

By the end of the "Creating Music with Purpose" series, readers will not only possess the technical skills and industry knowledge required for music production but also the business wisdom to thrive as independent artists. This series promises a transformative journey, taking you from the basics of music creation to establishing a successful career in the music industry, all while encouraging you to take control of your artistic journey and live a life driven by purpose.

The past is gone, the future is not guaranteed, this present moment, right now, is all we have.

Anything else really doesn't matter.

**What are you saying to yourself right now, in this very moment?
I like to think of it as casting a spell over yourself.**

**What emotions are you feeling right now, in this very moment?
About now, your spell is starting to take effect. It has caused a chemical reaction in your brain, and it's starting to move through your body.**

**What are you doing right now, at this very moment?
Finally, your spell has taken over your entire body. It has reached the tips of your fingers and the tips of your toes.
You start to move.**

Where are you going? Do you have a destination, or are you just moving?

Right now, you are living the experience that you have created with your thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Do you feel pride, walking with your chest out and your head up? Do you feel shame, shoulders slumped and head down?

Where are you going? Do you have a destination, or are you just moving?

Create personal standards of living which include values, principles, systems, routines. Understanding that the only way for your life to change is for you to change.

Where are you going? Do you have a destination, or are you just moving?

Living with purpose is about creating positive thoughts and taking action.

Change your thoughts, change your actions, change your life.

-Cincinnati Reek