

JOHN JANTSCH

AUTHOR OF DUCT TAPE MARKETING



The Self-Reliant Entrepreneur

366 DAILY MEDITATIONS
TO FEED YOUR SOUL
AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS

WILEY

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*To Carol, who makes every day the best day
of the year.*

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hustlers, intrapreneurs, and entrepreneurs
everywhere who courageously choose to insist on
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Introduction

In this book I invite you to take inspiration from a renegade minister, a handyman turned political activist and naturalist, and an innovative educator and early feminist voice, though they may seem at first an odd collection of mentors to guide today's entrepreneur.

Each of these sources of inspiration produced their primary body of literary work in the mid-1800s, during a time that many cite as America's first period of a truly spirited counterculture.

I'm speaking of the period often referred to as American transcendentalism, a brief time that experienced its heyday just prior to the American Civil War and left a lasting impact on American literature, religion, philosophy, art, political activism, social thought, and as I propose in this work, a goldmine for today's enlightened entrepreneur.

It doesn't matter what you call this point of view or even what you call yourself. You can possess the spirit of self-reliance and independence no matter your profession or job title. Being an entrepreneur is as much about who you choose to be as what you choose to do for a living.

In addition to blossoming independent thinking, this was a period of unparalleled awakening in American literature, when perennial classics such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *Leaves of Grass*, *Moby Dick*, *Little Women*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Self-Reliance*, *Walden*, and *Civil Disobedience*, along with a great deal of the catalog of Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, and Edgar Allan Poe, sprang forth.

This was a period when America's literary voice finally broke free of the influence of other cultures. There's a reason your teachers asked you to (made you) read most of these works. I invite you to revisit the golden nuggets of these classics in the context of your entrepreneurial journey. Don't worry; there will no pop quizzes.

Not to overcomplicate the history lesson here, but some of the writers sourced in this book would be seen more as coming from a period also referred to as American romanticism. Romanticism and transcendentalism have many commonalities and some differences. Both placed great emphasis on the individual as well as inspiration from nature.

The time period identified as each's heyday overlaps; however, romanticism did not concern itself at all with God or religion, whereas spirituality was a founding aspect of the transcendentalist philosophy. Transcendentalism flourished perhaps as a natural outgrowth of American romanticism.

Even though some of the authors of the works listed here didn't consider themselves transcendentalists, in all of these voices you can hear the emergence of a self-reliant, self-searching, and at times self-torturing protagonist—a common motif driving this new form of American literature.

In the end, it doesn't matter what you call it; the lessons for entrepreneurial thinking abound.

There is an undeniable element of a counterculture, or even internal disobedience, in most entrepreneurs. So, I suspect that, if you have not already done so, you will find kindred spirits in these pages.

The simple idea that runs through the works I've curated for this book is that all individuals possess self-knowledge that transcends what they might see and hear from others around them.

You must trust yourself to be the ultimate authority on what is right. And this is the ultimate definition of self-reliance.

Many of the transcendentalist writers made a case for what, at the time, were seen as radical ideas:

- that holding and sticking to your own beliefs is more important than following the well-worn track of others;
- that producing value rather than acquiring possessions is a far more useful contribution to the world;
- that the essence of success is gained through individual experience and self-examination more than by following prescribed doctrine;
- that observing nature provides the most perfect example for how to live;
- that inner peace is a goal worth diligent pursuit;
- that present moment awareness is the secret to lasting joy; and
- that the essence of life is to explore how all things are connected.

Transcendentalism was initially a religious undertaking—albeit more of a movement to question the given religious doctrine, particularly Calvinism. The movement, however, quickly became a force in many areas of life beyond religion and found its most notable spokesperson in Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Although this book does not intend to tackle the subject of religion, the connection between the entrepreneurial journey and the human spiritual journey has many parallels found in the underpinnings of transcendentalist philosophy and writing.

Emerson's philosophy of self-reliance, as with many of the transcendentalist works, clearly borrowed heavily from ancient Eastern sacred texts such as *The Upanishads*, *The Tao-te Ching*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and *The Vedas*. These works spoke of a god not as a separate being or Trinity but as a force of energy within every individual waiting to be awakened.

If that doesn't sound like inspiration for the entrepreneurial spirit, I don't know what does.

Change is perhaps the only constant in the world of the entrepreneur. Transformation, as a constant influence, is at the heart of the

transcendentalist philosophy, and the persistent search for a process of transformation serves the entrepreneur well.

Emerson's self-reliance finds a catalyst in self-awareness and calls the entrepreneur to create a space for inner and outer observation in an attempt to join mind, body, and spirit in the achievement of individual transformation and the transformation of the entrepreneurial enterprise.

A common theme contained in many of the works of the period is that of individualism—that the source of truth was contained within rather than from the inspiration of others. These ideas burn brightly still today as hundreds of thousands pilgrimage to Walden Pond and the Thoreau Institute's Walden Woods Project each year as a tribute to these teachings.

So, yes, in this sense, this book reveals a vital spiritual component to this awakening of the self-reliant entrepreneur. The spirit of the entrepreneur is understood as much as a force of energy as an institution.

Once you find your unique self-reliant point-of-view and voice, your one voice of truth, you can find freedom in every decision you make. This is true for anyone and not just entrepreneurs. What's healthy for the self-reliant entrepreneur is equally useful for anyone wishing to gain a measure of self-reliance.

Self-reliant entrepreneurs do not consider themselves constrained by their circumstances; rather they ignore the call of common wisdom on the way to shining a light on what only they can make manifest.

This is not an appeal for recklessness. It is a form of thought that is perhaps less an act of self-confidence than it is one of self-trust. And the difference is ultimately practical.

How This Book Is Organized

Much like the annual passing of calendar seasons, there are four distinct phases or seasons that most entrepreneurs experience as they move from start-up to traction to growth and profit and back to what many confess feels like instability all over again. These "seasons" are part of how entrepreneurs move from one phase of business to the next.

Of course, this observation is one of hindsight because, unlike the turning and tumbling leaves that signal fall, the seasons of the entrepreneur are much more difficult to detect—but look for them, both inside and out, and you will see them.

This metaphor offers the perfect way to organize the readings and reflections into seasons while further focusing on thematic elements that make up the core tenets of self-reliant thinking.

In *The Self-Reliant Entrepreneur*, the seasons of the entrepreneur are named Planning, Discovering, Evolving, and Growing. In furthering the

season metaphor, these easily line up with the attributes we most associate with summer, fall, winter, and spring:

Planning

January – Trust

February – Creativity

March – Freedom

Discovering

April – Love

May – Commitment

June – Security

Evolving

July – Failure

August – Resilience

September – Congruence

Growing

October – Change

November – Impact

December—Grace

How to Use This Book

The format of this book allows you to reflect upon tailored, timeless guidance each day without investing too much time. You may wish to study deeply every day in order to center your thoughts for that day or dive in from time to time as your schedule allows or as you need to wrestle with a particular challenge. There are countless ways to use and to gift this work.

Each day you will start with a reading from a transcendentalist-era author, followed by my reflection and application for today's entrepreneur. Each passage concludes with what I call a "Challenge Question" in an effort to nudge you to apply the day's lesson to your current situation or goal. Use the brief space found at the bottom of each page to record your initial thoughts to the question. You may find that you return to your answers over and over again.

A word of advice here—don't be surprised if you find answers to these questions coming from somewhere deep inside. Don't ignore that voice. We are often quick to dismiss our own insights in favor of advice from others—listen to yourself; it's probably your soul speaking up.

Pick this book up every day or every once in a while and use the wisdom of the transcendentalists (some feisty entrepreneurs and revolutionaries) to keep you showing up, keep you inspired, and most important, to keep you boldly self-reliant.

Also, it doesn't matter where you start or when you start. If you found this book in July, jump in there and you catch the first six months next year. This book will remain fresh to you year after year as each reading will mean something new when you revisit after 12 months of growth on your self-reliant path.

There is an element of irony in teaching the idea of self-reliance. See, the “self” part of the equation is on you. The lessons that follow will never truly impact your life until you embark on the intense self-exploration required to embody the themes. Only you can make the concepts contained here practical, personal, and ultimately relevant.

For that reason, you’ll find numerous references in this book to the practice of meditation, journaling, and solitude as tools to help you experience the internal cultivation of these notions so that you might ultimately express them in your everyday external reality.

Author's Note

A number of the meditations used in this book have been lightly edited from their original form in an attempt to modernize pronouns and address words no longer in common use that may serve to confuse the meaning of the quote.

Every effort has been made to retain the original meaning of the passage.

January

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Every revolution was first a thought in one man's mind and when the same thought occurs in another man, it is the key to that era.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



Source: Wikimedia

Ralph Waldo Emerson is considered the father of the transcendentalist movement. He was born in the bustling seaport of Boston, Massachusetts, in 1802. His father, a Unitarian minister and learned man, instilled in him an interest in literature from a young age.

Emerson enrolled in Harvard at age 14, where he developed a keen interest in Asian culture, religion, and literature. He continued his study at Harvard Divinity School to become a minister, like his father, and took a post at a Boston church in 1829.

However, when his wife passed away from tuberculosis in 1831, he questioned his faith and decided to move away from the Church. After quitting his job, he left the United States to travel throughout Europe, where he met such literary giants as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Thomas Carlyle.

Upon his return to the States, he became a public lecturer—a career he would hold for the next 50 years of his life. This is also when he became involved with transcendentalism.

He published *Nature*, a seminal text of the movement, in 1836, and together with Margaret Fuller founded *The Dial*, the journal that became the primary vehicle for transcendentalist writers to publish their works, in 1840.

He published two collections of writings, *Essays* in 1841, and *Essays: Second Series* in 1844, that helped cement his place as a literary celebrity in America. In his later years, his writing focused more on poetry and contained strong influences from Eastern religions.

He continued to write extensively until 1880, and he died in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1882.

January 1

The Force of Nature

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a person does not keep pace with their companions, perhaps it is because they hear a different drummer. Let them step to the music which they hear, however measured or far away. It is not important that you should mature as soon as an apple tree or an oak. Shall you turn your spring into summer?

Henry David Thoreau—Walden (1854)

Nature has no desire to succeed—one season inevitably folds into the next, a year marked by changes in weather, ecology, and daylight—no matter how much force we might exert to contain it.

If we attempted to mimic nature, one thing is for sure, we would release the need to control any aspect of our lives. We would give in to what naturally needs to happen.

This is a fundamental element of self-reliance. And ironically by releasing the need to control we eventually find that we gain access to greater control.

Think about the last time you forced or tried to force something to happen. How did that feel? How did it turn out? If you succeeded, did the result last?

Now think about the last time something came into your life by way of what felt like luck. Isn't it possible that your lack of control actually created what you characterized as luck? Your letting go created your fate.

Today, and as you journey through this book, consider the many things on your path that worked out well for you even though you didn't or couldn't control them—listen closely for this tone, for it is your beat—the beat of your “different drummer.”

Challenge Question

Can you describe a time you benefited from luck? What does luck feel like?

January 2

Wear Your Truth

I may be deemed superstitious, and even egotistical, in regarding this event as a special interposition of divine Providence in my favor. But I should be false to the earliest sentiments of my soul, if I suppressed the opinion. I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and incur my own abhorrence. From my earliest recollection, I date the entertainment of a deep conviction that slavery would not always be able to hold me within its foul embrace.

Frederick Douglass—Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845)

So much about the quest for self-reliance is counterintuitive. The way toward the light often looks like the darkest choice. The true measure of our strength comes clothed in our ability to be weak.

But to speak and assume your truth in an effort to follow your passion as those around you seek to drag you into their fear and doubt also requires extraordinary wisdom.

You must first recognize how foolish following the path of others is so that you may embrace the posture of self-reliance.

Douglass stated he knew he would be freed from slavery long before it happened and that he welcomed the ridicule of others for speaking his truth in his version of “to thine own self be true.”

Today, be mindful of what you think, do, and say and consciously note how often your thoughts and actions betray your essential truth and how often you stand firmly clothed in your truth.

Challenge Question

What is something you are sure of, even if it does not yet exist?

January 3

You Are Blendingly Distinct

Who in the rainbow can draw the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the difference of the colors, but where exactly does the one first blendingly enter into the other?

Herman Melville—Billy Budd, Sailor (1924)

Blendingly is a word every entrepreneur should embrace as it perfectly defines the contradiction inherent as you struggle for progress, all the while holding your breath in fear of failure—where does one end and one begin?

We often fail to see or trust our greatness because our feelings of unworthiness tell us we have accomplished far too little at this point. Read in context, Melville's character is explaining insanity, and there's certainly a little madness to be embraced in being an entrepreneur.

It shows up a little like striving to make it while pushing aside a persistent feeling that we are a fraud.

Here's are some questions to ponder. What do your feelings of unworthiness want from you? Why do they scream the loudest right when you are on the edge of something particularly significant?

Today, let go of the need to achieve. Get comfortable with being somebody and nobody at the very same time, and perhaps you'll finally catch a glimpse of your greatness once and for all.

Challenge Question

Can you describe a belief that might be holding you back? Where did that belief come from?

January 4

Who Are You to Be Great?

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today.—“Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.”—Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

Ralph Waldo Emerson—Self-Reliance (1841)

What, then, is it to be understood? Is it to have what you are doing, saying, thinking, and feeling fit into someone else’s consistent view of the world?

Emerson felt that to be great was to be different, but he also knew that different was a more difficult way to go. An impressive lot—Socrates, Jesus, Luther, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton—were all labeled different and persecuted long before their ideas would be branded genius.

Different for the sake of difference may not make you great, but if your ideas today are not causing some to question your sanity just a bit, you may not be trying hard enough.

Different is often misunderstood, and those willing to change the world may eventually face the label of different, or weird, or crazy, or, the age-old favorite, a dreamer.

Dreaming big and being willing to be different is the hallmark of a self-reliant entrepreneur.

It’s game time again—how will your dream be misunderstood today?

Challenge Question

How are your dreams misunderstood? Describe a time.

January 5

You Are Enough Right Now

All around us lies what we neither understand nor use. Our capacities, our instincts for this our present sphere are but half developed. Let us confine ourselves to that till the lesson be learned; let us be completely natural; before we trouble ourselves with the supernatural. I never see any of these things but I long to get away and lie under a green tree and let the wind blow on me. There is marvel and charm enough in that for me.

Margaret Fuller—Summer on the Lakes (1844)

The call to compete, stay relevant, follow the social media draped existence of others, robs us of our focus.

And, of course, the chase for more belies the fact that we already possess so much. Find less to do, think about, and observe, and it is likely you'll discover that your idea, your innovation, your silly little thing that nobody gets is quite perfect.

Strip the essence of your business down to no more than two or three priorities each month, each quarter perhaps, and go to work brilliantly on those ideas.

New ideas and new ways to make money are tantalizing, but the real fortune is in fully realizing the essential nature of your unique point of view, and that is expressed by doing less rather than more.

You are *enough* does not mean that you are *everything* right now. It says you had this idea of yours because you needed to shine a light on something, and even though you may need lots of help and you may make lots of mistakes, you trust that, right now, at this moment, you've got what it takes.

Step back, take in the wind, learn, smile, and stay focused on what's right in front of you. Everything is perfect, everything is perfect, everything is perfect—right now.

Challenge Question

What is one thing you feel is holding you back? Why are you letting it?

January 6

Peaceful in Your Intent

*I exist as I am, that is enough, If no other in the world be aware I sit content,
And if each and all be aware I sit content. One world is aware and by far
the largest to me, and that is myself. And whether I come to my own today
or in ten thousand or ten million years, I can cheerfully take it now, or with
equal cheerfulness I can wait.*

Walt Whitman—Song of Myself (1855)

The world is going to happen today—with or without your permission.

We have little control over what happens through the day, what is said, what we deem success or failure, and certainly how others react to whatever it is that we do.

The one thing we control universally is our intent. Intent powers, often unconsciously, our everyday actions and reactions and, if we choose to direct it so, powers the overarching vision for our entrepreneurial journey.

What is the ultimate intent for your journey? Not so much precisely where you are going but how you will impact others because you are going.

To realize intent of this nature, you must simultaneously hold this vision and let it go. You must be content with your progress. The thing is no matter what you do it is likely you'll get to where you want to go someday, but intent will get you there faster.

As a self-reliant entrepreneur, you are able to be one with your business and simultaneously able to stand apart from your business, letting things happen without trying to control the outcome.

Today, be at peace while holding your intent steadfastly.

Challenge Question

How do you plan to positively impact others today?

January 7

Consistency Brings Trust

They must be the poor creature that does not often repeat themselves. Imagine the author of the excellent piece of advice, "Know thyself," never alluding to that sentiment again during the course of a protracted existence! Why, the truths a person carries about are their tools; and do you think a carpenter is bound to use the same plane but once to smooth a knotty board with, or to hang up their hammer after it has driven its first nail?

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.—The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table (1858)

The key to success is to do things others aren't willing to do and to do them over and over again.

That may not sound like advice for one intent on becoming a headline-making overnight success, but it is terribly sound advice for one intent on making a long-term impact on some corner of the universe.

Your unfailing word is how you let people know you mean it. Your reliable deed is how you lead others. Your constant practice is how you master your journey.

It is likely you will grow tired of expressing your truth long before even a trifle of those who most need it will ever experience it.

Today, tell your story, express your truth, enlist others in that story, and never stop sharing some version of it.

Consistency—showing up again and again and doing what you promised you would do from the start—is the hallmark of one to whom trust is extended.

Challenge Question

Can you describe one positive habit that has served you through consistent practice? How did you turn it into a habit?

January 8

Respect Your Dream

Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them, but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them, and try to follow where they lead.

Louisa May Alcott—From the scrapbook of Elbert Hubbard (1915)

What is it that you most love about what you do or aspire to do?

Who else finds peace, joy, and happiness when you do it? Respecting this notion is how you unearth the joy that will always be with you.

Live in constant appreciation of your highest aspirations and you will attract what you need.

Challenge Question

What element of what you do brings you the greatest joy?

January 9

A Life Imagined

If one advances confidently in the direction of one's dreams, and endeavors to live the life which they have imagined, they will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. They will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within them; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in their favor in a more liberal sense, and they will live with the license of a higher order of beings.

Henry David Thoreau—Walden (1854)

You are 100 percent unique (just like everyone else!)—there is no other human being exactly like you. That fact of science alone should be enough to allow us to choose whatever path we like rather than follow in the steps of others or choose a life determined by those who would judge right and wrong for us.

Are you living your life based on past prescriptions, or are you asking, “What do I want, what am I afraid of, what must I change?”

Or are you comparing yourself to others?

To live more fully, you must stop reinforcing judgments on yourself made by others and you must stop imposing your judgment. These are the mental exercises that compound daily to rob us of our essential, 100 percent unique nature.

Here's the thing: there's nothing to win. There's only your essential nature, and when you discover the awesome power of that, when you start to feel that in your heart, you'll discover the key to this entire game.

All day today, take note of things that are unique and essential to you and only you.

Challenge Question

Can you describe something about yourself that is completely unique?

January 10

Cast Your Bread

Mother's motto was "Hope, and keep busy," and one of her sayings, "Cast your bread upon the waters, and after many days it will come back buttered."

Louisa May Alcott—Her Life, Letters, and Journals (1914)

The message contained in today's reading is a playful version of a notion as old as all of civilization. It appears in the book of Ecclesiastes 11:1–6 (v. 1—*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days*) and could be seen as a literal characterization of the practice of the ancient Egyptian farmers who would cast seeds on top of the spring floodwaters of the Nile so that when the water receded the now-germinated seeds would settle into the rich soil and produce a fruitful harvest.

In *Her Life, Letters, and Journals*, Alcott recounts a winter when a neighbor lacked firewood, so her parents gave half of their dwindling pile to the neighbor in need without any real idea of how they would provide enough heat for their own home.

Shortly after a woodcutter passing by feared the drifting snow and asked if he could drop off his load there; he told them that because they were doing him a favor, they needn't hurry about paying for it.

The universe has an amazing scorekeeping system, and those who trust that what they need will show up at the appropriate moment can stay focused on acting in a mindset of prosperity.

An essential element of self-reliance is the belief that all things are connected and that what is good for others is good for you and is good for all. Keeping the continuous cycle of giving and receiving flowing—investing and reaping—is how abundance appears at precisely the moment nature intended.

Challenge Question

When was the last time you shared something unconditionally?

January 11

Light Within

A person should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across their mind from within, more than the luster of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet they dismiss without notice this thought because it is theirs. In every work of genius, we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty.

Ralph Waldo Emerson—Self-Reliance (1841)

Self-doubt fuels much of the resistance felt at some point by nearly every entrepreneur. A complete absence of self-doubt might suggest a lack of passion—if you aren’t at least a little afraid to do something, you might not be thinking big enough.

But ignoring your genius precisely because it is yours triggers a pattern much worse than the paralysis of doubt alone. When our ideas are rejected off hand or left to linger unrealized, we begin to welcome forms of incongruence or want of integrity.

Trust the gleam of light that flashes across your mind from within or forever risk living a lie—it’s just a choice.

Emerson’s passage concludes with this thought in summary: “and we shall be forced with shame to take our own opinion from another.”

Today dig deep and access how this idea might be creating friction in your journey.

Challenge Question

Can you name one big thing (idea) you know you should be doing?

January 12

Your Own Crazy

Had the routine of our life at this place been known to the world, we should have been regarded as madmen—; although, perhaps, as madmen of a harmless nature.

Edgar Allan Poe—The Murders in the Rue Morgue (1841)

Entrepreneurs possess their own special brand of crazy—and that’s just fine!

Truly self-reliant entrepreneurs bear more resemblance to artists than the traditional businessperson. To make something out of nothing requires equal parts hallucination and determination.

It’s no coincidence, then, that terms like “lean” and “canvas” abound in start-up literature. Artists, like entrepreneurs, struggle for many reasons, but often it is because they determine to stay true to their vision when it would seem so much easier to just get a job and collect pay.

Today, wear your badge of madness proudly (although do no harm).

Challenge Question

What’s one time when you did not stay true to your vision (word) for fear of looking foolish?

January 13

Life Evolving

To be wise is but to know how little can be known. The true searcher after truth and knowledge is always like a child; although gaining strength from year to year, they still learn to labor and to wait. The field of labor is ever expanding before them, reminding them that they have yet more to learn; teaching them that they are nothing more than a child in knowledge, and inviting them onward with a thousand varied charms.

William Wells Brown—Three Years in Europe; or, Places I Have Seen and People I Have Met (1852)

Any entrepreneurs caught believing they have mastered their craft are just about to get their butt kicked.

The lifelong practice of gathering knowledge begins with the desire to learn but blossoms with the admission that you know so little. This isn't a flaw in your education; it's an acknowledgment that you can never run out of things to absorb.

Committing to a life of practice and growth requires curiosity above all else. Curiosity is the entrepreneur's perpetual learning device and personal growth engine.

Some have more of it quite naturally, but it can be learned and embraced.

True curiosity is not simply the gathering of information—it's the questioning of information gathered.

Why not? How does this work? Why do we do it this way? What if we . . .

Excitement breeds curiosity, and few things stimulate excitement like adventure.

Today, plan an adventure, something you've never done, maybe even something you're a little afraid to do, and ask yourself as you're doing it not just what you learned, but how alive it made you feel.

Challenge Question

When is the last time you ventured into something completely unknown to you?

January 14

Take the Plunge

You can't sit on the bank and think about it. You have to plunge. That's the way I've always done and it's the right way for people like you and me. There's nothing so dangerous as sitting still. You've only got one life, one youth, and you can let it slip through your fingers if you want to; nothing easier. Most people do that.

Willa Cather—The Bohemian Girl (1912)

Few things are easier than not acting on a heartfelt desire. And the tricky thing is there are so many ways to escape into the busyness that you can actually start to feel excited about doing nothing special.

All the while you begin to shrink.

And it's understandable, because you're not smart enough yet, you don't have enough experience yet, you haven't made the right connections yet.

That's what you might tell yourself as a way to keep sitting still, all the while life is slipping through your fingers. Nothing easier.

Don't think, take the plunge, you'll have plenty of time to be afraid another day, just not today.

Challenge Question

What's one bold action you could take today that would propel you toward your dreams?

Author's Note: Today's reflection is provided by my daughter, Ellen Jantsch.

January 15

Have a Dream

Reformers who are always compromising, have not yet grasped the idea that truth is the only safe ground to stand upon. The object of an individual life is not to carry one fragmentary measure in human progress, but to utter the highest truth clearly seen in all directions, and thus to round out and perfect a well balanced character.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton—The Woman's Bible (1895)

It's so easy to fall into the trap of feeling like this thing you are doing is too hard. It *is* hard! Building your own business isn't easy, it never was, it isn't now, and it won't ever be.

One of your biggest advantages is your willingness to keep pushing ahead even when it feels like you aren't making progress.

To do something on your own can invite criticism or worse, comparison, and those self-inflicted voices become noisy distractions, but “*truth is the only safe ground to stand upon.*”

Do you remember any days when you worked for someone else and maybe you didn't give it your best work? In hindsight, didn't that feel worse than putting up with the hard work you're doing on your own?

Your work has your name on it and belongs to you. You're contributing on your own terms, expressing yourself the way you want, and that is a tiny and important revolution!

Challenge Question

What's the hardest part of your work these days? How could you reframe it?
