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including you,
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a beginning,
and a middle,
but no end.



Fantastic Life Rule

Know Your Stories

Everyone has a story. Actually, everyone has quite a few stories. These are the stories we tell ourselves every single day, throughout the day—365 days a year. Trust me, the stories never stop. Wait until you start seeing and recognizing the stories you tell yourself. “I’m too fat.” “I’m too lazy.” “I always lose.” Or “I’m the greatest.” “I can’t be stopped.”

You also have biographical stories. You’ve probably heard the classic one in the business world. “I went to such and such college and got a degree in (fill in the blank). When I graduated, I started my career at a big firm and, within a few years, realized it wasn’t for me. So I took all the money I had saved, which wasn’t much, and bootstrapped my own shop.” What are your versions of that story?

From there, the stories continue to where our storyteller is at the present moment. It’s the stories—so far. Your stories are “so far,” too, and you are shaping and refining them with every breath you take. Whatever your stories, know that their nuances make them unique to you. You’re the only one who has lived this life to this present moment and feels the way you do.

Everyone who is living, including you, has stories with a beginning, and a middle, but no end. Because they are in the middle of “so far.” I see these stories as having two different parts. The first part is the one you’re writing with every passing day. The second part is how you reframe the first. **If you truly want to live a Fantastic Life, your stories must continue to evolve—positively.** If your stories evolve negatively, if they devolve, it is because you may have other stories inside that you may or may not be aware of. They are the stories in our heads that keep us stuck. They’re stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. These stories live within our thoughts and have been created throughout our lives by the world around us and our mental, emotional, and spiritual responses.

Let’s just say right now that these other stories—and the tellers of these stories—can be a real barrier to you living your Fantastic Life. If your storytellers keep reminding you that, “You have no business trying to start your own company. Who do you think you are? You’re not VP material. It’s never going to work, you know. You’re not smart enough. It’s too risky; stick with what’s safe. Go off to Paris alone? You don’t even know the language. You’ll get taken advantage of. You’re a dreamer.” and so on... If you listen to that non-sense, you’ll never do anything to advance yourself, your abilities, your real story, and subsequently, live your Fantastic Life. The truth here is that your “other” stories and their storytellers are the ultimate limiters.

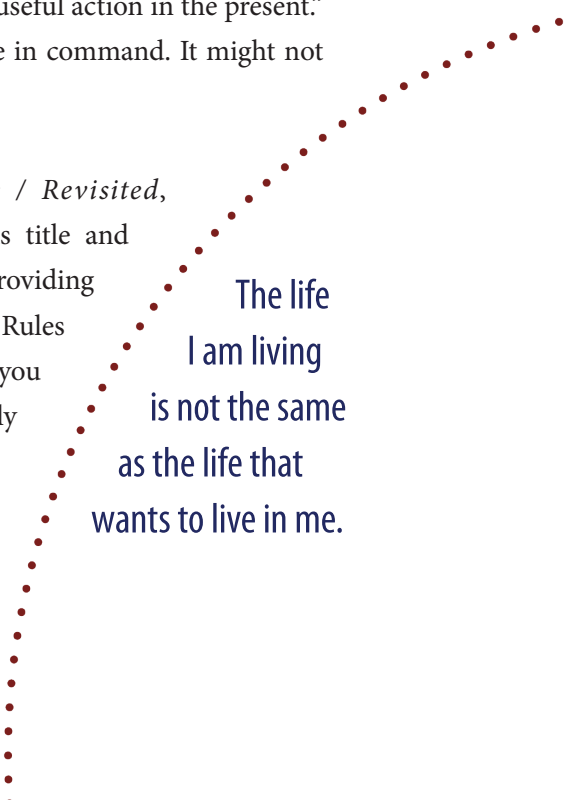


What Are Your Stories?

Your stories need not limit you. All your stories can be your ultimate champions! Isn't that great news? **When you dare to have Fantastic Life big rock goals, the key is to simply do the work to bring the stories in your head into alignment with the stories you want to live.** In other words, let's get the stories you hear in the silence of the night, in the morning when the alarm goes off, or on the weekend to be very close to the story you share when someone asks, "So tell me about you." Sound easy? It is, and it isn't.

Author James Clear says, "The events of your past are fixed. The meaning of your past is not. The influence of every experience in your life is determined by the meaning you assign to it. Assign a more useful meaning to your past, and it becomes easier to take a more useful action in the present." What he is saying is that you are in command. It might not feel that way yet, but it will.

This book, *The Fantastic Life / Revisited*, takes the earlier version of this title and expands it into new realms, providing more everyday context to the Rules I introduced years ago so that you can see the patterns more easily and apply them to your own life.



The life
I am living
is not the same
as the life that
wants to live in me.

You'll find familiarity and meaning that I hope will inspire you to both begin and to keep going. And in this chapter, we'll focus on learning to recognize the stories we are telling ourselves, modify them, and become the champion of our own life. This is the power of this rule. You are becoming the person you want to be. It starts now. It starts here, and it starts with John.

In the first book, I introduced readers to John, whom I met while running the Marathon des Sables. The race is a 150-mile self-supported ultra-marathon in the Sahara Desert. No lie, that's what it is, and enduring it is even harder than it sounds. Running takes incredible physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual strength to get through the long days and nights in the Sahara's triple-digit heat and towering sand dunes, with no end in sight.

John's story is an excellent example of a successful guy whose biggest accomplishment was overcoming his storyteller father's painful words that John endured when he was a child. "You're lazy. You'll never amount to anything," John's father used to say to his son over and over. John could have decided to align his own life experiences with his father's destructive words and beliefs, affirming them in his life. But instead, John decided—I mean literally made the decision—that his father's story wasn't the one he wanted for his life. He decided to create a new story, a more Fantastic story, and begin living it. At age 18, John left home and joined the Navy, where he excelled.



I met John while running the race, at an aid station on a 50-mile segment, as the sun was setting, feeling exhausted and irritated by the sand in our shoes and every other part of our bodies, having run about ten straight hours up to that point. I came to learn that he taught U.S. Navy enlistees how to swim. He told me that to train for this race, he would get up in the darkness and head to the pool before anyone else arrived and run for two hours around the pool. Then he'd do his job, run another hour at lunch, and finally run two more hours after work. He did all of this wearing full firefighter gear. Consistently, day in, day out. Month after month. "This guy must have some crazy story to cause him to train like this," I thought.

There was a lot of time to talk and a lot of time to think during the race, and I couldn't help but marvel at John, who decided not to believe the story his father told him. Who decided not to let that story be the story he would tell himself in the silence of the night. The story he decided to create was one he could prove to himself over and over again in ever more Fantastic ways. Right there is when I decided two things: First, I decided I would run with him because there was no way he wouldn't finish even if he had to crawl, so he'd be great mentally for me. And second, I decided from that moment on I'd be like John and let the stories I tell myself cultivate, curate, refine, and drive me to live my Fantastic Life. Guess what? It's working, for decades now. My life, my past, and my stories empower me to live a Fantastic Life.

You Can Choose Your Story

A Fantastic Life isn't one of just accomplishing incredible feats, however, one after the next. A Fantastic Life is about the journey itself and the empowering feelings that accompany achieving incredible feats. (Being as goal-oriented as I am, it took me a long time to be able to not only write this but actually mean it.) It's a life that often involves choosing and then doing the hard things which, when achieved, give you a sense of accomplishment, a sense of pride, and the peace of knowing you are living life in full color. These choices and actions happen all the time. Sometimes by the minute.

Being Fantastic requires real-life decisions and actions at every turn, which isn't always easy.

Your stories have to be powerful enough, meaningful enough, and personal enough to move you inch by inch through your Fantastic Life. This path gives you an ever-increasing confidence and belief in your abilities. A Fantastic Life is executing, over and over again, and embedding your Fantastic stories—both the ones you tell yourself and the ones you tell others when asked—deep in your soul.

One of my long-time friends and business partners is Robert Kiyosaki. **Robert is the author of the #1 personal finance book of all time, Rich Dad Poor Dad, and many other books about gaining financial freedom. He's been at it for decades and has been credited with inspiring more people to entrepreneurship than anyone in human history.** In a way, Robert's



“choice” of occupation was likely more about knowing the story in his head and applying it in a way that ultimately made himself and millions more successful in life.

Here’s the abridged version of Robert’s story. The first thing to know is that Robert’s dad was a school teacher and later a superintendent of schools in Hilo, Hawaii. He was Robert’s “Poor Dad.” The dad of Robert’s best friend developed hotels and motels in Honolulu and, you guessed it, was Robert’s “Rich Dad.” Robert’s real dad was not poor in the literal sense. He was poor in how he viewed the world—how people who live average or below average lives view it. Specifically, they believe that you “go to school, get good grades, get a college degree, get a job, work hard and eventually retire. That’s life,” as Robert would often put it.

Robert’s Rich Dad saw the world differently. He saw life as an investor who let money work hard for him. And not just his own money, but other people’s money too. “My Poor Dad did everything he could never to have any debt. And my Rich Dad used debt to make himself a fortune.” Robert, who loved the idea of money from an early age, followed his Rich Dad’s example, not his Poor Dad’s, and became a worldwide success.

That’s the story, but another story, one that played out in Robert’s head for years—and truly became a catalyst for his success—was much different. It’s a story that could have

SETH GODIN SAYS:

“Feeling like a failure
has little correlation
to actually failing.”

just as easily made him a failure, a person who gives up on life or settles for what naysayers believed him to be. You see, Robert, the son of an educator, was a terrible student. He barely made it through high school. “Why sit in class when you can surf? So we’d skip school a lot.” And teachers of the day were brutal, labeling him as stupid and as a person who would never amount to anything. Robert endured school, and teachers endured Robert. Imagine how hard that must have been, particularly when your dad works in your school.

Robert did manage to graduate high school, but the continual pounding by teachers and his dad took a toll on him. How could it not? Knowing he was expected to attend college, he applied and got accepted into the United States Merchant Marine Academy. “I chose a military academy because I knew I would need a disciplined environment to be successful. And this particular military academy over the others, because I found out its graduates earned more money than the graduates from any of other military academy.” Robert’s stories, including his love of all things money and his need to overcome his story of not being good enough, were beginning to align.

True to form, he got a high-paying job on a freighter after graduation. Later, he went on to lead the nation in sales for Xerox, at the time a premier business training ground that led to many entrepreneurial success stories, Robert’s among them. All this proved to Robert that school, grades, and often the dismissiveness of his teachers, didn’t mean a darn thing in life. And that his Poor Dad’s “pathway to success” was a myth, which in 1996, when *Rich Dad Poor Dad* was first published, was near heresy. The book was bold, relatable,



and transformative. It was the true alignment of Robert's two stories—his aspirations of success and his distaste for the myths surrounding it—blended with just enough ire to plow through the many hurdles of business and life. His inner story is his power. That is when I met Robert. His stories, his views, and how he lived his life were empowering to me too.

Your Stories Are Connected

Knowing your stories and curating your stories, along with the milestone moments within each of them, are far more important than most people think. They have led you from where you were to where you are. If you have not taken the time to really discern the stories in your life, now is the time. It is also time to develop the habit of continuous review and refinement of your internal stories. Some only arise in certain situations, like when you are with your parents, siblings or old friends, for instance. Others trigger because of something that happens in your day. Take the time to jot them down in the moment before the opportunity slips away. When you go back and read what you wrote, you'll be glad you did.

Here's one more real-life example of how your stories shape your life from my dear friend and business partner. **Bill Lee, who passed away in 2021, was the founder of Lee & Associates, the commercial real estate firm that I have worked at as one of the founding principals in the Arizona office since 1991.** His story was the

catalyst for Lee & Associates. And it remains the inspiration for thousands of commercial real estate professionals using Commercial Real Estate to enable their Fantastic Life.

Like Robert, Bill struggled in school as a child. He had what we know today to be Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and that made sitting still and paying attention in the classroom next to impossible. “My mind would just wander, no matter how hard I tried. I would create my own mental journeys and make my own decisions on those journeys. In a way, it trained me for my future because through that, I became daring as a teenager and young adult.” Bill said he wasn’t afraid to take risks and live through the consequences.

“One day, I decided it was time to become an adult, so I got a job. I had gone to college and graduated late, at age 24. Inside me was a mental clock that told me it was time to go to work and stop being a kid.” He made a decision and did what anyone looking for a job in Los Angeles would do in the 1960s: open the *Los Angeles Times* and check out the classified “Help Wanted” ads. He applied to a few jobs and eventually got hired by Mobil Oil as a rep’s assistant. It was an indoor desk job, and Bill hated being inside all day. For his next job, Bill started selling copier machines for 3M. “They gave me a car,” Bill said, “and a business card, and I really liked being out of the office and on the road.” Bill worked for 3M for three years which, for sales reps in that business, was a rarity. Most people didn’t stick it out.

You never know when an opportunity will present itself, and for Bill, it happened at a friend’s wedding. “I was in the wedding party, and one of the other guys in the party,



named Jim Hammond, who worked for Coldwell Banker, and I got to talking candidly about work. He was my age, and he said a lot of guys who are selling copiers are getting into commercial real estate. I asked him, ‘How much money can you make doing that?’ At the time, I was married, and we were expecting our second child. I told him I made \$18,000 a year working for 3M.”

“Well, I made fifty grand last year,” Jim replied. What? This was a big opportunity.

After a long series of interviews, Bill got a job with Coldwell Banker in Century City. Trouble was, Bill had just bought a home in Orange County, and that commute just wasn’t going to work. After trying and failing to get hired at an office closer to home, Bill adjusted. “I noticed Grubb & Ellis had a commercial real estate office near my house. So I interviewed with them. And, guess what? They hired me. I gave my notice at 3M and went home to tell my wife the good news. She asked what the salary was, and I told her there was no salary. It was all commission, a big risk with a new house and only three or four months’ worth of money in the bank.”

Daring is so much a part of Bill’s story. But also important to his story is that he always “made his way” through life from the time he was a kid. He would try something, learn all he could, adjust and ultimately figure it out.

DOLLY PARTON SAYS:

“If you don’t like the road you’re walking, start paving another one.”

That gave him confidence in his new position and in virtually everything else he ever did in life. Bill knew all he had to do was get out on the street and meet people, so that's what he did, and started to score not only a few real estate deals but also countless, often funny, stories to tell. They are memorialized in the book that Bill and I co-wrote, called *Chasing Excellence*, a fabulous read that brings out the best of Bill's Fantastic Life journey, including one about selling copiers that alone is worth the price of the book.

A milestone moment in Bill's story happened about five years into his tenure with Grubb & Ellis. He was asked to represent the brokers as the only representative on the company board. "I went to about five quarterly board meetings," Bill said. "What started to be obvious is that the board didn't really care about the brokers at all. They just cared about shareholder value and building it up. It was terribly disappointing." Bill, being the risk taker, confident in his abilities, able to adjust and make his way through just about anything, began talking to some of the key sales guys about starting their own company. This proved to be one of Bill's hardest sales because even though people were unhappy, they didn't want to walk away from commissions or risk change.

Bill persisted because he felt that the salespeople in a commercial real estate company are the most important people of all. Their needs should be a top priority, and they should have the opportunity to share in the success they create.

After several years of unwavering persistence, never letting go of his dream, Bill rounded up a few colleagues and started his own commercial real



estate company called Lee & Associates in 1979. Bill's idea grew to multiple offices in California, eventually expanding nationwide.

“I had spent my life taking risks and learning all I could about whatever I was doing. I think if you're going to be successful in selling, and everyone is selling something, you need two things: self-confidence and knowledge. I had a love affair with learning and with real estate.” This is what can come from someone whose mind was always wandering, always open to ideas and then making his own decisions to follow them or not. Sometimes it was the decision to ditch school; other times to go out for football. Other times it was jumping from 3M job security to a straight commission sales position and ultimately making the decision to start Lee & Associates.

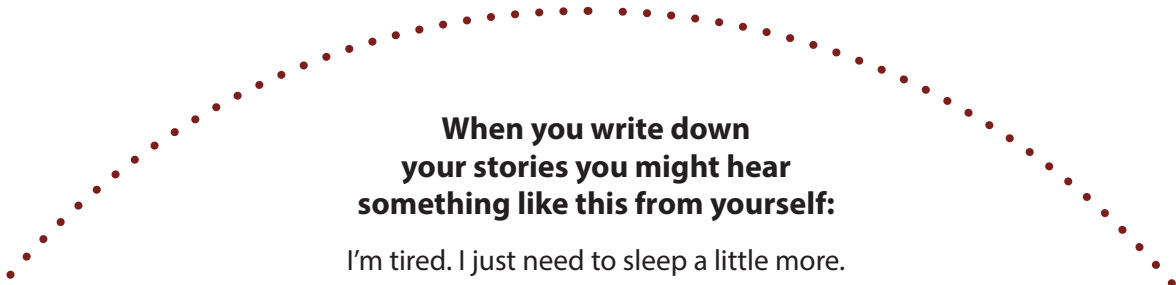
Bill's story demonstrates how the guy with ADD and lots of ideas can use that story to create the other stories you just heard. Bill's inner voice embraced his abilities and didn't think of them as shortcomings. He didn't beat himself up about not being a good student. Instead, he embraced his gifts and used them to build a Fantastic career that changed the industry and thousands of people's lives.

STEPHEN COVEY SAYS:

“I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions.”

Steps You Can Take

Now it's time for you to consider *your* stories. The ones *you're* living now and the stories in your head. The goal is to envision the future story you want to tell and to maybe assign new meaning to the stories you have been telling yourself for years.



**When you write down
your stories you might hear
something like this from yourself:**

I'm tired. I just need to sleep a little more.

I can work out tomorrow.

They don't know how hard I work.

Why does this always happen to me?

Or maybe it's these...

I can do this.

I rock!

Yes!

It was great.



First, analyze the present ■■ Get real and write down what your stories are right now, and keep writing. You will be analyzing all the stories—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Do it in the daytime and include who you are, what you do, your life circumstances, your wins, your losses, and your truths. What do you tell yourself throughout the day as you wake up, live your current life, and as you go to bed? Get ultra-real and do the same thing in the middle of the night when you can't sleep and hear the stories that are keeping you awake. What are they saying? What's troubling you? Why are they invading your Fantastic Life? Ask yourself, is it fear, doubt, confusion? And when you identify that, ask yourself what are you afraid of, in doubt of, or confused about? Write it all down, and you'll discover the stories that are holding you back from your Fantastic Life. Once you know these stories, you can rewrite them just like John, Robert, and Bill did their Fantastic Lives. There is power in perspective. This is an ongoing exercise. Some stories don't come up for months or even longer. You may find a story that only arises when you are with certain people or in a specific situation. The key is to become aware of the stories you tell yourself. Then make them work for you.



Look into the future 📅 Dare to dream what a Fantastic Life looks and feels like to you. Consider all aspects of your life. Personal self, family, children, business, spiritual, athletic, financial, and more. Be as specific as you can, with no limits. Don't worry about how impossible some of those Fantastic dreams may seem. The "how" doesn't matter. It's the "what" at this stage that really counts. Take the next month and simply listen to yourself. Listen to the stories you tell yourself, then write them down. Get in that habit of catching yourself.


Many times, I find people are so programmed into their current stories and reality that they have forgotten how to dream. The best remedy for that illness is to be bold and let yourself have a dream, even if it will seem small in retrospect. Just allow yourself the possibility of some aspect of your life becoming Fantastic. It might be as simple as getting a new apartment. Or finding a more rewarding job. It might be volunteering in your community or joining a club to meet new people. It might be moving somewhere you've always wanted to live or even just vacationing there. Dream it and write it down as vividly as you can. Write all your dreams down.



Find all the disconnects 📌 Now, look at your future and your present—your stories. Where are the gaps? What aspects of your internal stories are holding you back? Do they stem from your own storyteller voice or the storyteller voices of others? Are they from a long time ago or some incident you don't even think about anymore? One of my stories is from high school. My car (that I bought with my own earnings) got a bent rim on the tire. I had no money to buy a replacement. So my car sat for two weeks until I made some more money. I told myself at that time, and have told myself thousands of times over the last 40 years, “that will never happen again. I will never run out of money.” This has driven me to financial freedom. Crazy, but this one story fueled my drive to financially succeed.


Begin reshaping your stories 📌 Many of the Rules in this book, when followed, will help you reshape your stories. But, right now, start with one thing you want to change. Maybe part of your future Fantastic Life is traveling to foreign countries. But your story is, “I'm so busy that I'll never be able to take two weeks off to do an overseas vacation.” So right now, look at your current state and figure out how you can begin to free up time so that—set a deadline—next year at this time, you'll have a vacation planned and the freedom to take it. Change your story by taking action, and the story in your head will change too. Of all your stories, what's one thing you'd like to reshape or reframe? What's your plan for reshaping that one thing? Then review, refine and repeat for your other stories, writing it all down.





Memorialize a new beginning  Keep visible your Future Fantastic stories that you want to live. Read them often. Say them out loud. Check in. Then, keep in your daily view the one thing you are working on changing and your plan for changing it. Schedule into your day consistently, a small block of time to make progress. Not only will this take you where you want to go, but you'll begin developing the habits you'll need to get there.


Yours is a living series of stories, and you're always working on them. Make this work a positive, active force for living your Fantastic Life.


Thoughts

 What parts of your story have others defined for you?

 Which ones have you defined for yourself?

 Are you happy with the answers to those two questions, or are they limiting you?

 Have you ever thought about your legacy?
Why not write down what you'd like it to be?

 What do you want? What stories do you have that will take you in that direction? Which stories are holding you back? Refine them. This is your Fantastic Life. Let your stories show you the way.

