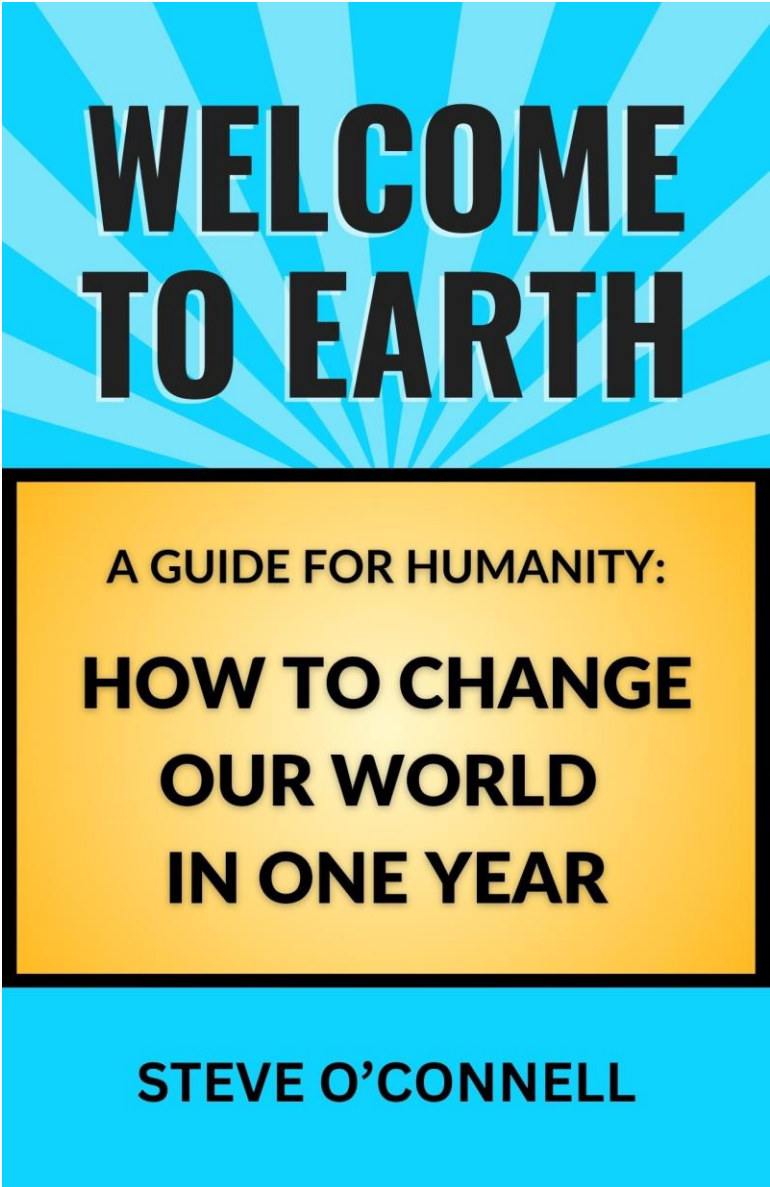




WELCOME TO EARTH

**A GUIDE FOR HUMANITY:
HOW TO CHANGE
OUR WORLD
IN ONE YEAR**

STEVE O'CONNELL

If you find value in this message and would like to show
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Dedicated to:

The human race.

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To view this book’s Cheat Codes, see page 139 or visit <https://humanunity.co/blog/f/taking-control-of-your-life-cheat-codes> and click on the blog “Taking Control of Your Life (Cheat Codes)”.

Part 1: Groundwork

Can't we all just get along?

– Everyone (at some point in their life)

The Purpose of this Book

Hi, my name is Steve. I'm one of your fellow humans here on planet Earth. The purpose of this book is to help readers find inner peace and promote unity among the human race. Try to imagine what eight billion peaceful humans could accomplish when we each work together. At the end of this book, I'll provide a detailed description of what that idyllic world looks like and how it's realistically attainable for humankind.

This is the first book in the Welcome To series. The message in this book is presented in four parts. The first three parts are heavy with information about where we are and how we got here. In part four, I offer practical solutions in the form of a step-by-step cleanse guiding you toward creating new habits to help you, and everyone, find peace, essentially changing the world.

No, this book is not satirical. Yes, I do make strong statements on sensitive topics. This book is a well-intended guide, like a GPS navigational aid, that indicates our society is drifting into a precarious direction. The world is disconnected by an overwhelming excess of technology. It interferes with our focus and attention, even disrupting meaningful relationships. We're seeing severe deficiencies in healthy lifestyles due to poor nutrition and scarcity of healthy options. Perceived hatred is growing at an alarming rate among groups who would otherwise coexist naturally. People are struggling to understand one another, and compassion is dwindling. In the same way that a vehicle requires scheduled tune-ups and mechanical servicing, there are fundamental things that require our attention now. This book contains the maintenance schedule that can lead

to the healing of humanity. Massive change is most effective when first approached as individuals.

Just what is the root cause of the declining trend in society? Some call it greed. Some will say it's corruption. Others feel the source is more sinister and refer to it as the devil, or reptilians, shapeshifters, even extraterrestrials. Whoever, whatever, or wherever the source of the malevolent energy originates is highly debated and remains unclear. It's quite possible that we may never completely learn the source of the outside influence that surrounds us. While some may feel the importance of labeling its identity, what is more important is becoming united as a human race. So, I ask you, can't we all just get along? Could we each work together as a human unit and not fall for traps or swallow the bait that is relentlessly trying to make us appear as though we are divided?

Some feel that changing the world would be an impossible feat without some sort of paradigm shift or divine intervention. Call me an idealist, (my editor did), but the basic, fundamental cleanses I present at the end of this book would dramatically change the world and improve humanity as a whole. A drop in the bucket might seem like nothing. But over time, that bucket will fill up and eventually begin to overflow. How so? Allow me to present a basic analogy to clarify my point.

Imagine a beautiful home in a wonderful safe neighborhood that's been neglected over time—perhaps as a result of depression that has led to hoarding. The owner has lost focus, and as a result, the upkeep of the home has suffered. The dishes have piled beyond recognition. There are pizza boxes littering the floors. After years and years of this neglect, the home could likely be on the verge of being

declared unlivable. This home that was once a comfortable sanctuary now requires major attention.

Now, instead of just sitting back with a defeated mentality while watching the home continue to deteriorate, how about beginning a restoration effort? It doesn't need to be a colossal overhaul. What if we just start out small, with gradual phases, so that we're not completely overwhelmed with lots of mega-improvements all at once?

In this book, you'll see that making a few relatively minor and gradual cleanses over time can eventually have a major impact on the entire home. A domino effect, if you will. This book is a guide that points toward a fresh way to cleanse, declutter, and remove some of the unnecessary trash and distractions in our lives that's been piling up over the years. Once the clutter has been removed, it can allow room for the bigger problems to be solved.

Sometimes the solution isn't as profound as you might expect. As insignificant as it might seem, please don't underestimate the impact that one small change can make. Through experience, I've learned that if you take care of the small things, the big things will usually take care of themselves.

This book recognizes that many people are discovering "clutter" to be a top factor that's interfering with their progress. I recommend the following four areas to tidy up in your life: digital, physical, emotional, and personal. I'll elaborate on each of these areas and show you how to approach these with fundamental decluttering techniques and how they can allow you to find peace and real freedom. These are the initial steps that can have a significant impact toward restoring our house into a home.

It's quite similar to the way our immune systems were designed to rectify ailments, often before we're ever aware of them. I truly believe that the answers to the ultimate success of mankind are already inside each one of us. What we need most right now is a thorough cleanse, a complete scrub down in order to allow the natural remedy to ensue, for society to get back on track and start moving in the right direction.

My primary aim is to draw less attention to the “checked boxes” used to categorize people, which subtly separates the population. I want to make it crystal clear that this is not intended to deny anyone their unique individuality. Not at all. Rather, this is meant to promote societal unity and cooperation by advocating the beauty in viewing one another as fellow human beings; a family.

Subconsciously, I've spent a good portion of my life collecting observations of silly human shenanigans which I roll my eyes at. Then, I just continue along with my day. But the accumulation of these observations has been nagging at me, especially recently. I've always had a strong desire to make some kind of difference in this world and leave it better than I found it. I keep thinking, “I'm only *one* person. What could *I* possibly do to make any significant impact?”

This is exactly why I decided to share these observations with you. By no means as an insult, but as a, “Hey, I noticed one of our tires is leaking air and we're about to get on the highway. Maybe we should do something about it—like now.”

Of course, this is not the first book about the condition of the world we live in. Human society has a long and unfortunately strong reputation for screwing things up—usually pretty badly—and then forgetting that anything ever happened. *Foolish humans*.

Also, there are tons of inspirational and motivational websites and social media pages with seemingly endless content. Free Hugs Project, Prince Ea, Good News Movement, and John Tesh are just a few of my favorites. These focus on promoting hope and positive change in our communities and in the world. It just goes to show that this topic is near and dear to many people, not just myself. It seems these days that people are constantly looking for new ways to improve themselves mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Some hope to see the entire world improve. I am one of those people.

Stories with happy endings seem to be highly adored. So, why does it seem like things continue to decline rather than improve? The well-known influential comedian, George Carlin, shared his profound observations on the overall decay in humanity. He brought attention to it by sharing his strong social, political, and religious criticisms. I've observed many things that give credibility to his commentary regarding humanity and how far off track we've become as a society.

There's just one major difference between him and me. That one difference is I still have hope. The fact that we are still here means that maybe, just maybe, there's a possibility that things *can* be turned around. That's why I decided to publish this message. To draw attention toward our potential, our feasible prosperity as a whole, and the imminent success of humankind. (And if we actually are a

lost cause and I happen to be wrong, then so be it. At least I can find peace in knowing that I made a genuine effort trying to help people.) Thank you, George, for breaking down modern reality so logically and humorously. I've always enjoyed your point of view.

Let's be real, the default way of human life (the way humans are being conditioned to think and function from a very young age) has been going on for ... well, longer than an amount of time we can all agree on. The goal of this book is to encourage you to think outside the standard path that has been laid out for us. It's written with the hope of inspiring you to ask more questions—the deep questions about life—and empowering you to think for yourself.

I dive into sensitive topics like government, politics, and even a hint of religion and spirituality. I want to make it very clear that I do not present one-sided viewpoints, meaning I do not belong to or align with any one single political party or religious denominational group. (That is, until “human” is recognized as a political party or religion.) While I respect and cooperate with governmental structure, I must say, the solutions for today's societal issues go far beyond any one particular party to truly solve them. Also, you may perceive the flavor of certain religious views due to the influence of my upbringing. And yes, I do hold firm values of being a high-quality, respectful, and honorable individual. However, my personally held beliefs have not settled on any one specific set of guidelines based on a particular deity or “code,” as my values continue to evolve over the course of my life. If you feel the need to label me, you could say I am a “seeker”, or a “lifelong learner”.

This book will challenge the way you think. If you are *really* into politics and take a strong side with a political party—this book could strike a nerve. If you are *really* into religion and devoted to a particular set of rules, standards, or guidebook—you may be turned off from certain things in this book. If you have any hard-set, rigid affiliation or attachment to a particular way of thinking or belief system—some of the things I say in this book could stir up some uncomfortable emotions. Unless your mind and heart are open and receptive, chances are fairly high that you’re not going to like at least *something* in this book.

I’m about as dead center, middle of the road as you’ll find when it comes to political and religious beliefs. The essence of my soul exudes understanding of one another, patience, balance, empathy, and love.

I’m not a proponent of focusing attention on problems—that is, unless I also have some constructive ideas to offer. You have my promise that I will lay the groundwork, as necessary. Then I will wrap up with hopeful and achievable solutions that we desperately need.

As I mentioned earlier, I wrote this book because I believe it has real value for the general population. I’m hoping to present it clearly and effectively to inspire and motivate people to find peace and ultimately change our world. No matter where anyone is on their journey, I would love to see the people around me create positive changes. And I’d love everyone around you to create positive changes too.

This book started out as a simple compilation of my thoughts and observations of the modern world—a journal. I initially had no intention for anyone reading my privately

noted viewpoints and personal observations. However, my entries developed an interrogative pattern asking, “What do we do now?” I eventually began to realize that the purpose of my writing was not simply to document my findings. The purpose of my writing was to find solutions.

While the content in this book may fit in the “philosophy” or “social sciences” sections, I’ve decided it would be more accurate and suitable to place it in the “personal transformation” section. And that is its home now, where it truly belongs. Why? Because at the end of this book I offer solutions in the form of a thorough cleanse detailing what we can each do individually to change ourselves, then change our world. I break it up into several phases that are geared to help rid ourselves of the many things that are restricting our growth not only as individuals, but also as a whole society. This step-by-step cleanse is how we can turn our species around into a way of living where all can thrive and achieve our fullest potential. I believe you will find my take on humanity intriguing and compelling, with a solution that all can enjoy and love.

I’m guessing some readers might be hoping for profoundly fantastic, bombshell solutions for how we can obtain world peace and harmony for all mankind. Unfortunately, while I do believe this is possible, we’re not quite there yet. The suggestions I offer in this book are not overly sophisticated or earth-shattering. They are very simple, basic things we can each do to begin forming a solid foundation on which we can build.

An infant doesn’t go from rolling over, to sitting up, to crawling, to grabbing onto furniture, to walking, to running in just a week. Same with us. We’re barely at the point of sitting up. Before we can move forward, we must

first master the basics. This book provides the blueprint to help us get started in the right direction. I love the concept that if each one picks up just one piece of trash, we can easily remove around eight billion pieces of trash.

Our house has become an overwhelming mess. We are in dire need of a thorough cleanup to restore our home. Let's begin by vastly reducing distractions around us so we will be able to start communicating more effectively. Once humans are able to have meaningful conversations (namely by listening to the other person), then we'll be able to progress toward more substantial solutions. My purpose is to show how we can achieve these small things first. I'm willing to give it a shot. My question to you is: are you willing to give it a shot too?

At one point in my life, I was severely overweight and I had an opportunity to work with a personal fitness trainer. The first thing my trainer asked was about my short- and long-term goals. I told him I wanted to bulk up and that I wanted to look like "The Rock." He chuckled and said to me, "Sure, I can help you get there. But first, I need to get you lean. We'll have something to build upon once you've slimmed down to a proper size." I felt discouraged because I wanted to lift weights and bulk up right away. But I trusted his expertise and was able to begrudgingly admit that I wasn't there yet.

Similarly, humans are not ready for any grand solutions quite yet. Like an infant, we as a society seem to have lost the ability to simply sit up. And that's okay; we have to start somewhere. The good thing is that we are starting. That's what's truly important.

Topics of the Day

In my interactions with people lately, I've noticed a trend in the topics of conversation. Have you noticed it too? Often enough, it seems they tend to shift in a direction that causes tension, frustration, anxiety, and yes, sometimes even anger. These topics can be anything ranging from conspiracy theories to current events, to governmental and societal issues. You name it. When I absorb these conversations, which can sometimes become unsettling and downright disturbing, I have a unique ability to process the reality around us. Allow me to offer you a quick glimpse into my thought process.

I like to imagine a friendly alien sightseer who has come to visit our human civilization. Let's call him Marty. Imagine with me, if you will, Marty's spaceship arrives at quite an inopportune time—during downtown rush hour traffic. As he descends from the high-tech space vessel, he sees two individuals in the middle of the street, hurling threats at each other in a heated exchange of road rage. The scene is so tense, consuming people's attention that many are oblivious of his presence. Everyone freezes, stops, and stares at the ordeal. When Marty observes this less-than-flattering human moment of weakness, he is overcome with bewilderment.

Marty moseys over toward me with a confused expression. I, like most of us, am torn between two options: get involved to help the situation, or simply butt out and mind my own business, then continue with my day.

Although I'm merely an indifferent onlooker, I realize that this undignified human interaction *could* be perceived as a reflection on me. Subconsciously my

shoulders begin to drop, and my face slightly winces. Then I gently lean over to Marty and sheepishly, almost sarcastically, mutter under my breath, “Welcome to Earth.”

To us, this is just another Monday afternoon. So, why is Marty’s first impression of humans so puzzling?

If you observe a community of ants for just a few minutes, you might understand Marty’s point of view. As you watch how the ants interact, you’ll begin to notice how they all work together toward a collective goal to achieve something better for the entire group. Their sense of harmony, unity, and cooperation is magnificent.

The way ants operate as a whole is how most people would expect to find another species interacting, right? I mean, why would there be any tension or discord among any species—especially among humans with vast technological advancements? Ants do not have locks, passwords, mega-corporations spending uber-amounts of resources on advertising trying to distract them or pressure them into buying something they don’t need or doing something they wouldn’t naturally do or care about anyway. Why is it that most humans seem to be distracted with many forms of manipulation in one way or another?

For example, I can’t imagine any little girl is born needing a Coach purse. I can definitely see how over time she has become convinced she wants it because her favorite singer or movie star glamorizes it. And I’m almost certain that most young boys are not inherently stressed about landing a prestigious six-figure position just so they can live an exorbitant life.

In my observations, most kids simply want to play, have fun, and just live. But as impressionable young people, many eventually succumb to a belief that they won't feel accepted, important, or even loved without pursuing the acquisitions which offer a misguided impression of how modern human life is "supposed to be."

Life is a gift. And yes, it truly is amazing *being* human. We are conscious of time and have an appreciation for leisure and urgency. We're able to communicate abstract thoughts and subtle emotions, distinguishing us from the Animal Kingdom. Also, while your car and home are incapable of self-repair, your amazing body is able to heal itself toward recovery from many ailments. And topping it all off, we have the unique ability to grasp and appreciate humor.

Each of these traits distinguish humans from other known life forms. Now, what baffles me is, how is it that humans are inundated with stress, depression, struggle, and overall dissatisfaction? How did the human race get like this? (This book provides a concise overview of how this has occurred over time.) Also, what direction is the species heading? And can anything be done to improve the current plight of mankind?

All I know for sure is that humans are a pretty disconcerting species right now. Many agree that something seems awry all around us. I'm almost certain that while outside life forms might be intrigued and fascinated by us, they would most likely prefer maintaining a safe distance. Can you really blame them? After all, humans have door latches to keep wildlife out. But they have door locks to keep other humans out. Interesting, isn't it?

Marty is scratching his head and finds himself asking the following *why* questions.

Why is there so much disharmony and general distrust among human beings (neighbors)?

Why are humans fighting—and literally killing each other—in senseless wars and street crime (civilians)?

Why are humans (mega-corporations) deliberately lying and misleading other humans through devious advertising strategies?

Why are a select few of them (the leaders) still offering false hope and empty promises just to gain temporary political power over other humans?

Why are human livelihood expectations so unreasonable and constrained by unsatisfying employment?

Why are some humans seeking to gain an unfair advantage over other humans through overbearing taxes and pure greed?

Why do some humans seek lavish monetary profits through promotion of unhealthy, addictive, and harmful foods?

Why do they seek even more gains through selling “cures” that are developed in a laboratory?

Why do some humans improperly define concepts that are misleading like “health care,” when they are actually talking about “sick care”?

Did you feel a shift of consciousness while reading Marty's *why* questions? Marty had been under the impression that the human race is an earthly family, a worldwide team, a collective unit simply known as *humans*.

When looking in from the outside, certain interactions and behaviors between humans are simply preposterous. Our alien friend is probably incapable of comprehending the magnitude of the disharmony. And somehow, humans have simply become accustomed to this warped dynamic over time.

If humans would step back and take an honest look at themselves through the impartial eyes of Marty, it's clear to see, currently, they are failing to reach their potential as an interconnected species. Are you starting to see this yet? You may be surprised as your consciousness is aroused.

Are you ready to embark on our journey, taking an impartial tour of humanity from an unbiased point of view, to find out where we have come as a society, how we got where we are, and where we are heading? Buckle up. Our friend Marty thinks it could get a little bumpy at times.

Why so Dysfunctional?

Humans are not exactly the ideal depiction of a team. Just look around a little and you'll see. Russia vs. Ukraine, Republicans vs. Democrats, men vs. women, city folk vs. country folk, rich vs. poor, Black vs. White, young vs. old. The list is endless, and the division continues to increase. So, why is the human family so dysfunctional? In part four of this book, I offer ways for you to cleanse or declutter some things in your life that are causing some of these distorted divisions. I present it with the aim of helping each one find their peace.

I find it fascinating that when humans are faced with an overwhelming situation of doom and gloom (like a natural disaster or a terrorist attack), there's an inborn natural tendency to put all differences aside and come together for a solution to preserve the existence of the species. A sense of collective preservation during dire times is fine and well. What bothers me is, why does it take a national calamity or a worldwide disaster for people to get in touch with innate humanity? I find it strange that people generally want to believe in humanity but still constantly struggle to put trust in each other—that is until things get a little dicey. Is it because individuals are waiting for the other person to take the initiative and make the first move, and *then* they will begin to trust each other?

The “Elephant Chain” Mentality

The human brain is fascinating. It sends and receives all sorts of information to the entire body. Some of the information it sends out is incredibly useful. For example, the signal of pain so that we know to remove our hand from the hot stovetop. Other information, often referred to as cognitive distortions, can be somewhat questionable and sometimes even debilitating.

Think about it, humans are born to be intelligent, powerful, and capable. However, many are aware of overwhelming limitations (better known as distractions) that lead humans to *believe* they are stuck in a system that is not designed for their overall well-being.

Humans collectively are not doomed victims by any means. But is it possible for humans to modify their mindset so they can break away from certain beliefs that may appear to be keeping them in place and suffocating them from reaching their full potential?

Consider a tragically enlightening concept. Some may find it a little disturbing. I assure you of its pertinence to this book’s message. It’s called elephant chaining.

Like humans, elephants are intelligent, powerful creatures. They will rip large trees out of the ground and demolish structures with ease. But they won’t make even the slightest effort to break a small chain looped around their leg.

Why?

Because as a helpless infant, the elephant's leg was tethered to a small rope or chain which was strong enough to keep him in place. The newborn will struggle and try to escape and free itself but is physically unable because it's not strong enough—not yet. Eventually, the elephant will give up realizing its inability to escape, no matter how hard it tries.

Would you believe the exact same chain which kept it confined from infancy is still used when he becomes a fully grown adult? It sure does. But it's not because of the strength of the chain.

Then, how does it work?

The elephant has already accepted the reality that the small chain around its leg was impossible to break and therefore will stop trying. This captivity technique only works on the fully grown elephant because it remembers the pain and struggle when trying to escape as a calf. Yes, he could easily break free if he tried. I find this form of manipulation tragic and disturbing. Yet, I also find it fascinating and eye-opening.

Now, before jumping to the conclusion that the “evil” ringmaster is the elephant's paramount adversary, please remember the elephant has more than enough capability to break the chain on its own—if it simply made an effort. Again, the elephant chaining technique is only effective because the elephant *thinks* it works.

People are tired. People feel powerless. People have been tricked into believing self-defeating thoughts planted by an outside influence—“ringmasters” if you will. Some people do not quite realize just how powerful they really

are—like that baby elephant who has grown into a four-ton adult.

Many who are exhausted from the abuse of power are truly capable of breaking free from their elephant chain. This book offers practical solutions to help you recognize things that *are* in your control—things that you *can* change. It provides ways for you to effectively find your peace. These solutions transcend political, racial, religious, and social bias. These simple solutions are the key to unlocking your freedom.

In part two, I will give a few examples of manipulative “chains” used to convince humans they are restrained—things or ideas put in place that might convince people that they are stuck or trapped, powerless or incapable. This book revolves around the concept of breaking free from these chains. My hope is for you to utilize the solutions so that you can find your peace.

An Uphill Battle

Life is like a long, straight path that leads to a wonderful destination. Sounds lovely, right? However, this path we are currently on is constantly being cluttered with hundreds of thousands of hurdles, obstacles, and distractions that are making it incredibly difficult to reach our destination. Have you ever asked, “Why do things have to be so difficult?” I welcome the challenge of hard work that produces results. And I don’t even mind occasionally losing (aka: learning) every now and again. But I’m unwilling to participate in a game that is rigged against me where the winner is predetermined.

It has become clear that something is actively trying to deter us from our wonderful destination, keeping us from important things that truly matter—things like family, friends, nature, love, compassion, understanding, and forgiveness. The distractions, divisions, and deceptions are undeniable. And they are camouflaged, ingrained, indoctrinated, or hidden altogether, intentionally clouding our perception of reality.

At one time or another, we all fall victim to things we’re unaware of that blindside us. Some of these realizations may very well be unsettling to us. When we become aware of these obscured things, it has a profound way of changing our perception. And despite the unsettling realization, you may find relief when your mind is receptive to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

We all know how dogs respond when you toss a ball or a stick. They’ll chase it and bring it back to you. (Okay, maybe not *your* dog.) It’s a simple trick people

could use if they wanted to distract them. Little does the animal know they're getting the needed exercise they require. Voila! And we also know how easily we can distract a cat with a laser pointer. And an angry bull can be tricked into charging just by waving a small red cloth. Humans too are susceptible to certain distractions, control tactics, and manipulation—namely by an overwhelming abundance of technology.

As time passes and generations come and go, humans are not getting better. Humans are not getting smarter, not becoming healthier, not learning from past mistakes. This is bad. It's getting worse. We seem to be in our own way, and it's only harming ourselves. We have the power to stop it, which I will expand on in part four of this book.

In part two, I'll elaborate on some of the shenanigans we see in modern human life. I cannot possibly list every single instance of fraud, corruption, deception, or intentional distraction. But I can give you a few solid examples to start pulling the curtain back on the harsh reality so we can attempt to see this world from a fresh, impartial, candid perspective. We may not always achieve this, but the endeavor is worth the effort. If we aim with skill and precision and we miss the mark, we can still achieve exceptionally accurate results. Once you are aware of the uphill battle you are facing, you can be empowered to learn the strategies to help you find your peace.

A Day in the Life of a Human

The standard structure of a modern nine-to-fiver has led many off the path to a meaningful and fulfilling life. How so? Let's take a look at a typical day.

First, you wake up (actually, you're startled awake) to the invasive beeping of an alarm clock. The timing seems too early for your internal biological clock. You're tired and exhausted from the previous day. Perpetually? What a start.

Next, it's time for you to stretch, exercise, and eat something healthy. But wait. "I just don't feel like it today. I'll simply have coffee with some sugar and cream. That'll do the trick and give me the energy I need to start the day." (Three items which I'm pretty sure are not ideal choices for human wellness.) And just like that, you've already decided against taking the proper time to make yourself a healthy meal to start your day.

Instead, you'll just quickly microwave something, or heat up a frozen pastry—not real food. And although it happens to be quick and easy, for some reason, you still pass on the apple that's been sitting around for several days.

Now, it's time for you to leave the place you call home and head to work just to fight (get irritable) with fellow commuters rather than saving your frustration for the true source of your stress. The vast majority of the motoring public, like you, are likely also having a rough start to their day. Not to mention those who are distracted from other things like recently losing a loved one, going

through a rough breakup, having been the target of identity theft, or some other thing.

Human life is not for the weak.

This world is designed to be rough on all individuals; yes, you heard that right—*designed*. And now, people are taking it out on each other—honking, yelling, making snarky faces and angry gestures, being impatient and inhuman toward each other. Does that help the problem? No. Do we feel better after that? No. It just makes it worse. Pretty good start to the day, eh?

Now, you've arrived at your job—you know, the one you already don't like, the one that probably doesn't appreciate you enough. And because the opportunity never came through, or you had an unexpected detour in your life's journey, you found it easier to just keep plugging away rather than pursuing your childhood dreams and aspirations.

So, before you even clock in and get settled, you hear, "hey, I need this right now" or, "why are you late?" or, "yesterday you forgot to" Does any of that encourage you to *want* to work harder? No—screw this job! Why would you want to work any harder or take any pride in the quality of your work?

Now a customer shows up saying, "I'm here to buy something", "file a complaint", "pick something up" or, "request service." At this point, you're not exactly eager to appease them. You're tired; you are not in the mood. You do not feel like being happy, treating them special, or being accommodating or whatever. So, you begrudgingly do the bare minimum just to get through the day. And some may

even grab a high-sugar, caffeinated energy drink to help them continue the battle of staying awake throughout the day.

The workday is finally over. So, you rush out the door and start heading home. Another round of traffic jams awaits. And it's worse this time because now, everyone is in a hurry to get back to the comfort of their home (which is more enticing), making it even more urgent and stressful.

You listen to the radio in an effort to mentally unwind during your commute—which is heavily flooded with advertisements—trying to convince you to “buy something today” or “watch this show tonight” or “don’t forget to do _____ for the upcoming weekend or holiday.” Your brain is now filled with extra clutter—I call them distractions. No wonder many struggle to remember simple tasks without the assistance of a planner or list.

Then you get home. Finally, time to chill, right? Nope. Something is broken (as if you’re not already irritable). Or your partner dumps their rough day onto you—and now you’re even more stressed out. You’re irritable. Your spouse is irritable. You both are irritable. Your relationship at home is now suffering. It’s no wonder that couples who stay together are the rarity. (Yes, I realize relationships require work. It just seems to be much more work than truly necessary—like an uphill battle.) This world is designed to mentally wear people down, split them apart, stir up negativity, make them tired and exhausted, discourage them from becoming better. And most of the ones who do want to do better simply don’t feel they have the time for it.

So, what do you do once you're home? Well, you definitely don't want to exercise. You don't want to eat anything healthy. You probably just want to drink a beer (or twelve), watch some TV, play games on your phone, or aimlessly scroll through social media feeds (or some other kind of mindless distraction).

You just want to be left alone. You don't want to hear about your kids' day or help them with their homework. You don't want to play with them or help coach their little league team. You don't want to drive to the store or mow the lawn. You've already done enough today, right? Besides, with the ever-rising cost of living and bills piling up you don't really even have the money to get or do any of the things you actually desire.

So, you stayed up late and didn't accomplish anything important. Your relationships have not been strengthened. You didn't learn anything new or work toward the business idea you've been meaning to start. So, you just go to sleep and hope tomorrow will be better. Fat chance.

And that's it. That is your typical human day in this modern world. Poor diet, inadequate amount of exercise, the majority of your time spent on people and things that you do not love. What a miserable existence.

I sincerely hope that at least a few readers cannot relate to anything in this portrayal. But sadly, this is pretty accurate for many humans. One person might ask, "Is this all there is? Does life get any better than this?" Another might reflect, "If I'm lucky enough to make it to my 'golden years' (which is an incredibly weird phrase), then I will get to kick my feet up and finally enjoy my life (along

with the added aches and pains that I've accumulated over the years).”

Every day, the commercials on TV, the pop-up ads on our computers, the sponsored ads on our phones, the billboards on the highway, the advertisements on the radio, ads on our apps are continuously bombarding humans. How much commercialism is in our face constantly? According to *Forbes*: “digital marketing experts estimate that most Americans are exposed to around 4,000 to 10,000 ads each day.” That’s a lot of pressure aimed toward reminding people to do what someone else wants us to do. And it bombards us daily.

Life can be exhausting. Thankfully, we can lessen the effects of this stressful lifestyle by making a conscious effort to cleanse ourselves from an overwhelming digital influence. This book will help you on the path to find your peace.

Similarities between Life and Little League

I heard an eye-opening story about a thirteen-year-old little league baseball player. One time he was batting and got walked. So, he heads to first base. After making it to first base the catcher stares him down almost as if to dare him to steal second base. So, the runner sprints to second base. The catcher hastily hurls the ball into the outfield. So, the runner heads for third base. The fielders overthrow the ball once again. He heads for home. There's a cloud of dust with a play at the plate. Everyone looks for the umpire's call, and he informs them it was only ball three.

There's something profound to be learned from this lighthearted story. The reality is, although it's just an odd, funny story about a kid playing baseball, the most boneheaded player on the field (struggling to be tactful here) was controlling the entire game at that moment. Everyone on the field responded to his actions, even though he was completely wrong. And might I respectfully add (ahem)—dumb? It's nice to know that it all got sorted out in the end. But the fact that it even happened in the first place is just a tiny bit frightening.

What would you have done in that situation? Would you just keep playing and waste everyone's time by recklessly throwing the ball around because some idiot (according to the version I heard) *thought* he knew what was going on?

That's pretty much what's going on in the world today. A few of the people are very aware and clearly see what's going on in the world around them (the pitcher and catcher). Then, there are other people who are kind of paying attention and have a general handle on the current

situation (the infielders). And then, there are others who have no clue whatsoever what's going on, and they just keep doing whatever they think makes the most sense to them (the outfielders).

Living on Autopilot

It seems like most people are simply going along with the structure they have grown accustomed to, even though it doesn't make much sense—all because “they said we have to... (fill in the blank).” For example: pay *this* amount of taxes,* work *this* many hours each week, root for *this* sports team, post on *this* social media, drink *this* soda or eat *this* burger, vote for *this* candidate, pray for *this* group, go to school for *this* many years, and then supplement it with college for another *this* many years. And the list goes on, and on and on.

Are you really operating your own life and making your own decisions? Somewhat yes. But ultimately, no—not as much as you may think you do. Local water sources that many people depend on have fluoride added, whether we like it or not. The food we choose is generally determined by what is made available within a few miles of where we reside. Do you choose your doctor, or does your insurance company specify which ones you may select? Do you choose your own cable or internet provider, or does your city choose? Many of the options available to people are not as “optional” as they might appear to be.

Are these things trivial? Maybe, maybe not. The book *Ultra-Processed People* by Chris Van Tulleken unleashes this jarring truth: “You’re a participant in an experiment you didn’t volunteer for.” The point is, people are led to believe they are in complete control of their lives.

* I realize this is a law, not a personal decision. Yet many people don’t take the time to perform due diligence finding ways to reduce their tax liability. They just keep paying the standard rate without taking advantage of prudent incentives or adjusting the methods in which they spend.

Young people often hear, “You can be anything you want when you grow up.” Is that so? Maybe, kind of, in a way for some. But realistically—no. It’s not.

Good news: there are several steps you can take that can leverage things back into your control. You can greatly reduce your dependence on medical treatment if you prioritize your health. By limiting your technological intake, you can free yourself from excessive reliance on digital services. These might seem like small things, but over time, they can become life changing.

We already know that there are a limited number of options for many people, which are predetermined by a multifaceted structure more complex than we can even imagine. The majority generally figure out the least painful path to undertake in life. But that’s not real living. It is a designed system of living, and it is not designed for you (or me). That is for sure.

This reminds me of the bully in school who continually harasses or takes lunch money from smaller or weaker classmates. It typically begins with verbal attacks and eventually leads to more intense intimidation, sometimes escalating to physical assault. This behavior often continues until an adult figure finally becomes aware and intervenes.

Just the same as the bully situation in school, the only reason the masses of humanity appear powerless is because the few in power remain unopposed by the majority who are being oppressed. Bullies only persist in their intimidating ways until an alternate solution is found or by being opposed by a stronger force. There are some who believe the only way to stop bullying is with brutal

force. While I understand how that could be relied upon as a final resort—and *only* when physical harm is imminent—it is almost never the answer to stop bullying.

There are numerous options for defusing those who appear to be more powerful or who are exerting unauthorized control. Ignoring, walking away, laughing off, and seeking assistance from a trusted adult are all proven methods. When these preliminary attempts are unsuccessful, the bullying usually continues or likely even gets worse. While defusing and disarming is always the ideal outcome, sometimes it requires more. That's when things get complicated and can easily turn ugly if not handled properly.

We want to fix things—it seems easy enough. But somehow, we just keep making things worse by digging ourselves deeper into the rut.

Do you remember the first time your car was stuck in snow or mud? You probably tried aggressively smashing the accelerator with your foot while someone else helped push from behind—and it probably just kept digging itself deeper into the trench, getting worse. Thankfully, you are not nearly as stuck as you may believe you are. I am willing to help push to get you unstuck. We can accomplish this much more easily when we work together.

Humans Are Creatures of Habit

Humans are creatures of habit. Therefore, sometimes we inevitably do things without applying conscious thought, mindlessly repeating the same old routine behaviors on autopilot. One common example that immediately comes to mind is the knee-jerk phrase “bless you” uttered after someone sneezes. (I would prefer a “bless you” for something I did consciously and intentionally—not for an involuntary bodily function.)

It may be worth taking time to consciously ask yourself more questions like the following examples.

- Why do I feel stuck working a job where I feel miserable?
- Why do I feel trapped in an unhealthy lifestyle?
- Why do I feel powerless and incapable of reaching my full potential?

Do those things sound familiar at all—perhaps like that elephant chain we discussed earlier in the book? Well, this book is all about helping people find their peace so they can break free that defeatist mentality—you know, that *belief* of being stuck, trapped, powerless, or incapable.

When our thoughts are distracted into a mindless state, human behavior defaults to what is routine or familiar. When the human mind is on autopilot, human behavior becomes malleable. Many of us are too busy to

stop and think about what we are doing or ask important questions about *why* we are doing *what* we are doing.

A Mental Exercise

Let's do a quick mental exercise. It's a simple multiple-choice question. It's not a trick question. Some of you will get it right away.

What form of government does the United States have?

- a. Monarchy
- b. Communism
- c. Democracy
- d. Other

Do you have your answer?

Great! Now, let's change the subject for a moment.

The Pledge of Allegiance

Let's take a moment to talk about the Pledge of Allegiance. Have you ever stopped and actually thought about what the Pledge of Allegiance means and what purpose it serves?

Let's break it down with a quick review.

I pledge ... I promise, vow, commit
allegiance ... heartfelt loyalty
to the flag of ... to the emblem which represents
the United States of America, ... the nation as a whole
and to the republic ... and to the organized structure
for which it stands, ... for the values that it holds to
one nation ... a single unified country
under God, ... in recognition of a divine being
indivisible, ... unable to be separated or divided
with liberty ... with freedom from oppressive restrictions
and justice ... and fair treatment
for all. ... for every citizen

Did anything stand out to you when reviewing it?

Yes? No? Not really?

Here's what stands out to me. Nowhere in the Pledge does it say that this nation is a democracy. Why? Because it's not a pure democracy. The Pledge does, however, mention that the United States is a republic. That means the political decisions are made by the ones who represent the citizens. Those representatives do not always go along with the popular vote of the citizens. While the two forms of government are symbiotic, they are definitely not interchangeable.

Isn't it interesting how young people are taught that America is simply a democratic nation? You may have recently come across the video of the different news outlets that are quoted saying, "this is extremely dangerous to our democracy."* This obscure concept would be far less confusing if it were presented more clearly.

* You can review the clip here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzYjl1qWb-M>.

Back to the Mental Exercise

The correct answer is: d. Other.

“What?”

“Is this a typo or printing error?”

“I am *certain* the answer is in fact ‘c’.”

The government of the United States of America is in fact a “*federal, representative, democratic republic.*” Here’s a direct excerpt from “Our American Government” which describes the dynamic function of the United States.

*The United States, under its Constitution, is a federal, representative, democratic republic, an indivisible union of 50 sovereign States. With the exception of town meetings, a form of pure democracy, we have at the local, state, and national levels a government which is: “federal” because power is shared among these three levels; “democratic” because the people govern themselves and have the means to control the government; and “republic” because the people choose elected delegates by free and secret ballot.**

What this is saying is a democratic method is used to elect representatives of the citizens. Those representatives are relied on to make decisions on their behalf. In a true democracy, representatives would not be

* Referenced from the 2003 Edition of *Our American Government*, page 7 or at this link: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CDOC-108hdoc94/pdf/CDOC-108hdoc94.pdf>.

necessary. And because it is a democratic republic, the chosen representatives determine what's best for the whole. Hence, the United States is not a pure democracy, as many are led to believe.

Splitting hairs? I can see why some may think so. Again, my hope is to clarify widely accepted misleading concepts. This is simply another example of how the human brain can easily accept a way of thinking that is not completely accurate.

A simple way to illustrate this would be a family where the parents are requesting their children's input before deciding where to go on vacation. "Do you kids want to go camping or to the beach?" A couple of the kids say "beach!" The other siblings say "camping!" Will any of the kids get what they want? Of course. But remember, only two options were offered which gives the appearance that the kiddos get to make their own choice. Some call this an "illusion of choice". Of the two options the decision is ultimately up to the parents. That's how a democratic republic works.

Back to the Pledge of Allegiance

Every morning, schoolchildren are required to chant in unison (before they've reached an age to fully understand the meaning), in a monotone voice, a commitment to our leaders (actually to a flag), you could say *religiously*, almost as a form of worship. This daily practice somewhat reminds me of the book *1984* by George Orwell. In that book, he mentions three specific abuses of authority: deleting history, controlling people with the "Thought Police," and indoctrination by "Big Brother." His fictional account quite accurately depicts these in today's modern world as being the standard way of life.

Here's an intriguing excerpt from the book.

"The Party imposed itself most successfully on people incapable of understanding it. They could be made to accept the most flagrant violations of reality, because they never fully grasped the enormity of what was demanded of them, and were not sufficiently interested in public events to notice what was happening. By lack of understanding they remained sane. They simply swallowed everything."*

This is deep. How do you remedy this heavily entrenched way of thinking—especially when the control appears to be stronger than the general population can

* *1984* by George Orwell. Copyright 1949 by Harcourt, Inc. and renewed 1977 by Sonia Brownell Orwell. Courtesy of HarperCollins Publishers.

handle? And the Pledge of Allegiance is just one example of this kind of indoctrination into our youth. What second or third grader actually knows what a republic is and how it operates? And yet, most of us are taught to recite it anyway. Young people, in their impressionable mental and emotional state, can easily form a subconscious fondness, a personal bond with their government. Seems quite effective, doesn't it?

That leads me to wonder: why don't humans pledge their allegiance to other substantial things on a daily basis? I don't wake up every morning and recite my marriage vows to my wife. That would be absurd (and a little creepy). And yes, I regularly reassure her of my affection and commitment to her—but reciting it on a daily basis seems a little nuts, don't you think?

Consider a new kind of commitment, or pledge, in a matter of speaking.

A New Pledge

I would like to propose a new pledge—not literally, but just something different for you to ponder and reflect on to start off your day. How about pledging your allegiance to your health, to each other, to living a more productive life, to humanity, to the success and well-being of all mankind? Why stop with your own country? What about your human family in China, Brazil, the Netherlands, Indonesia, Guatemala, Canada, everyone, everywhere? “I pledge my loyalty to my entire human family.”

This type of pledge is designed to erase divisions. It’s meant to promote human unity, supporting the overall well-being of all humankind. I am willing to adopt this model, and I invite and encourage you to join me. This is how we change the world.

The way the human brain functions and operates is incredibly amazing—how it can often feed off the bait so easily. Consider this new cognitive approach. “Why America? Because that’s where I was *born*? Yeah, I definitely like it here. And I actively take part in advancing this country’s values and ambitions. But it wasn’t exactly a conscious decision of loyalty that I made as an individual. I like making well-educated and informed decisions regarding commitments of my personal allegiance. In fact, I’d like to reserve my decision making for when my brain would be more developed.

Marty is now beginning to see how the structure of human society has been laid out. Things are now starting to make sense.

Part 2: Shenanigans

*The more you look around, the more you
realize something is wrong here.*

– George Carlin

A Friendly Heads-Up

This section of the book contains the most sensitive content. You may very well be one who is already aware of the perplexing things going on behind the scenes in the world we live in. I'd like to remind readers that dwelling on the following topics is generally ill advised. In fact, while writing this section, I felt noticeably more agitated than I typically do. (My apologies to those around me.) But I pushed myself along so I could prepare it for those who might benefit from a small sample of the reality around us.

Again, it's nearly impossible for me to list every single instance of fraud, corruption, deception, or intentional distraction. But here are a few examples that I hope will allow you to clearly see the battle we are facing. Recognition of these challenges facilitates our ability to learn strategies to overcome them and find our peace.

Athlete and Celebrity Worship

Like most humans, I enjoy different forms of entertainment like music, movies, and sports. I wonder, though, how have humans come to the point where entertainers are idolized as if they are real heroes? They are glorified on gigantic posters hanging in theaters, malls, and arenas, with big names stitched on overpriced jerseys. Their salaries are astronomically unbalanced, considering they are merely performers. Sure, these talented humans are fantastic and impressive, but worthy of deification?

Meanwhile, individuals who actually risk their lives for other humans are not nearly as highly regarded. They don't get their names in big, flashy lights; no funny TV commercials selling insurance; no guaranteed, multi-year, mega-value contract worthy of making national headlines. How has this become a thing?

I'd like to illustrate the scope of this perception with an illustration that Marty might be able to relate to. Let's say your favorite entertainer earned \$250,000 last year. That's a completely acceptable amount of money for nearly anyone to live on and provide for their family in most regions today. However, no one would be overly concerned about their whereabouts, their favorite meal, or their pet's name. Yes, they worked hard; their performance was great. And ...?

How about we talk about the contract extension your trash collector signed this week? He or she should be making the really big bucks. And what about the underappreciated nurse who gets abused while working long hours on night shift? Where is her big endorsement from Nike or hilarious State Farm Insurance commercial?

Oh yeah, that goes against the script where humans have been trained and conditioned to worship nonessential professions.

Rather than changing sports team names (because changing the channel isn't always enough for some), how about changing things that would actually improve society? Like actually helping *the group* that is said to be oppressed. If concern and empathy for the oppressed group is genuine, the focus would be on helping them first and then redirecting efforts to changing sports team names subsequently.

Here's another thing we could do. Let's eliminate the misguided phrase "sports hero." Athletes are not heroes—they are performers—just like circus clowns and television actors. Military veterans and traumatic medical personnel are actual heroes, yet they are not nearly as recognized or famous (or taken care of) like the professional athletes and celebrities. Marty is shocked that humans haven't even gotten that one right.

Another Fun Mental Exercise

Can you name the NFL player on the Buffalo Bills who suffered cardiac arrest on January 2, 2023? If you said Damar Hamlin, you are absolutely correct. Now, what about the athletic trainer who performed CPR on the playing field and saved his life? Can you name that person? If you said Denny Kellington, you are again absolutely correct.

Did you actually know, or at least recognize, the health professional's name? Or did you have to go look it up? (Marty just interrupted and asked me, "umm, what's a buff alo-bill?")

Maybe you've heard of him once or twice, but his name has essentially had little to no impact on the general public. There were many signs saying, "Pray for Damar" yet very few that said, "Thank God for Denny." This is just one example of what's wrong in society today. I am thrilled that Damar is reportedly recovering, and I hope that he is fortunate enough to continue earning a living doing what he loves. But I wonder, how is it that a real-life hero (the person who saved another's life) is not getting the accolades (or paycheck) that he deserves for saving a human life?

Why is his name less familiar than, let's say, Tom Brady? Why is he not being praised and lauded by the entire country? Where is his multimillion-dollar contract? If I ever happen to find myself in a medical predicament, I sure hope Denny is nearby and not Tom or Damar. Nothing personal. It just goes to show that human brains are so easily deceived into acknowledging, recognizing, and dare I say, glorifying the wrong people and things.

I get it, that's just how entertainment works today. Humans are easily distracted by what is currently most visible. For example, Emmitt Smith isn't exactly the number-one focus of stardom this week. So yeah, maybe that might be how things are. But I challenge all of us to adjust that skewed way of thinking.

Sanitation Workers and Nurses

This has to be said: no one should be earning more money than the people who collect our trash each week. (Water-treatment workers should be a close second.) I do not say this by any means to minimize the importance of, let's say, a neurosurgeon. In support of my bold statement, consider how effective a surgical procedure would be without the services of proper waste removal.

Now don't get me wrong, I definitely know our athletes, musicians, and all entertainers are extremely talented and special. And yes, they do deserve to be paid exceptionally well for their abilities and long hours of hard work. That being said, it should not be more than the trash collectors are paid. Imagine a world without sports (you know—like when the Major League Baseball players went on strike in 1994–95); or a world without television programs to entertain us (like roughly a hundred years ago—before it was even invented). What would we do? We could not possibly live like that, could we?

Okay, now imagine a world without trash collectors for, let's say, one month. The perspective changes drastically. And let's take it a step further—a month without medical professionals, teachers, janitors, farmers, or meal preparers. I can keep listing people who drastically affect our well-being and quality of life more than the ones making avalanche loads of money. Again, I am not saying do not pay the celebrities well. I am only saying they should not be making more money than the people we depend on to make our lives better.

Here's a quick example off the top of my head for a way to balance annual salaries of professions based on their relevance to society.

Trash Collector:	\$1.8 Million
Water Treatment Worker:	\$1.5 Million
Nurse:	\$1.3 Million
Police Officer:	\$1.2 Million
Doctor:	\$1.1 Million
Teacher:	\$800 Thousand
Truck Driver:	\$750 Thousand
Cook:	\$500 Thousand
Athlete/Actor/Musician	\$300 Thousand

Okay, I'm ready for it—let me know how far off my proposition is and how there's not enough money in the entire world to balance it that way. That's a fair debating point. At least, let's visit this topic and start making sense of it so we can achieve a better balance. My point is there is clearly an extreme imbalance. And there has to be a better way of doing it for a more reasonable and better-functioning system.

Before continuing, I want to revisit a topic I touched on earlier. Let's go ahead and see what Damar Hamlin's

salary looks like in comparison to the gentleman who saved his life. What was that guy's name again? Exactly.

Damar Hamlin: \$910,000/year*
(Qualified to entertain
audiences)

Denny Kellington: \$75,000/year
(Qualified to save lives)

Do those numbers add up to you? They sure don't make sense to me. Denny Kellington could work fifty years of his life and he would bring in a whopping \$3.75 million over his entire career as an athletic trainer in the NFL. And he holds responsibility for the health and well-being of the performers.

As I try explaining all of this to Marty the best I logically can, he simply stares back at me with a blank look on his face. I feel for him.

Don't get me wrong, I do not believe in simply taking from the rich and giving to the poor. I believe in redefining the values that are placed on specific productive tasks indicative of their proper worth. I strongly believe in the adage, "if you don't work, you don't eat" (with certain reasonable exceptions, of course). I am simply saying that there is definitely an imbalance and also a likely way to level the playing field so that all can thrive. The key word in this entire book is *balance*. No one loses that way. In other words, we can all win.

* Oddly enough, Damar is on the low end of the pay scale when compared to higher-profile athletes.

Help Our Veterans

While driving down the highway one day, I saw an advertisement saying something along the lines of “Please give money to help take care of our veterans.” *What?* Now, I am totally in favor of supporting the men and women who make sacrifices for the comforts that we all enjoy every day. But shouldn’t the country that they served carry the sole responsibility to ensure the best care possible? Considering the amount of tax dollars collected, shouldn’t taking care of their veterans be a top priority?

I’m in favor of treating our troops well and thanking them for their sacrifices, for risking their lives for us. I am not talking about “*I do not want to help them.*” They should be fully taken care of by the country they served or at least better than they currently are. Since the balance is unequal maybe we would do well to revisit how tax dollars are allocated.

Food and Diet (Health and Fitness Too)

I believe the view on food, health, and overall wellness is just the tip of the iceberg when considering the current state of humanity.

Let's take a quick look at the Animal Kingdom. Elephants and hippopotamuses—fat, round-shaped creatures. That's not an insult—that's just their anatomy. And then there are gazelles and cheetahs—fit, sleek-formed creatures. Again, not a compliment by any means; just an observation of their makeup.

I've never seen a thin, in-shape elephant or hippo due to regularly exercising and monitoring their diet. I've also never seen an out-of-shape cheetah or gazelle due to overeating or laziness. In her observations, Clara Davis noticed how “wild animals seemed to maintain their health without being told what to eat by science.” If you're anything like me, this constant in nature raises several eye-opening questions. Why do we see so many different shapes in humans? Why are there more than forty treadmills at the gym I go to? Why are there so many gyms in every neighborhood? Why do we “need” to seek out exercise just to maintain our health?

I'm going to go out on a limb here and speculate it's likely a cause and effect from the barrage of fast-food restaurants that have overtaken our communities. Many humans are overly stressed, depressed, rushed, and on a tight budget. Do you think the way modern human life is currently structured just happens to be so hectic and rushed—or is this possibly by design?

How is it still unclear what humans are supposed to eat? Keto, paleo, no carbs, no grains, fat-free, gluten-free, more protein, less sugar, processed, no dairy, vegan, candy and sweets as a reward for the kiddos, etc.? What the heck? Which is it? How have humans gotten so lost regarding what real food *is* and is *not*?

Humans have many popular diet plans: Weight Watchers, Nutrisystem, Jenny Craig, SlimFast, Paleo, Atkins, South Beach, DASH, Mayo Clinic, Mediterranean, Dukan, Ornish, HMR, Medifast, Optifast, and more.

Humans also have many popular fitness facilities: Equinox, Anytime Fitness, LA Fitness, 24 Hour Fitness, Crunch Fitness, Orangetheory Fitness, Curves, Pure Barre, Planet Fitness, Gold's Gym, Lifetime Fitness, YMCA, EXOS, YouFit, CrossFit, Snap Fitness ... and note, that's *not* including all of the smaller, lesser-known gyms you'll find in your local area. This list can go on with home fitness solutions: Peloton, Bowflex, Tonal, Tempo, NordicTrack, P90X, Insanity, Richard Simmons, Suzanne Somers, and more. How many fitness facilities with cutting-edge equipment do we really need for maintaining proper health?

Remember, I'm in complete favor of health, wellness, and overall fitness. I personally enjoy the variety of options available for health and wellness. But my intention here is to shed light on a type of scam of making people unhealthy so they require more exercise than they were designed to need. This system is very clearly (and gently) stated in the book *Ultra-Processed People* by Chris Van Tulleken. He wonderfully exposes the nuts and bolts behind the modern food industry in a way that removes pressure and guilt from the reader; not pointing any blame

toward the general population. He shares insightful information behind the problem that has brought about the symptom.

It's sad that humans are doing this against their own species. Why? I'm guessing it's because the fast-food industry has become an easy money grab. Not only is life designed to be excessively stressful, but the modern system also challenges, pressures, and persuades humans to eat less healthy because it's so easily accessible and convenient—especially if you're on a tight budget.

Can you really blame people for just grabbing a quick bite or hitting the drive-thru on their way home from their stressful, unsatisfying, meaningless job, simply as a coping technique? People almost need comfort food every once in a while. Unfortunately, people need the fix of unhealthy food more now than ever before.

It's essentially a vicious cycle that feels nearly impossible for some people to escape. Think about it—people in this modern world already feel incredibly rushed, which creates stress, and all too often leads to poor eating habits. And that's just how the cycle begins. An ever-increasing number of people now struggle with obesity, which breeds sluggishness, fatigue, depression, lower productivity, and typically requires more time spent exercising. In compensating for a poor diet through exercise, much of their valuable time is squandered, which leads them even further into—you guessed it—feeling rushed, right back to where the cycle started. People are finding themselves in this unfortunate death spiral, an overly hectic lifestyle, and are struggling to handle more than they are truly capable of. Would you agree that our food, fitness, and overall health are closely intertwined with

the success of humankind? I believe a nonhuman external influence—an “invisible hand” running the show—is well aware of this, and they leverage this to their advantage.

That brings me to another point. Neighborhoods would greatly benefit from growing community food gardens rather than honing efforts on perfectly manicured lawns laden with who knows what kind of chemicals. I call this a Community Grow-Share Program. Think about it; if each family grows a designated food or two, and everyone trades their yield with one another, the entire neighborhood’s grocery bill would drastically decrease. I’d wager their doctor appointments, other bills, and prescription medications would diminish too. Sounds like a win to me. Sure, we’d face challenges like preventing theft and vandalism. But I have faith that we could manage ironing out those details.

There you have it: self-sufficiency and health care at its finest—and less dependency on how much income you would require from your current employer. Additionally, fewer trucks would be on the road, and drivers would get to spend more time with their families. Why? Because they wouldn’t have to bring unnaturally processed foods to your local grocery store (which lacks the adequate nutrition your body requires to function optimally). Our alien friend, Marty, would be pleased to see everyone happy and healthy working together like this.

TV and Entertainment

Televisions, tablets, phones, all electronic screens really, have placed humans under a devious spell. People believe they like them, but they are really just tools used to manipulate, sell, misinform, and distract humans from meaningful things—important things.

For example, people will watch ten to fifteen minutes of an actual sporting event while eating junk food and guzzling less-than-healthy beverages, all while mentally absorbing two to three hours of commercials and nonsensical chatter from sports “experts.”* Closely related examples include reality shows, game shows, dramas, sitcoms, and talent competitions. Think about how much time is wasted simply taking in irrelevant content and the plethora of advertisements. Some people choose this over spending quality time with their family or learning how to invest their hard-earned money.

Not to worry though. There is a way to wake up, break up, and make up with personal indulgences and chosen forms of relaxation and entertainment. They do, after all, serve a purpose. You’ll find this in part four of this book, phase one of the solution.

* I initially wanted to find a reference to cite. But I’m trying to set an example of asking more questions and doing your own research rather than simply relying on information published by others. So, I took the liberty to document my own findings. The average length of an American football game from start to finish is 187 minutes (just over three hours). I recorded an average of thirteen minutes, twenty-nine seconds of actual football “action” and forty-seven minutes containing 128 commercials during breaks. The remaining time was mostly filled with slow-motion replays and chitchat from the sports analysts, aka “experts.”

Different Demographics in Humanity

Marty the alien is confused. How is it we still struggle with differences in skin color, gender, age, religion, social and financial status, as well as many more “differences” that could be added to the list? Let me clarify my stance. I absolutely love the variety within the human species. In fact, I heard it perfectly stated somewhere that “variety is the spice of life.” Each unique culture makes humanity beautiful. We are not all exactly the same, and that’s okay. In fact, it’s awesome.

I get it, most of us are accustomed to nations, states, local municipalities, even sports teams having distinct flags representing their identities. My question is: where is our *human* flag? When will we finally put our differences aside so we can firmly plant a distinguished banner of “human unity” and fly it with utmost pride?

What will it actually take for humans to look directly into the mirror and realize that we’re all *one* family on the same team working together? No matter the extent that someone or something tries to divide, categorize, or separate us, we will always have *much* more in common (unifying us) than we have differences (separating us). The last time I checked, we all bleed red. I’m pretty sure that hasn’t changed. So, why are division and separation so prevalent? Or is someone trying to *convince* humans to be divided, knowing full well how vulnerable they can be when separated?

Government and Politics

I'm going to start this section with the notion that most people have been told at some point, "If you want to make a difference, you need to vote." Or "If you didn't vote, don't complain."

I'm on the fence when it comes to dissecting and debating words and grammar, especially in the English language. It's incredibly complicated and confusing with all the inconsistent rules that only apply in certain instances. For example: "no one" is *one* word (according to the dictionary*) and "cannot" is *not* two words. Confusing? (Please tell me I'm not the only one whose head hurts from the seemingly endless catalog of linguistic exceptions.)

no one

pronoun

1. no person; nobody

No one has ever done this before.

We called, but *no one* answered.

Do you see this difference? The word *no one* is unique in comparison to similar words: *someone*, *anyone*, *everyone*. (And yes, this is the proper word—not an informal or slang version of the word.) This reinforces how our brains are able to assimilate illogical and somewhat bizarre "rules" over time.[†]

* A few entries from several sources:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/no-one>,

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/no%20one>,

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/no-one>.

[†] The simple explanation being the rule makers do not prefer the two vowels touching in *no one*. They are fine with the two consonants touching in *cannot*. (I didn't make these rules.)

While it may appear I am veering way off topic, this is yet another clear example of how things that don't make the most logical sense can still become accepted by the masses as a standardization. That being said, I think it would be important to briefly review the origin of the word "politics."

The English word politics originated in the mid-fifteenth century, based on a classic work by Aristotle called *Politiká* ("affairs of the cities"). Here are a few of the definitions derived from it.

"A distinctive form of rule whereby *people act together through institutionalized procedures to resolve differences.*"—Bernard Crick

"... comprises all the activities of *co-operation, negotiation and conflict within and between societies.*" — Adrian Leftwich

"The capacity of always choosing at each instant, in constantly changing situations, the *least harmful, the most useful.*" —Otto von Bismarck

What did you deduce from those definitions? Here's my understanding.

- Order, organization, and structure
- Working together toward an acceptable agreement
- Problem-solving and solutions
- Productively serving the interests of the collective

- Generally working together toward conflict resolution

Are you on board with the concept of “working together” through an “organized structure” to “solve problems” in the “best interests of the entire group”? I know I sure am. But is that how politics operate today? Nope. Politics has evolved into a sort of power-hungry, self-serving circus performance.

Again, we have somehow been convinced as a society that real change can only happen at the polls. However, lots of people question the effectiveness and validity of voting. Gore did when Bush won; Hilary did when Trump won; Trump did when Biden won. It’s incredibly absurd how a candidate will have no complaints when they *win* an election but will take major issue with the integrity of the election process when they *lose*. If you win: “voting is effective.” If you lose: “they must’ve cheated.” Logically speaking, if politicians have a problem with the way they lost, then they should also take issue with the way they won. I feel for Marty who’s still struggling to make sense of it all.

Society has been fooled into the belief that selecting this politician over that politician is the foremost way to improve your life. In reality, it’s a game that has been created to where the general population has been seduced into playing with them—and for them. You see, politicians as a whole are all on the same team. The whole “back and forth” games they play are just for show to keep the people from becoming united and rising up/revolting. While there may be some honest and genuine political candidates who

make it into office, all too often they do not last very long as leaders. Career politicians are clearly known for becoming corrupt over time.

The people, the citizens, and their welfare are not the true priority of modern politicians. Politicians focus on strategies for winning elections by targeting certain states, counties, demographics, etc. not by improving policies and actual problem-solving; quite different from the definition of the word “politics.” The word *politics* today often suggests a more schmoozing, car-salesy connotation. Politicians have simply mastered the craft of saying the right things to get people to react—the fascinating art of persuasion. While there may be some well-intentioned, honest, and genuine politicians, it is unfortunately clear that any impact they do make is short lived.

Try this. The next time you hear news during an upcoming election, pay close attention and decide for yourself how much of the reporting is on “winning the vote” or “who is leading in the polls” or “my opponent is a bad choice because (fill in the blank),” in other words “throwing dirt at each other.” Conversely ask yourself how much of the reporting is spent discussing actual policies, or detailed solutions. It’s clear that whoever leverages the most money with the right people in their corner and plays the game most skillfully wins the election and gains control.

I think most can agree how ridiculous the adult comedy cartoon *South Park* is—an absolute dumpster fire of absurdity. And even they recognize the ridiculousness in choosing the lesser of two evils for leadership in our nation: “Will you be voting for the Giant Douche or the Turd

Sandwich?” (*South Park*, season 20, episode 1) Many citizens feel obligated to choose a candidate they dislike less rather than selecting an honorable candidate that aligns with their values who they can wholeheartedly support. The system is set up so that “elites,” super PACs, and lobbyists get the things they want—things that the general population would never even consider. How incredible that even the outlandishly satirical *South Park* cartoon clearly sees this. Yet many people routinely keep going through the motions continuing to cast their “sacred” vote every few years as if it truly matters to our society.

My heart goes out to Marty. He must be confused and overwhelmed with grief and pity, disappointed in what the human species has become. I’m certain this is not what he was expecting when he was planning to visit a new species.

Flawed Justice System

Okay, this might be the shortest section of this book: the legal system is not about justice. It's about money. Next topic.

Fine, I'll elaborate. While writing this book, I had my first opportunity to serve on jury duty. I was selected to be on a panel, which was a fantastic experience. Although I was originally apprehensive and hoped to be released from my obligation, I'm very happy to have gotten the privilege to serve—even though it was mentally and emotionally exhausting.

Neither party was happy with the outcome. The plaintiff was awarded much less than they requested. And the defendant paid out much more than they anticipated. In the end (after factoring in all the time, money, mental and emotional stress, trial preparation, etc.) it was a wash. Both parties' lives will never be the same. No one truly got what they wanted. The only ones who benefited from the legal proceedings were the representatives of both parties, the attorneys. While the system may have been originally structured and well-intended to be effective, it most definitely is not always the case.

People are incarcerated due to marijuana possession. And what does it accomplish? Also, people pay fines for minor traffic violations. What does that accomplish? Do those fines go to any victim? Nope. It all goes directly to the court. Does this do anything to actually help society? No. It simply encourages people to “clever up” and find better ways to evade consequences. It only aggravates people, encourages resentment, and makes those operating the legal system richer. In fact, lawyers and

prosecutors receive accolades for how many cases they win—not for how many innocent people they protected.

Now, that's just the trivial side of the coin in the flawed justice system. In the deeper trenches of legal matters, humans can clearly see that certain ones are treated differently than the rest—usually because they have lots of money. For example, the Ghislaine Maxwell trial involving the sexual trafficking of children was not given the same attention as the Johnny Depp defamation trial, which was strategically plastered all over mainstream news and social media. By the way, who was she trafficking children to? Why has it taken so long to bring justice to her clients? What could the media possibly be covering up?

Another thing: laws do not stop the bad guys. Criminals will always find a way unless something with the magnitude of divine intervention steps in. Here's an example: a felon wants to purchase a firearm. But he is not able to legally get one. No problem for the criminal. The felon can acquire each part of the weapon and then assemble it in the comfort of his home. And just like that, the criminal has his very own unregistered firearm to do with what he pleases. Marty is beside himself with this realization.

These are called ghost guns. I was fascinated when I first heard of them. I happened to be listening to the State of the Union address, and President Joe Biden was talking about cracking down on ghost guns. I thought to myself, *Hmmm, what's a ghost gun?* So, I looked it up and was disgusted and simultaneously fascinated when I realized what it was. Human cleverness and ingenuity never cease to amaze me.

So, even I, one of the good guys, now know how simple it can be to skate by the written law. I have no intention of ever doing that because my conscience won't allow me. But if the thought so much as even crossed *my* mind, I could only imagine how many bad guys' minds it crossed too. That is frightening.

Ineffectual Education System

The general population of humans are not adequately taught fundamental lessons about budgeting, investing, how to file taxes, parenting, the significance of trust funds, or real health. But modern humans *are* taught to go into major debt paying for further education, just so they can work forty to fifty years until they can finally sit back, relax, and *then* enjoy life.

The public school system is not designed to educate young people how to become wealthy and successful. (Keep in mind, wealth and success are not always tallied in monetary measurements.) Traditional schooling revolves around a method of “memorizing and testing” rather than instilling valuable skills into our youth. The modern curriculum teaches youngsters the bare minimum so they can become good employees, not self-reliant producers. In fact, the kids are being taught by people who themselves are employees who are stuck in the rat race.

I’m not saying corporate CEOs should be teaching sixth-grade math. I’m saying that this world is not set up for parents to properly and effectively raise their children and instill values in them to become productive adults. This world is designed, again, to separate families. Parents *go* to work; kids *go* to school. This structure clearly strengthens the industrial fabric while weakening the family dynamic. Imagine how families would thrive if they implemented real-world skills and integrated basic values that are held in the Amish community (for example).

Conspiracy “Theories”

I could provide many examples of known conspiracies and their blatantly obvious inconsistencies, along with cited references. That would fill up an entire book, likely causing more debates rather than accomplishing anything productive. The purpose of this book, however, is to encourage you to ask more questions—especially *why* questions. My resolve is for you to decide for yourself what is credible and what is not. I want you to get into the habit of questioning things beyond how they are simply being presented to you. Remember this powerful gem: truth does not mind being questioned; lies do not like being challenged.

Let’s talk about false flags. The phrase *false flag* comes from devious sixteenth-century pirates. These cunning swashbucklers would raise a false “friendly” flag to deceptively communicate that a friendly vessel was approaching. They would do this to confuse, disarm, and eventually blame a crime on others before attacking unsuspecting seafarers. Pretty clever, right? Can you think of any false flags in recent history?

Here’s one very well-known and yet rarely talked-about example, “Operation Northwoods.”* The unclassified document begins this way: “Justification for US Military Intervention in Cuba.” Be honest. Are you aware of the plans laid out by US military leaders in this document? Sadly, many people are more familiar with the local team’s starting lineup or the Kardashian gang. Yet this important

* The unclassified document “Memorandum of 3/13/1962” also known as “Operation Northwoods” can be found in the National Archives or at this link: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/305036?objectPage=129>.

piece of information remains intriguingly quiet. Does that make you wonder at all?

This is just one well-documented case of a top-secret false flag proposal.* It was discovered and unclassified thanks to the due diligence of the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Review Board. Top military leaders in the United States admitted to intentions of hurting its own people. These plans were not limited to innocent civilian targets. They even included the proposal of killing US military personnel. All of this just to create a ruse in an effort to gain the support of American citizens to start a war against Cuba.

Do you remember how Fidel Castro was painted as the “enemy” for so many years? And then there was Saddam Hussein ... Osama Bin Laden ... Kim Jong Un ... Donald Trump ... Vladimir Putin (along with many, many others over the years). Who will be next? The nation’s leaders proposed specific plans to carry this out, in order to blame Cuba for provoking an attack.

Here’s a very brief timeline of the events.

1959—Fidel Castro takes power of Cuba.

1962—“Operation Northwoods” is proposed to President Kennedy (and rejected).

1984—The top-secret document is reviewed and remains hidden.

* You can read the ABC News article here:
<https://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=92662&page=1>.

1987—Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lyman L. Lemnitzer,* receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom.†

1988—Lyman Lemnitzer dies (after the damage is already done and before any consequence could be determined).

1992—A board is created to seek information regarding Kennedy’s assassination.

1998—Documentation is released including “Operation Northwoods.”

Well, this raises many more questions than answers. Is this report even real? Why did it take so long for it to come out? Would it have ever been known had Kennedy not been assassinated? Is the admission of guilt authentic or some kind of cover-up for yet another secret operation? And what other proposed (or successfully carried out) operations are people still not—and may never become—aware of? Marty’s beginning to wonder if visiting our planet was such a great idea.

So, for thirty-five years, the common knowledge of “Fidel Castro is the bad guy” was deliberately broadcast to

* L. L. Lemnitzer’s signature is on the first page of the proposal.

† The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the nation’s highest civilian honor, presented to individuals who have made exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public, or private endeavors. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/01/president-biden-announces-recipients-of-the-presidential-medal-of-freedom/>.

the masses. This inaccurate information has settled firmly into the knowledge banks of many human brains. Rectifying this falsehood is *far* more complex than just saying “my bad” and moving on from the error (actually the deliberate lie that they attempted to conceal from the public). This reminds me of *Forensic Files*, where even the most highly qualified detectives almost need to rely on “pure luck” to find that one unlikely clue which the criminal mistakenly overlooked in his devious plan before they can utilize scientific evidence to confirm the criminal act. Such an exhausting process just to reveal a morsel of truth to people. Ugh.

In fact, let’s briefly walk through the process. First of all, they have to find and identify some measure of reasonable suspicion from inconsistent reporting—of which there is a plethora to choose from. (Usually, the people who find and share suspicious information are loosely referred to as conspiracy theorists.) Then, there’s the burden of proof, a heavy burden indeed, to actually be able to locate and produce the suspected misleading evidence because it’s usually hidden *very* well. There’s also the daunting task of obtaining a confession to the lie they told. Not to mention the exhausting process of having the documents unclassified (or declassified) making them available to the general public. Then, you can publish and share your findings with the masses, which by now is a little too late. The damage has already been done. Winston Churchill’s witty version of this observation goes like this. “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.”

Do you see how time-consuming and meticulous it is having to undo devious hypocrisy rather than just living life and focusing on healthy, positive things? Many trades

workers often use the phrase “measure twice, cut once.” That’s because undoing and fixing errors (or in this case, deliberate acts of ill will) require an extensive amount of effort when compared to simply doing something right the first time.

Who really has adequate time to intently listen, question, and verify *everything*? Wouldn’t it be nice if we could simply put our trust in the sources that are meant to keep us informed? Again, this is eerily similar to Orwell’s book *1984*. To paraphrase, the ones who are distracted and paying very little attention are the most easily swayed to believe even the most outrageous claims.

If deliberate efforts to mislead the general public aren’t purely evil, I don’t know what is. That’s definitely not a “natural” human characteristic. (Or perhaps it *is* a natural human trait, and I’ve developed an unrealistic faith in humanity. Sure, I’ll plead guilty to that charge.)

Known attempts like these sow seeds of doubt in people’s minds. They lead many to distrust commonly known information that is being presented as factual. This includes even the most elementary of teachings, from the historic moon landing to the framework of the planet we live on. At this point, I’m struggling to even make eye contact with Marty as I say once again with complete embarrassment, “Welcome to Earth.”

When confirmed deceptions (not theories) such as Operation Northwoods, MK Ultra, and the Tuskegee Airmen become revealed, how can people truly accept the authenticity of the next story? Do you really blame people for questioning other major “documented” historical events when the records contain significant inconsistencies? For

example, September 11, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the sinking of the *Titanic*, the Vietnam War, the Irish Potato Famine, and the CIA Contra crack controversy? Since propaganda is being widely broadcast by the straight-faced media, how eager are you to simply accept any news report at face value? Do you see why people have major doubts regarding the credibility of the media?

If you don't clearly see major inconsistencies within documented events in recent history, then I don't know how else to say you're being blatantly lied to. I say this with complete empathy; it's a tough pill to swallow. It's embarrassing. I don't like being fooled by someone who I am supposed to trust in a position of leadership.

I struggle with the disappointing realization that there are some with an agenda of deception who actually do not care what humans think or how they feel. I'm almost certain that a natural human element has become rare, if not absent, in some among us. So, instead of blindly accepting everything you're being told, how about asking more questions?

The News

That leads right into the next topic, the news.

Have you heard this before, “No news is good news?” It’d be nice if it was all good news. But realistically, that’s not always the case. The phrase seems to bring me an inner sense of calm.

However, doesn’t it seem a little odd that news sources typically only report on things when they’re bad or negative? So, why not broadcast the positive stuff *more* and bring *less* attention to the negative? I realize the practicality of informing the public of traffic jams, inclement weather, and suspicious or criminal activity, etc. But the concept is still valid. Why is our attention so easily focused on negative stories over the positive ones?

This media industry has been so well-established that at designated times throughout the day, people will sit in expectation, eager to hear what recent bad stuff has happened. To paraphrase comedian Chris Porter, just *once* I want to turn on the news and hear them say: ‘frickin’ nothing.’

Here’s something you’ve probably heard a few times, “Up next: important news you need to hear right now... after a word from our sponsors” or “when we come back from this commercial break.” Well then, I suppose it wasn’t nearly as urgent as they led me to believe it was. Sounds like the media folks just want people to stay coozied up next to the TV so people can consume their next collection of advertisements reminding people to “ask your doctor if this pill is right for you.” (By the way, very slick method of coercing people to sell products to their family

physician. If only we could spread awareness of healthier options so effectively.)

Has it become clear enough to you by now that the news has two major advantages: a massive platform and giant “grenades” to lob into crowds of unsuspecting people? Yes, the outside forces working diligently to divide society is becoming clear for people to see. Efforts to conceal the truth are becoming virtually nonexistent. Once the pin has been pulled, those talking heads can walk away unharmed and simply watch humans fight among themselves.

Ask yourself these two simple questions. Do you feel like everything in the world has been told to you accurately? How confident are you that what you are being told is in your best interests?

The news obviously contains a reasonable amount of truth to maintain a measure of credibility to the public. The majority of what is reported can be verified as factual. I’m okay with that—I like facts. What I’m not okay with is the teeny-tiny percentage that is snuck in with the intention of manipulating the general public. Over time, humans have become dependent on the news to stay informed of reliable and accurate information.

But now, the media is becoming exposed, and people are starting to see how they’re able to slip in any sort of distracting story they choose because of the trust they’ve already gained from the general population. They’re now capable of releasing any headline they can create; anything from a “Cuban Missile Crisis” and “a spy balloon from China,” to “mysterious drones over New Jersey”. And they’re successfully able to capture the

attention of the public—whether people believe it’s true or not. The initial knee-jerk response is to believe it—that is until we eventually open our eyes and see it for what it really is—just another thing to distract humans from something else.

So, next time you see an odd and unusual news event, ask yourself, “what are they trying to cover up?” or “what are they trying to distract us from?” (Some call this “reading between the lines” or “not simply accepting everything at face value.”) You may not get an answer to that question, but you will start viewing their information with a new perspective that will stir up less of your emotional energy—and perhaps even lower your blood pressure a bit.

Here’s another good thing to ask when hearing something on the news (or from any other source). Is this information intended to bring me calm and peace? Or is it stirring up tension and anxiety? The answer to that question will reveal everything you need to know about the source of the content.

Taxes and Cost of Living

It's time for your favorite topic, taxes. Hope you're sitting down for this one.

“Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's.” (Matthew 22:21, NIV) That sounds reasonable. But after diving into this arranged system, it's a little unsettling to discover just how lopsided and encumbering this “collection agency” has become.

Allow this to sink in. The majority of working people's income is taxed twice when they earn wages—through federal income tax and state income tax. Then, the money that people get to keep is taxed a third time when it's spent—through sales tax. Furthermore, many are also taxed a fourth time for residing within a municipality—local tax. And then, if they own property (that's really owned by the bank if you have a mortgage), they pay even more tax on that—a fifth time, property tax. And still, they keep looking for new ways to acquire more of your hard-earned money.

On the following page you'll find a current table showing the amount of federal and state taxes being taken from working folks.

<u>TAX:</u>	<u>RANGE:</u>	<u>AVERAGE:</u>
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Federal Tax:	10–37.00%*	23.50%
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State Tax:	0–13.30%†	6.65%
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TOTALS:	10–50.30%	30.15%
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So, right off the bat, the average taxpayer is out 30 percent of what they’ve earned. Think about that. This doesn’t even include local tax, sales tax, property tax, which ultimately brings this average much closer to 35 percent.

I originally wanted to show a complete tax table with a range and average of how much earned income is withheld from the general population. But, due to the way tax laws are uniquely written at state and local levels, it would not accurately depict what is withheld from an average paycheck. Since those figures would not apply across the board, I highly encourage you to review your own personal tax requirements—what is being withheld compared to the income you’ve earned.

So, on average, people are required to pay back at least 35 percent of their earned salary just in taxes alone. To put that in perspective, say you work a full-time job making \$100 per hour. The value of that hourly wage is essentially only \$65. The government keeps (takes) thirty-five of those dollars that you earned, and you get to keep a

* Federal Tax Range: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-provides-tax-inflation-adjustments-for-tax-year-2022>.

† State Tax Range: <https://turbotax.intuit.com/tax-tips/fun-facts/states-with-the-highest-and-lowest-taxes/L6HPAVqSF>.

measly \$65 to spend on goods and services for yourself and your family. After putting in a forty-hour work week, you would have earned \$4,000, and yet you would only see \$2,600 of it.* And that doesn't even include other fringe withholdings such as Social Security and Medicare. (Don't get me started on the looming deterioration of Social Security.)

People are being led to believe they have more and can afford more than they actually do. Welcome to America. I would think the government might want to show appreciation for the people and acknowledge each one with a shiny plaque expressing gratitude for the generous contributions made toward national operations.

Looking at it through the proper lens, you will begin to understand exactly how much of "your" money is gone before you ever see it. The next time you consider a purchase, you may want to evaluate if the purchase is realistically affordable, necessary, and worth your hard-spent time.

That's just taxes; it doesn't end there.

Consider the cost people pay for protections through insurance premiums—health insurance, life insurance, home insurance, car insurance, pet insurance, travel insurance, a multitude of specialized insurances. If that sounds overwhelming, that's because it is overwhelming. Sadly, humans have become complacent toward this reality, while the system continues pressuring and lulling them to work overtime just to make ends meet.

* 40 hours x \$100 per hour = \$4,000 - \$1,400 (which is 35%) = \$2,600, which you get to keep.

Never-Ending Debt

In 2022, the IRS collected over \$4 trillion in tax revenue,^{*} and the United States (as of this writing) is over \$33 trillion in debt.[†] Do you think any of that \$4 trillion in tax revenue went toward paying down the national debt? It couldn't have decreased it much, if at all. The government is taking in far less than they're spending—and the amount they're taking is clearly absurd.

Do you see a problem here?

You might be asking yourself, “Why are they taking so much money from their citizens when they clearly aren't fit to manage their own debt?” And “Couldn't the government simply print more money if they wanted to?”

Great question. The short answer is yes; they can, and they do. And when they do, it only weakens the dollar unless it is bonded, backed, or guaranteed that the new debt will be paid off with future employable jobs to define its value.

I suppose I could understand how a nation of such proportion and complexity would be a few *billion* dollars in debt. That would make some sense because the leaders are not exactly the savviest when it comes to spending money wisely. But we're talking about trillions of dollars here. Trillions. And not just a few trillion—*thirty-three* trillion. So, not only is the government taking a profane amount of

^{*} <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-releases-fiscal-year-2022-data-book-describing-agencys-activities#:~:text=For%20FY%202022%2C%20the%20gross,the%20hi story%20of%20the%20agency>.

[†] <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/americas-finance-guide/national-debt/>.

money from the general public, but they continue tacking on to the never-ending debt which is likely to never be repaid.

When people request loans for a car or home, or even a credit card, they must meet certain criteria before being approved by a bank for the transaction to go through. Financial institutions closely review a potential borrower's current debts as a major consideration. So, how is it that the government is able to continually get approved for additional funding—even more debt that will also likely never be repaid?

This playing field is incredibly off balance. How is an entity that's drowning in its own debt capable of “bailing out” banks, corporations, and even other countries? The relationship between the government and the banks is highly disturbing to many. Furthermore, the average person in the modern world has more debt than they can reasonably handle. Will this ever get sorted out? Or will it take some kind of colossal plan or divine intervention to alleviate it all?

Disproportionate taxes, the burdensome cost of living, and the growing mountain of debt continue to widen the gap between the citizens and the ones who are running the show. It's absolutely insane, and it continues getting worse. After paying rent or mortgage, utilities, groceries, maintenance, and upkeep, what's really left over? How can the average person truly afford anything? How many people realistically are happy with their financial wellness and their work-life balance? Perhaps the answer to that question helps to explain why the lottery is still running strong.

A Healthy Balance

I am a strong proponent for working hard, fulfilling responsibilities, being honest and productive, and providing for family. But what really confounds me is the overwhelming imbalance where some live in excessive luxury while others struggle in poverty. This must be quite difficult for our alien friend to grasp. This is wrong. We all see it. We all know it.

The Pledge of Allegiance says, “with liberty [freedom from oppressive restrictions] ... for all.” Do you believe the government genuinely holds itself to this clear and simple concept? Do you believe it honors and reciprocates toward the citizens—the same way people have demonstrated heartfelt loyalty to their nation?

If this perspective on tax, debt, and the cost of living doesn't disturb you, inspire you to explore significant changes, or motivate you to take action, I'm pretty sure nothing will. Until you recognize your own capable, powerful, intelligent nature, and start making practical, mindful changes in your routine, you will aimlessly continue in a thoughtless pattern until one day you eventually die. But, when you recognize the long list of shenanigans around you and take personal action, you'll begin to break that proverbial elephant chain and start finding peace that brings real freedom. This book offers solid ideas so we can begin moving in the right direction to start seeing real balance in society.

Part 3: Awareness

*It's easier to fool people than to convince
them that they have been fooled.*

– Mark Twain

Humans Are in a Frantic Hurry

I know, that was a lot. I'm glad you stuck with me. Now that the shenanigans are out of the way, your eyes and mind have begun to open, making you ready to process the reality in this modern world.

Humans are in such a hurry to grow up, to get their driver's license, to send an "important" text message (sometimes while driving), to pass judgment, to jump to conclusions, to get to work, to beat the traffic light, to cross the street—sometimes without even looking both ways first. (The next time you go to a shopping center, pay attention to how often people walk directly from the store into the parking lot without ever looking—or caring—if there's a car headed toward them.)

Instant gratification is more common now than ever before. People do well when they slow down. Enjoy the journey. Be present. Life is beautiful, but humans are moving so quickly that they are not seizing the wonderful opportunity to experience it properly.

Time: Your Most Valuable Asset

I'm sure at some point you've heard the phrase "spending time." That's because time has real value. Unlike the value of a dollar bill, which is pretty much backed by faith alone, time is the number-one most valuable resource to humans. One day, it will run out—and that's it. Game over.

Many responsible people budget their money and monitor their spending habits. I like to do what I call a "time budget." It's what I do to monitor my time, to make sure I don't spend or waste it on useless things. Allow me to explain.

Every week, everyone gets a set amount of time—168 hours, to be exact. No one gets more; no one gets less. You cannot buy or borrow from anyone else. What you have is what you get; just like everyone else.

So, how do you spend that precious time? Let's look at a realistic, modern schedule and add up the hours.

The Time Budget

- Sleep (8 hours x 7 days) = 56 hours
- Full-time job (8 hours x 5 days) = 40 hours
- Commute (1 hour x 5 days) = 5 hours
- Time to unwind (30 mins x 5 days) = 2.5 hours
- Personal hygiene (1 hour x 7 days) = 7 hours
- Regular exercise (4 hours/week) = 4 hours
- Meal preparation (1 hour/day) = 5 hours
- Housekeeping and yard work = 3 hours
- TV & screen time (2 hours x 7 days) = 14 hours*

This realistic, modern schedule already consumes over 136 hours of your precious time. Just over thirty-one hours remain. What do you do with that time?

- Time with kids (2 hours/day) = 14 hours
- Time with friends (2 hours/week) = 2 hours
- Time with family (2 hours/week) = 2 hours
- Time for your hobby (30 mins/day) = 3.5 hours
- Work an extra shift (plus commute) = 9 hours

* Some sources say people are spending as much as thirty-five hours of screen time each week: *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey, part 4, page 365.

This model of a modern schedule seizes a total of 167 hours, leaving just one hour of our most valuable resource to spare. That's one hour to play video games, go to a place of worship, walk your dog, read a book, or do something else you find interesting.

What does your time budget look like? Do you feel like you spend adequate time with the people and things you care about most? If so, you have been extraordinarily blessed. You are one of the rare, fortunate ones, and I'm sincerely happy for you.

For the rest, that remaining hour is incredibly precious. And that doesn't include all the driving required to take your kids to soccer practice, or the time spent shopping for groceries and home supplies, or going to doctor appointments that you may have to squeeze into your busy schedule. You might occasionally have to sacrifice some of your precious sleep to facilitate these responsibilities.

It would be a shame to waste your time on insignificant things like:

- Arguing with strangers on the internet
- Playing games on your phone
- Obsessing over a sports team
- Sitting in rush-hour traffic
- Waiting on hold with a credit card company
- Anything unproductive

Human Needs

There's a general rule of three regarding basic physical human needs. A human can typically survive without oxygen for three minutes, without water for three days, without food for three weeks. Of course, all of these numbers are generally speaking. They can and have been broken in extreme cases.

Oxygen is not a critical concern right now—at least not pertinent to the message in this book. The water supply might be a little more concerning but not to an extreme point of raising the highest of alarm.* Now the food—that's where the real concern is.

Are people really able to choose what they eat? Or are their choices limited to a very few specific items that are put in front of them? For example, the most prevalent food source is fast food. These eateries are known to offer the lowest-quality, least-healthy foods available. Additionally (generally speaking), inside your local grocery store, if it's in a package, it probably contains something that your body does not need (or want).

Further, the added sugar in many foods is becoming atrocious. I say “added” sugar because foods like strawberries and apples provide humans with all the sugar required for balanced health. Human bodies do not require “added” sugar. And what's the reason for all the added sugar? Because it is highly addicting. This added sugar (not to mention the ultra-processed and bioengineered food

* To find information about your local water supply visit this website: https://sdwis.epa.gov/ords/sfdw_pub/t/sfdw/sdwis_fed_reports_public/200.

options) leads to obesity, cancer, tooth decay, diabetes, etc.—nothing beneficial to humans. Unbeknownst to many, people are willingly choosing to consume products that are harmful to their bodies. Many of us really can't be certain what's in the general supply of food anymore.

This concerns me deeply. The vast majority of consumable options to choose from are overly regulated. Pretty much, if you don't grow it on your own or process it yourself, then you really can't know if what you're eating is *real* food. That begs an additional probing question: is there already some tampering occurring with the water supply that people aren't fully aware of yet? Many are aware that public water systems have been fluoridated, allegedly for dental health. So, if the water supply can be "adjusted" or altered without consent from the public, then what else has been tampered with? Or what else could be tampered with next? It seems to me that they're capable of much worse.

Keep in mind, the concern for food does not end with what's in our food. It also includes the supply—how much food is available. Do you think that could be something that those in control might meddle with as well? American investigative journalist, lawyer, novelist, editor, and short story writer Alfred Henry Lewis put it in a sobering perspective when he said, "There are only nine meals between mankind and anarchy." I certainly hope things don't ever go that far.

My whole point in this section is that humans have specific vulnerabilities making them essentially defenseless against those who hold the power in regulating basic needs. And people are so wrapped up in other important aspects of life keeping them at the mercy of whatever is made

available to them. It almost sounds like the same way animals are treated in a zoo.

On the next few pages, I will present three lists of traits pertinent to the design and makeup of human beings. Barring some sort of external interference, these items would hold true for humans to attain.

Everybody Wants

Here are some basic desires that are hardwired into humans.

- comfort
- pleasure
- wellness (health)
- love
- acceptance
- attention
- unity
- peace
- orderliness
- sharing
- happiness
- growth (progress)
- privacy
- protection
- safety
- financial security
- food
- clean water
- reasonable housing
- social community
- independence
- leisure time
- education
- purpose
- adequacy
- worship
- success

Some readers may respond, “I know someone who definitely does *not* want peace or unity.” I appreciate how it could appear that way. And I respectfully disagree; there is no inherent trait in a person to not want peace. I accept the possibility that I might choose to see the good in people to a fault. And I view those traits to be learned or conditioned ideas, or likely the product of some kind of abnormality.

Nobody Wants

Here's a list of things that are not naturally programmed into humans.

- struggle
- poverty
- unhealthiness
- hate
- rejection
- neglect
- division
- war
- chaos
- withholding*
- stagnation
- depression

Some Crave Even More

And finally, here's a list of unhealthy urges that consume and overtake some.

- fame
- fortune
- glory
- abundance
- control
- power

After considering these lists, is it clear that if it weren't for some kind of *interference* (those excessive cravings, if you will), the entire list of "wants" could be possible for all to attain? Without those excessive cravings that have caused the vast imbalance in society, no one would truly have to experience any of those "unwanted"

* Basic needs being withheld from them.

things either. I firmly believe this in the deepest part of my soul.

So then, what exactly is hindering this from becoming a reality? Perhaps you can think of a hundred things that stand in our way. However, I can think of about eight billion reasons why we could make this happen. Once we first find inner peace as individuals, couldn't we then all work together and achieve this on the planet we call home? Then we could proudly proclaim to other life forms, like Marty, that humans have made a breakthrough and have figured out the secret of true health, wealth, love, and happiness as a species. The code has been unlocked. Humans have leveled up.

Yes, I realize this is a tall order, that my message skews fantastical and could be dismissed as being completely unattainable. I am bold enough to say that I have chosen to make the change now to start making a difference. It starts with one, then two, then three and four. I believe we can completely overcome destructive influences by taking productive actions first as individuals.

Coming up, I will expound on how you can find your peace and embrace real freedom. I present it in a way for you to cleanse yourself from the distractions that prevent unity of the human race from becoming a reality.

How Did We Get Here?

There's one reasonable explanation to clarify why life is such a struggle. Someone (or something) is clearly working hard to distract humans from what's most important: relationships—with family, with friends, with neighbors, with a Supreme Being, with food, with health, with nature, with the Animal Kingdom, and yes, the relationship with money. Humans naturally thrive through reliance on each other. Some energy around us has people convinced they're more connected now than ever before. But humans are severely disconnected—mostly due to the overwhelming abundance of technology.

All the shenanigans I touched on in part two may seem very small and insignificant. Individually, each one may appear to be nothing more than “first-world problems.” But it's deeper than that. Cumulatively, all these things (the many forms of distractions and divisions) work together for a massive purpose—or should I say *method*?

Many people today are being overworked, underpaid, overstressed, irritable, poorly nourished (either under- or overweight), sleep deprived, and distracted by unimportant things. Raise your hand if you feel well rested every day you wake up. Hmmm, I'm not seeing very many hands. That is a problem.

With all the genetically modified and ultra-processed foods (or “industrially produced edible substances” as Fernanda Rauber would say according to *Ultra-Processed People*) containing high-fructose corn syrup, caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, etc., that people have

already consumed, is there really hope for any significant recovery?

Now, let's switch gears and discuss the perceived need for agreement and/or being right, thinking, "if we don't agree, then we can't be friends." Rather than choosing to engage in effective communication with each other, many are quick to write people off simply because they don't share the same viewpoint. This kind of thinking is becoming much more prevalent as time goes on. It's almost as if some sort of external influence is desperately trying to apply more pressure to divide humans, making little effort trying to conceal their underlying intentions.

The imbalance in this world has become incredible. Things can definitely be spread out more evenly, as I mentioned earlier. And no, I do not believe in the Robin Hood concept of simply redistributing from the rich to the poor. People need to be productive members in society if they want to experience the satisfaction that comes with knowing their contribution was meaningful and they made a difference. This also leads to a deeper appreciation of the things they've earned. There is a way to achieve a teamwork mentality throughout humanity. Right now is an excellent time to get the conversation started and work toward solutions.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this book, each minor solution, just like a drop in the bucket, might seem like nothing. But over time, they can have a major impact. (This can go either way.) If you're aware of even some of the many "shenanigans" around us, you may feel a sense of urgency to make some changes in your life—like I did—or to spread awareness—like I'm currently doing.

If something doesn't change soon, it will only get worse. Yes, I do believe this is an uphill battle. People are fighting against invisible and unknown forces, personal inner demons, and each other. It seems like humans are finding themselves really off course and starting to realize they're in unfamiliar territory. It would be wise now to set aside any inhibiting pride and simply stop to ask for directions. Humans definitely can get back on track. It's not impossible. It just requires some (okay, a *ton* of) conscious adjustments—not all at once—but one day at a time. People can make simple conscious changes to pick themselves up, brush themselves off, regain their bearings, and get back on track toward finding their peace. This is how people can create a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Learn from the Animal Kingdom

Of all earthly species, the most cerebral (humans) have become the most civilized and advanced. And yet they still have the most complicated problems. Isn't it fascinating how well lesser lifeforms are doing? It seems like they're achieving far greater success in most areas that humans are still struggling in. The following statistics in the Animal Kingdom are impressively low.

- Suicide Nearly 0% (Impressive)
- Addiction 0% (Unless you count catnip)
- Depression 0% (That I'm aware of)
- Medical Expenses 0% (Completely unheard of)
- Broken Families 0% (I'm pretty sure on this)
- Divorce 0% (I'm *positive* on this one)
- Cost of Living 0% (Bravo!)
- Crime (Perhaps theft and murder
remain issues among the
uncivilized rascals)

The animals don't even have a formal spoken language. How is it they are achieving such remarkable results like these? They don't have large rooms filled with thick, leatherbound books with all the laws and regulations they must adhere to. If only humans could go back to a simpler culture, maybe some of these things would begin to get under control.

House pets do not have a daily itinerary. The wildlife in the forest don't schedule their activities. They just live. It makes me wonder; how did people get to be so overly structured with all these things they "have" to do? I get it, the car isn't going to wash itself. And yes, there are important responsibilities that require attention, care, and upkeep. But where does this list end? When do humans just start *living*?

Just Live Your Life

Some are working overtime just so they can afford that new washer/dryer combo or pay the babysitter or the house cleaner. Or they're saving up for that trip they deserve but have been putting off, or to buy that new vehicle they've been thinking about. Or maybe, they're simply trying to make ends meet by filling the tank with gasoline or pay those never-ending bills.

Why is it people still can't answer the simple question, "What is the purpose of life?" The purpose of football is simple: score touchdowns and don't get hurt—so that you can score more touchdowns next week. Everything has a purpose. The roof above your home has a purpose. The yellow line on the road has a purpose. The cap on the milk jug has a purpose. Even trash bins have a purpose. Why is the human purpose still so incredibly unclear?

The purpose for being goes beyond simply working, sleeping, eating, pooping, and dying. Human beings are here to *be*. But how many are truly *being* something that they genuinely enjoy?

How did we become so obsessed with the concept of living for the weekend? Humans should be *living* every single day. Life is a blessing, and this modern world seems to blatantly disrespect the sacred gift from our Creator. I look forward to the day when the answer to, "what's on your to-do list today?" is simply, "live."

That's all. Just live.

Once people begin to view life (namely time—our most valuable resource) as a precious gift, everything

changes. Humans will start slowing down, appreciating everything (and one another) more. The fog starts to lift, and our purpose becomes more visible—to live.

A Rattlesnake in the Room

Consider a remarkable analogy that has been told over the years.

Imagine we're in a room full of people at a social gathering. We're hanging out with some familiar friends and meeting a few new people. We're having a great time talking, laughing, and enjoying ourselves. There's nothing to worry about, right? Why would there be?

Little do we know, in the corner of the room sits a coiled-up rattlesnake who's not very happy with all the commotion at the party. Everyone's completely unaware that he's even there; after all, the focus is on the social gathering.

As I walk across the room, I begin to notice a really faint rattling sound coming from the corner. I figure it's probably nothing serious; maybe just something wrong with a light fixture or something. So, I continue without a second thought.

However, as I walk back, I realize *there is a rattlesnake* sitting in the corner of the room. "Holy smokes!" I exclaim under my breath—because we all know the worst possible thing to do is to panic, yell, and scream. That would just incite chaos. That's not the ideal solution. But here's the thing—not everybody is aware of the serpent hiding in the shadows. Not everybody hears the rattling tail because of everything else going on.

By now, a few of the partygoers have become aware of its presence—either by seeing or hearing it. But a bunch

of the group is still unaware of the predicament at hand. What do you do?

This book presents a classic case of cause and effect where humankind is being affected. The root cause is some kind of outside force; something tricky that's not easily identifiable—like the rattlesnake that lurks among the people. My intention with this book is to paint a crystal-clear picture for my human family of the presence of this rattlesnake. The signals are obvious. It's not necessarily going to hurt anyone. But there is a strong possibility that it could strike if it senses the need. So, what are the options?

If I say nothing and go about my business, then I would essentially be guilty for not informing the group. Not cool. I couldn't have that on my conscience. The other option is to share what I know in a way that people can rationally make their own decisions of what would be best (even though the best decision is obvious—get the heck out of there—like right now). I do not write anything in this book with the intention to incite or spread any unwarranted fear or need to panic. In fact, I don't believe humans should be afraid of the current predicament.

Anyone who knows me is aware that I have a deescalating effect on tense situations. I'm the one who usually calms things down when others are hyped up. Once again, I'm not intending to rile anyone up. I'm simply identifying a situation—especially to those who are completely oblivious to it. Remember those outfielders from the little league story earlier in this book? I'm sincerely hoping (and one could argue unwittingly optimistic to a fault) that people can deescalate the imminent predicament in society. Only when the problem is recognized can something actually be done to fix it.

Are you on board? Have I made it clear that I'm looking out for the best interests of humans, for you (and animals; and why not—the best interests of extraterrestrials like our friend Marty too)? Do you have what it takes to begin creating change in our world? I know you do.

What Can You Do?

Humans root for their own kind on small scales. How so? People cheer for their school, their city, their family, their home team, their country, their political stance, their religious views, etc.

People support their own kind on a small scale when they proudly display:

- T-shirts saying, “I love my *city*”
- Sweaters embroidered with their *family* crest
- Ballcaps with their beloved *team’s* logo
- Hoodies of the *school* they attended
- Jewelry symbolizing their *spiritual* views
- Lapel pins representing their born *nationality*
- Stickers aligning with their *political* stance

I sincerely wonder, why don’t people cheer for their own kind on a larger scale? I mean really support their own kind, their entire kind—no matter where they were born, how old they are, their current financial or social status, their skin color, or their personally held beliefs. When do humans stop and root for the human race? When will people finally embrace and honor our own *human flag*?

Humans still seem to struggle with concepts of “can’t we all just get along?” and “all we need is love.” Imagine if people spent more of their invaluable time and energy focusing on things that actually matter—for

instance family, health, their communities, compassion, forgiveness, and the leisure of simply being.

After reading this book, what do you plan to do? Set it on the shelf with your other books and say, “Wow, this Steve guy has some really interesting and well-thought-out perspectives. Time to go watch *Game of Thrones*.” Or will you begin making some changes?

Here are the options:

- *Passive*: Sit back, do nothing, try to enjoy whatever you can, and eventually die.
- *Aggressive*: Resist the corrupt authorities and brutally take control of what you want.
- *Assertive*: Individually look in the mirror, start making productive changes and intentionally correct some things that are in your control.

I used to be passive and secretly hope for a “hero” to come save us one day. But I am not opting for a passive approach anymore. And aggressive really isn’t my style. It might work for some, but I’ll save the aggressive approach as a last-ditch effort after all other options have been exhausted. I am choosing the assertive option, intentionally changing a few of the things that are in my control.

Remember, there’s no pressure to change everything all at once. If you change just one habit each month for twelve months, you can change twelve habits in a year. That’s pretty significant (and doable) when you look

at it that way. Just take it one day at a time. Slow and steady wins the race. Everyone can win, all of us.

Marty is pulling for us.

Throughout this book, I've laid the foundation of my observations and my sincere intention to promote peace and unity among humans. I've pulled back the curtain, revealing many shenanigans that are impeding the productivity of modern society. I've also drawn awareness of the current situation to the point where you can decide for yourself if you'd like to do something about it.

Are you ready for some productive techniques—ways that you can regain control in your life, methods to help you find your peace and real freedom? In this next and final part of the book, I've created a strategic plan containing twelve solutions that will help you (and all humankind) get back on track.

Part 4: Solution

All journeys begin with one step.

– *Unknown*

Finding Peace

This is the part where you can turn conscious recognition into action; the part where you (and I) can make a true difference. The underbelly of the uphill battle against the human race has been clearly exposed.

Here are twelve practical things you can do as an individual (and maybe one day as collective humans) to regain control of your life, find your peace, and essentially make this world a much more joyous place. (There's a simplified version at the end of this book on page 139 for those of you who like short, concise lists.) This is the blueprint that will guide humankind toward a healthy and productive society. These solutions are structured in a particular order to create the most effective and significant impact. You may adjust it as you like.

I want to remind you that none of the solutions here are earth-shattering. These are simple, basic, fundamental things we can each achieve so we can form a solid foundation on which to build. We need to start with baby steps to lead us in the right direction. Human unity begins through personal change in each one of us. Once we are able to successfully achieve these simple yet effective steps as individuals, we will then be able to tackle more comprehensive solutions.

Remember, when we take care of the small things, the big things usually have a way of taking care of themselves. I am willing to implement these techniques. Are you willing to make the effort with me? Great. Let's do this.

Phase 1: Digital Cleanse

REDUCE SCREEN TIME

Put your phone and tablet down. Unplug the TV and your video game system. I'm not suggesting that you toss all your devices into a river; after all, they do serve a useful purpose. In fact, you're using an electronic device right now while reading this e-book. The objective here is to make an intentional effort to reduce your daily usage of electronics and screen time. The harm they are causing is surpassing all of the conveniences they provide.

Feel free to keep track of how much screen time you actually spend each day. Don't just look at your phone's weekly update to inform you how much time you're spending. Actually track it on paper, including every time you check to see what time it is on your phone for three seconds. You might contend, "well, if I stopped and kept track of every single time I just look at my phone, I wouldn't get anything done." See what I mean? Eye-opening, isn't it?

Once you begin to realize how much time is squandered on bright, moving video screens, you might begin questioning "why?" and "how?" this happens. Time is definitely the most valuable asset humans have. And electronic devices are the most significant time suck in this modern world. The evil forces love how efficiently and effectively it distracts people from important things.

Why?

People are told that this cutting-edge technology is designed to make everything easier, "smarter", providing

more convenience for humans. But it actually creates more distractions and dulls human intelligence. When you reduce your digital overload from excessive screen time, it will lead to:

- Less distraction
- Better focus
- Better sleep
- Relief from negativity
- More productivity

This is number one on this list because it will free you from the most dominant distraction in society today. Once screen time is under control, you begin breaking the elephant chain mentality and are closer to finding your peace.

TURN OFF THE NEWS

Turn off the news and commercials. This almost goes hand in hand with number one since the source of news is primarily electronically based. I understand it may be difficult to untether yourself from your cherished handheld device. And that's okay—every person is on their own journey and each travels at their own pace. If you require a little more assistance to help you break free from your cellphone addiction, I highly recommend the book *How to Break Up with Your Phone* by Catherine Price. (Available on audiobook for those with a busy lifestyle.)

If nothing else, for heaven's sake, turn off the news and those badgering commercials. They are specifically designed to infiltrate your mind and manipulate you into

doing whatever it is they want you to do. “Buy *this* diamond for your sweetheart”, “watch *this* TV show tonight”, “hate *this* particular person or group”, “switch to *this* home and auto insurance bundle.”

I’m certain you can handle making your own decisions as far as where you can save money and how to entertain yourself and care for your family adequately. And if there really is something urgent going on in the community (or in the world) you’ll hear about it soon enough. Just turning off the news and commercials alone would be an enormous victory for yourself—and for humanity.

Why?

This is a simple concept of supply and demand. Less demand can create significant impacts on production. It can even put large, corrupt corporations out of business, which would organically reduce the amount of garbage in people’s faces daily. Did you know that humans are susceptible to an “illusionary truth effect”? The more someone hears something the more they believe it’s true—a simple form of brainwashing. How does that sit with you? If you need to know what’s going on in the world, stick to the headlines. They contain the essential content to keep you informed.

I made this the second step because the news and commercial advertisements are among the most divisive tools used against the human race. Removing them is an essential step toward finding your peace.

BREAK FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

Take a break from social media—or at least unfollow the negative stuff. (This could be different for everyone.) Social media is ironically packaged and presented (“sold”) as a product to connect people and bring them closer together. But it’s actually designed to divide humans and encourage isolation. The creators are incredibly cunning and crafty about it.

People are being baited and tricked in hopes that they’ll fall for the devious trap. So then, why are some still bickering and arguing over other people’s disputes? Democrats vs. Republicans, Blacks vs. Whites, males vs. females, old vs. young, rich vs. poor. Humans have far more in common than some may realize. If you’re struggling with the idea of taking a break from social media, then at least consciously try to reduce and unfollow the negative stuff you allow your brain to access.

Why?

Less social media can reduce your stress and can improve focus, freeing you from the mindless addiction and the excessive barrage of advertising. In fact, the creators themselves are known for restricting their own children from using social media.

This third piece of the puzzle completes the first phase in correcting the cause of the foremost problem in human society, starting you on the path to breaking your own personal elephant chain and finding your peace.

Phase 2: Physical Cleanse

SPEND TIME OUTSIDE

Go outside and get some fresh air. Take a few full, deep breaths, preferably somewhere away from all the commotion. (I personally like northern Wisconsin.) The quality of the air you breathe is an important component of your overall health. Additionally, intentional breathing techniques can offer many well-known health benefits to you—perhaps even reducing doctor appointments and visits to the pharmacy.

Why?

When you fill your lungs with a deep, fresh dose of clean oxygen, it relaxes you, nourishes you, and calms you. It's also good for relieving pain, improving immunity, lowering blood pressure, and increasing overall energy. The world needs this now more than ever. Just go outside and do this; you'll be glad you did.

PREPARE HEALTHY MEALS

Take ownership for what you decide to put into your body, plain and simple. Be mindful of your diet and make it a priority. Your health is not the responsibility of the government or anyone else; it's your responsibility. You only get one body. Nourish yourself according to your goals. Put in the effort that's required to make your body perform at its highest level. Your body is a complex machine just like a car. You wouldn't let your vehicle fall apart because you didn't make an effort to take proper care of it. So, why do that to your own wonderfully designed

human body? Sadly, some people do, but this is a topic for another discussion.

Many health professionals agree that making changes in your diet can drastically improve your health—without medication. For example, changing your diet has been proven to cure certain types of diabetes. Just eat real food; maybe start by replacing a candy bar with an apple this week. Garbage in, garbage out. Imagine that. Additionally, since you have fewer distractions in your life, you now have more time to educate yourself on real food and healthy living.

Why?

I know I didn't put this number one, but this is where everything starts. This is where the dominos of success begin to fall in order. Many people consume junk food and feel sluggish, lazy, tired, unmotivated, and lack ambition. Some often just want to sit on the couch and watch TV which includes commercials and the news. Are you surprised by that? And then they resort to putting even more junk inside their bodies. How can anyone expect to want to do better for the day? Why bother getting off the couch? Why bother going to the gym?

Again, this is where well-being and vitality begin. People's individual lives are shaped by the decisions they make. This is another essential way to regain control of your life and find your peace. Health is wealth.

EMBRACE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

This one is not to be confused with step number four: getting some fresh air. That step involves filling your lungs

with a fresh dose of oxygen. It's meant to relax, nourish, and calm you down. But the physical activity I'm referring to here is meant to invigorate you, to increase your heart rate, to stretch your muscles, to get your blood pumping efficiently to your entire body, and to keep your body functioning properly.

Be active; go for a walk, or a bike ride; join a softball or volleyball league; do some yoga or hit the weights at the gym. Everyone is different so do whatever works for you. Human bodies are designed to move and be challenged. Sure, it might take a little effort to get motivated and over that initial hump. But once you've started, your body will thank you, and you'll be even more motivated to keep going the next day. It gets easier with consistency. Remember, you don't have to be *great* to start; but you do have to *start* to be great. This is one of the best ways to stay young. (Another way is laughter—so make sure you don't take life too seriously.)

Why?

This is basically “part two of number five” because it goes hand in hand with caring for your health. Actually, these two should probably be at the top of this entire list because everything starts with your health. Nevertheless, I created this list in a particular order so that the dominos would fall as smoothly as possible. I put the most significant, impactful, and effective ones first because if you can't (or don't) reduce your oppression from digital devices—one through three—these next ones are probably going to be much more difficult to accomplish. This is an additional part of overall wellness. If you keep moving, you will feel better, and it will facilitate your pursuit in finding peace.

Phase 3: Emotional Cleanse

If you've made it to phase three, congratulations. I'm proud of you. Your fortitude does not go unnoticed. This world is designed to make these steps seem more challenging than they really are. And your commitment says a lot about your character.

TALK TO PEOPLE

Talk to people. Chat up your neighbors, your family members, your friends, and even people outside your clique. Talk to the people you perceive as different from you. Engage more often; have real conversations with real people. And instead of just talking to them, try to focus on actively listening to them and hearing what they have to say. Don't blindly accept everything the talking heads on TV want you to believe. You may be surprised to find out people don't hate each other as much as it's being portrayed.

Why?

It seems like people generally just don't like talking to each other anymore. I think it's a learned behavior from the pressures of everyday life. Having real conversations with each other could likely clear up distorted preconceptions people have acquired over the years. Just imagine how society could improve with less digital interaction and more personal connection.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Intentionally seek out and acknowledge some of the many things that make you feel grateful. There is always something to be thankful for.

I seriously wonder why humans don't naturally do this more often. I realize some are inclined to focus on the negatives and may have to work a little harder to express gratitude. But how hard would it be to take two to five minutes every day to reflect on all the good things that most take for granted? Here's a little exercise that helped me. Keep a journal called "A Book of Gratitude." Write down all the things the Creator has given you and blessed you with. It could be as simple as: you woke up today. That is nothing short of a miracle that deserves, at the very least, a tip of your hat. See that? Yeah—this one's gonna be easy. You just have to make sure you do it. Your book should fill up really fast.

Why?

If you focus on the positives, it can breed even more positivity. It's just like training a muscle. Although some may feel a tendency to be negative, that doesn't mean they can't work to become more positive. Positive people take actions that bring on positive results. Once you've made progress and start seeing one or two positive results, it brings inner peace that cannot be taken away.

PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES

Perhaps “enemy” may be an extreme word choice. But when was the last time you prayed for somebody who has wronged you? If you haven’t tried it recently (or ever), I recommend at least giving it a shot and allowing yourself to experience what it does for you. You might be surprised by the result.

And if praying isn’t something you do, you can intellectually wish them well or send out good vibes. This is one of the toughest ones on this list—which is why I put it toward the end. But you’re tougher than you think, so there’s no doubt in my mind that you can handle it. And once you survive the experience, realize how strong you really are, and you’re in the habit, it will get easier and will wondrously release the emotional burden (of holding on to your anger) off your shoulders.

Why?

You really can’t go wrong with this one. This brings a deep, inner peace for yourself, not necessarily for others. Wish people peace, calm, health, happiness, and contentment. It might just work and eventually flow to others around them like a river full of hope and healing. When someone has wronged you, intentionally or not, the forgiveness (not an excuse for their behavior but rather a prayer for their healing) that you extend to them is not for them. It is for you to make peace within yourself, so you can move on. Whatever goes on with them and their life is between them, their conscience, and their Creator.

Phase 4: Personal Cleanse

INCREASE YOUR TOLERANCE

You've already started breaking out of your comfort zone. Let's keep it going.

If you only take one thing away from this book, it's this. Give people the benefit of the doubt. You don't know all the details of what people are going through. So cut someone a little slack today ... and tomorrow ... and the next day. And keep doing it. This is my personal golden rule. Imagine if everyone consciously did this every single day; this whole world would be a better place.

Face it, everyone's imperfect. Everyone (including you and I) screws up sometimes. Someone will inevitably cut you off in traffic someday because they had something else on their mind—or they felt rushed or were distracted by their phone (like you may have once been—maybe). So, chill out; cut someone else some slack. Everybody wins this one. How proud would our alien friend, Marty, be if everyone made the effort?

Why?

Think about the domino effect this would have if all humans did this. It could take over the entire world. I'm not suggesting never speaking up when there's a situation that needs correcting. That would be a little ridiculous. I'm simply saying to chill out a bit and accept the fact that all are imperfect and make mistakes. I'm sure you don't appreciate every single minor error you make being pointed out and thrown in your face. It really doesn't help anything.

And other humans' errors and mistakes don't all need to be addressed and thrown in their faces either.

Choose your battles wisely. Don't stress over little things. Here's another excellent read if you happen to need a little more of a nudge, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life* by Mark Manson. (Available on audiobook for those with a busy lifestyle.) Think of all the slack you receive every day without even knowing it. I heard somewhere before, "freely forgive others just as you have also been freely forgiven." Don't be the weak link in this one. Just cut someone a little slack.

OFFER ASSISTANCE TO SOMEONE IN NEED

Many people out there who are less fortunate than you could really use some kind of assistance. I'm not talking about that person who consistently makes terrible decisions and screws up their life, whether intentionally or not. I'm talking about elderly neighbors, or people who have been blindsided by life's circumstances, people who could use a helping hand to get back on their feet, or to just get to the store, or make it to an appointment. For example, a fatherless child, a paraplegic, or someone who just got out of a rough relationship.

Decide now that you will take the initiative when you see an opportunity. Go help an elderly person; help an individual who is making an effort and is already taking steps to try and help themselves. One of my favorite mottos is, "I am willing to help anyone who demonstrates effort in helping themselves." Those are the ones who really need it and will appreciate your assistance. They will value your help and it will create a lasting impact.

Not seeing any opportunities to help someone? Then go look for one. Go find someone, or a reputable organization to offer your time (which holds more value than money). It might be a local charity or nonprofit organization that aligns with your values. There are many great nonprofit organizations that are making a significant impact helping the less fortunate. Don't just go with a well-known organization merely because you heard a celebrity mention them once. Find one that speaks to your soul.

Why?

Remember, one day you are going to need some help too. And while that shouldn't be your primary motivation it still puts things into a healthy perspective. Also, the point of this entire book is "team humans." Humans are a family, like it or not. Go help someone. It's a well-known fact there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving. So, you want to be happy? Go ahead and lend a helping hand. Our alien friend Marty, will be proud of you.

LIVE WITHIN YOUR MEANS

Simplify your life and start living within your means. This one's somewhat complex because you might say, "Well, I'm already struggling to make ends meet and currently struggling financially." I feel you. I certainly don't want you to deprive yourself of your needs—or a few reasonable wants. Additionally, if you don't have time or energy to care for yourself, your family, or your health, then you could be in the wrong line of work. Reevaluate what you are doing for income, and align it with your real goals in life. Do you want more time for yourself? Then pursue a

lifestyle that allows you to accomplish that. The key here is simplifying.

Why?

It allows you to take real control of your life without having to request permission from your boss to take a day off—or feel pressured to fabricate some lie like your grandma died—*again*. When you live within your means, *you* run your life by becoming more self-sufficient and less dependent on external entities. Your value increases, and now you cannot be paid off to do whatever they want you to do. Imagine no longer being stuck at a job that merely satisfies your current way of life but rather choosing a source of income that aligns with the lifestyle you truly desire.

The price of your time has shifted into your favor now. And if all would embrace this philosophy, the entire world would change. Think about the Buddha, Jesus, Gandhi. How complicated were their lives? I'm not saying you need to take it to that extreme. But those individuals were monumental examples of living in simplicity and blessing the world with their humble yet valuable lessons.

Phase 5: Bonus Cleanse

VOTE WITH YOUR ACTIONS

Your opportunity to vote does not end every few months or years. In fact, you can vote every single day through your actions—and you can't be voted down. Voting on paper does not always create real change in the world. “Voting” by way of your actions, however, quite literally, *does* change the world. Mahatma Gandhi's message is often condensed and paraphrased to say: be the change you want to see in the world.

Why?

Don't rely on the fairy tale that the only way you can make a difference is at the polls every few years. The fact is, you can make a difference every day by the choices you make. Yes, your choices and actions will affect other people, and you will start seeing a difference.

There you go—twelve (actually thirteen) things you can do to take back control of your life, find your peace, and vastly improve the world you live in. So, if you break that down and make an effort to change just one thing each month, you can change twelve things in one year. And imagine if all humans did that (about eight billion as of this writing), this entire species could be transformed in just one year. Imagine what that would look like.

Fewer distractions from outside influences and more control within yourself; living happier and healthier, with more energy and purpose; unselfishly helping others while maintaining an attitude of gratitude; being more open

minded; freedom from empty stressors and a slowness to jump to irrational conclusions.

Sounds like a lot, right? Well, it definitely is possible. Rather than embarking on changing the entire world, let's first strive to make simple changes in ourselves. We can only do our own part. Glen Ballard and Siedah Garrett wrote the famous lyric and said it perfectly: "If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change."

Notice, I didn't mention anything specific about personal vices like smoking, gambling, hard drugs, or alcohol. Why? Because these are not problems. These are *symptoms*; side effects if you will. Once people find and experience their own inner peace, they'll be able to gain mastery over these things. Many are simply trying to hide from or numb the pain they're currently in—and I honestly can't say that I blame them, not at all.

These might currently be harmful addictions that are difficult for some to control. I'm not telling you how to live your life, but when you realize how wonderful this world can be, you might not need those crutches to get you through the day so much. Think about it, why would anyone seek out an escape if this world was already as wonderful as you could possibly imagine?

People love finding ways to escape their pain simply as a coping mechanism to make it through (or survive) this exhausting and demanding life in the modern world. Once you've gained control of the root of the problem, you become less dependent on external vices and begin to flourish in your newfound inner peace. Also, imagine the many health problems that could become

eradicated as a fringe benefit just by eating better foods, being more active, etc. Finding beneficial ways to reduce stress levels leads to significant improvements in overall health.

You may already be in the habit of doing one or a few of these things already. And that's great. Try picking another one and remember, you're not trying to change these all at once. That could easily backfire. Just make an effort to tackle one new thing each month. Again, these do not necessarily need to be done in any specific order. But if you do them in order, you will see just how profound of a domino effect it could have.

A Domino Effect that Unites Humankind

Okay, so let's line up these dominos and visualize what's realistically attainable by making these practical adjustments.

Domino #1: First, you are spending less time on your phone, tablet, TV, and video games, and now you're less distracted and able to pay more attention and are more alert to things that actually matter to you.

Domino #2: Then you turn off the news and commercials, which reduces heightened attachment to any propaganda the talking heads are attempting to put into your mind (which also happens to lower your blood pressure).

Domino #3: Now you've eliminated your negative social media addiction, which frees your attention more, encouraging you to spend quality time doing the things you truly care about and want to accomplish.

Domino #4: Now that you've gotten outside into the fresh air, you're beginning to allow yourself to clear your mind and cleanse your body, making you more receptive to things that are important to you.

Domino #5: Now, combine that with a healthy, balanced diet, which gives you real energy and ambition without relying on unnecessary medications.

Domino #6: Along with some exercise that expands your lungs, gets your heart beating, while invigorating you just by moving around a little bit.

Domino #7: Likely you'll actually want to talk to people more and have real interactions with others, which strengthens your community, which is what humans are all about. (Did you notice the "unity" in comm-unity?)

Domino #8: So how can you not count your blessings now that the fog has lifted, and you can breathe more easily since the tension has eased?

Domino #9: And now you have no qualms offering well wishes to those who may have wronged you—lifting any burden of holding a grudge. After all, you've likely wronged someone before, and hopefully they're reading this book too, and they might just cut you a little slack as well.

Domino #10: Now, maybe you'll actually want to increase your tolerance because you're not as tightly wound or as stressed as you once were.

Domino #11: Not only are you willing, but you're also able to go help someone who needs it because you want to. After all, this is a community, and people take care of each other, right?

Domino #12: You're living a more simplified life, which reduces unnecessary pressure fabricated through corporate greed just so you can pay your bills and barely scrape by.

Are you able to envision how effortlessly these dominos fall into each other and how large an impact they could have? Well, it's not exactly effortless, but this is a method that works beautifully once you decide to take control of your life and claim your own personal peace.

Humans can definitely break their elephant chain mentality and find real peace. While life might be difficult and uncomfortable, with just a little conscious effort, people can find freedom from the greed, power, and corruption that appears to restrict humans from living to their full potential. People are not nearly as divided as the illusion makes it appear. It's simply something that some kind of external force (or "invisible hand") wants humans to believe—a form of manipulating the masses and pushing their agendas.

And now that you've found your peace and your neighbors have found theirs, we can all begin to watch the entire human species grow and progress into a wonderful, happy, pleasant, productive, cooperative people.

You *Can* Do This

I realize that this life has become structured by outside forces to make things more difficult for people and their families—the entire human family. “Slowing down isn’t as easy as it sounds.” “Growing my own food takes too much work.” Yes, society has turned life today into a seeming uphill battle that demands more than many are able to give. But you can make simple changes to make these things possible. Consume less, produce more. Simplify your life so that the system has little power to overcomplicate it.

I’ve heard it said many times that humans are just plain evil. And I get it; some of the things humans are collectively known for are purely disgusting. However, I respectfully disagree that humans are inherently evil. I believe 100 percent that humans have been contaminated by external forces—physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. Would you agree that it appears that humans are evil rather than simply believing people have devolved into a selfish, aggressive, greedy, unsatisfied group due to their environment and surroundings?

Have you ever seen an animal (typically a pet) that was mistreated and thought, “Wow, that dog is vicious”? Is it really? Or has it *become* aggressive, ferocious, and dangerous over time because of its environment and how it was poorly raised?

There is definitely a negative force that humans are essentially fighting against. Most of the time, people are completely unaware of its presence, just like the rattlesnake that was discovered at the social gathering. There are so many things out there trying to get inside people’s homes

(and minds, hearts, and bodies), working to keep humans distracted from important things.

Think about it. What are the things that are truly important to you? Can you rattle off your personal list of priorities? Family, friends, health, money, worship, pleasure, leisure, hobbies. Does it look something like that? Then why are people, more than often, putting their jobs in the number-one spot and their health and family at the bottom?

Everybody Can Win

You can win. Your family can win. Your friends can win. Your neighbors can win. And yes, even those pesky “enemies” of yours can also win. The straightforward truth is everybody can win. Don’t believe me?

“Well, that doesn’t make sense. In life there are winners and there are losers. Plain and simple.” Is it really that plain and simple, though? Allow me to present a clear illustration of how I know we can all win. I’ll use an analogy of two very different events held inside a large arena.

Event number one is a football game. There are performers, (Yes, I respectfully refer to athletes as nothing more than *performers*, people who entertain audiences.) spectators, staff members, food vendors, production operators, photographers, even gamblers betting on the outcome; a lot of people are involved. And yes, there literally can be only one winner (assuming they don’t tie). Many people will be going home pretty upset, though. And remember, there are always a few absolute winners—the performers win (by earning their paychecks), the event staff members win (who earn their paychecks), food vendors win (by earning their cut), the production operators and television networks win (through revenue from sponsors), the photographers win (who are paid for their work). The rest is up in the air 50/50. And yes, some will be losers—spectators who were rooting for the losing team, and gamblers who picked the wrong outcome.

This is the way many people view the world today—which kind of makes logical sense. Now, let’s consider another example.

Event number two is a concert performance in the same venue. Similarly, there are performers, spectators, staff members, food vendors, production operators, photographers; again, a lot of people involved. However, in this situation, there really are no losers. After the concert is over, everyone involved will be going home happy “winners” because the task of performing a show and entertaining the crowd will have been accomplished. The performers win, the spectators win, the event staff members win, the food vendors win, the production operators win, the photographers win, even the parking lot attendants win. Everybody wins.

It seems all too common that people view this life as more of a sporting event where groups are against each other and there are sides to be chosen; a zero-sum game, if you will—like gambling at the horse track or day trading in the stock market. I, on the other hand, see that life could definitely be like a concert performance setting, where all are rooting together, united for the same productive outcome of the whole.

Realistically, no one hopes to see a guitar player screw up a well-placed solo (in the same way that rowdy fans want to see an opposing team miss a field goal attempt); and no one wants to see the drummer drop a drumstick and lose the beat (in the same way those same fans want to see the opposing team fumble the ball). People are all cheering on and encouraging the entire production to be a success.

So, why are some more inclined to connect with a good-guy winner versus a bad-guy loser scenario? It seems to be something that humans have learned or been programmed to believe over time. When all of the ants in

the colony are working together, they all win. It's the same with humans today. Winners and losers are not absolutes in the equation of life. All humans can win.

I can take this one step further. Let's say you align more with the sporting-event mentality. Are you able to see how the offensive and defensive sides of a team each work in tandem because they both want to achieve the same outcome against a common opponent? Is it possible that we could define teams as "all humans" versus the "negative outside forces"? Regardless of individual uniqueness in strengths, talents, and abilities, all people could still root for each other as a whole by simply putting minor differences aside.

Another simple way to illustrate this: there's an abundant supply of oxygen for all humans to breathe comfortably. Greed is nonexistent with oxygen because the supply for one does not take away from the supply of another. In the same sense, all humans can adequately have all their needs met without restricting the needs of a fellow human family member. This is a perfect example of true balance. This is the mentality that will allow the entire human species to achieve real freedom and function as a collaborative society.

A Perfect World

Okay, so let's try this again. Marty and his peaceful alien friends show up for a visit to observe the human race and learn about the culture on planet Earth. Humans are standing by, eager to greet the alien visitors upon their arrival (unlike the initial encounter where they were distracted and barely even acknowledged Marty's arrival). The humans begin with a heartfelt:

“Greetings, Galactic Travelers.

“We humans are proud of ourselves, and our culture and we'd love to share our ways and experiences with you. We are pretty awesome. We believe you are as well. We can't wait to show you how we all operate together and get along as a productive species. We don't rush. We remain calm, content, peaceful, and happy. We don't know everything about our purpose, but we do our best to learn, grow, help each other, and progress toward better things.

“We eat high-quality food and have cleansed ourselves of all addictive, toxic junk products. We spend time with one another. Our elderly neighbors are appreciated, respected, cared for, and sought out for their depth of wisdom and experience. The leaders are trustworthy, and they all cohesively work together to keep things running smoothly without looking for unfair advantages. We don't all agree on everything, but we do accept each other's uniqueness, as it adds to the beauty of the whole.

“We all have reasonable and comfortable living conditions. No one lives in superfluous abundance, and no one is confined to a life of poverty. We all have different

abilities, talents, and roles, and we're each content with our own individuality. We do not believe that some win while others lose. In reality, we all win because we have restructured society, creating a reasonable balance among our entire species.

"We do not waste our time on unimportant things. In fact, we have lots of time for leisure and pleasure because we've removed excess distractions from our lives. The expectations for earning a living and providing for our families are realistic, allowing a healthy balance to live a meaningful, fulfilling life. Additionally, no one is stuck doing all the grunt work while someone else enjoys the easy, air-conditioned office job forever. Assignments are distributed fairly and rotated so that no one gets burned out. Nonessential tasks are reserved for times when the vital needs are adequately met. No one works night shifts except for a few essential emergency workers (and only for a very limited time—and no one person gets stuck doing it all the time). Our need for armed security is almost nonexistent because no one lacks the things they truly want or need.

"Everyone learns at their own pace, and we educate in a practical, less structured environment where real-world skills are taught (like budgeting, investing, home keeping, farming, and building). We enjoy competitive athletic events and view them as nothing more than pure entertainment. We don't struggle with addictions anymore because we don't have excessive distractions that foster unhealthy coping techniques. We do not have veterans to care for anymore because we don't fight in wars anymore. We humans all see ourselves as a whole; family, partners, teammates, colleagues on the same team working for a shared purpose of being safe, healthy, well-nourished and happy. We hope you enjoy your stay and that you decide to

come back for another visit really soon. Feel free to stay a while.”

“Welcome to Earth.”

Appendix

Obsolete Museum

“Rather than deleting the unpleasant parts of our history, we preserve them as valuable artifacts that we can learn from. In fact, please allow us to take you for a tour of our ancient history museum, where we have many relics that are now obsolete.

“We have on display here: guns that were used in killing each other (yes, you heard that right) simply because we did not all agree or get along.

“Over here is paper money (which was virtually worshiped by some) that was used as a controlling tool to influence people into doing things they would never have done otherwise.

“Then we have these devices here called door locks from a time when people could not trust each other.

“And we also have this section of technology, which includes gadgets called cellular phones (among other divisive electronic technologies) that were used to distract, control, overwhelm, and manipulate us from living a full life.

“In this next display are machines and other products that were used in developing unhealthy, ultra-processed, and bioengineered food products, which date way back to the twentieth century.

“Feel free to continue looking around. We are pleased to have created a society where each one has found peace; a productive, interconnected society; a society created for human unity.”

Cheat Codes: Finding Peace

Here is a concise list of practical things you can do to regain control of your life, experience real freedom, and essentially make this world a much more joyous place.

DIGITAL CLEANSE:

- Reduce screen time.
- Turn off the news.
- Break from social media.

PHYSICAL CLEANSE:

- Spend time outside.
- Prepare healthy meals.
- Embrace physical activity.

EMOTIONAL CLEANSE:

- Talk to people.
- Count your blessings.
- Pray for your enemies.

PERSONAL CLEANSE:

- Increase your tolerance.
- Offer assistance to someone in need.
- Live within your means.

There you have it. Twelve simple things you can do to reverse the exhausting uphill battle against the proverbial “elephant chain”—the *belief* that you are stuck, trapped, powerless, or incapable. When you release the burdens of life that are weighing you down, your energy is contagious. That is real peace, real freedom.

If you’re already in the habit of embracing one or a few of these suggestions, you already know the peace it brings. Try another one and see how that transforms your life even more. Rome was not built in a day. Any effort, no matter how minuscule, is monumental.

Break that elephant chain.

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(5-5-10-clap-point)

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Page 59, “The capacity of always choosing at each instant, in constantly changing situations, the least harmful, the most useful.”: Otto von Bismarck, Prussian and later German statesman and diplomat.

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Page 67, “Memorandum of 3/13/1962” also known as “Operation Northwoods”: available in the National Archives or at this link: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/305036?objectPage=129>.

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<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/01/president-biden-announces-recipients-of-the-presidential-medal-of-freedom/>.

Page 70, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.”: Winston Churchill

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Page 122, “Be the change you want to see in the world.”: Mahatma Gandhi’s message paraphrased.

Page 123, “If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change.”: “Man in the Mirror,” lyrics by Glen Ballard and Siedah Garrett.