



Production: Working at the Heart of the Team

Grant Shonkwiler
Producer, Epic Games

Matt Charles
Sr Producer, Gearbox

Greg Stone
Sr Producer, Backflip Studios

Michelle Ducker
Producer, Media Molecule

Agenda

- Grant - Starting a new team off right
- Matt - Preparing for and solving fires
- Michelle - Tools for surviving
- Greg - Preparing yourself to thrive
- Q&A

Who am I?

The studios where I've grown up



TEAM











Definition of Team

A group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job, or project.

Story Time!



Pecha Kucha Introduction

- 10 Slides, 10 Seconds
- Your life story
- Outside Interest
- Nothing Career other than inspiration

Scott Crabtree

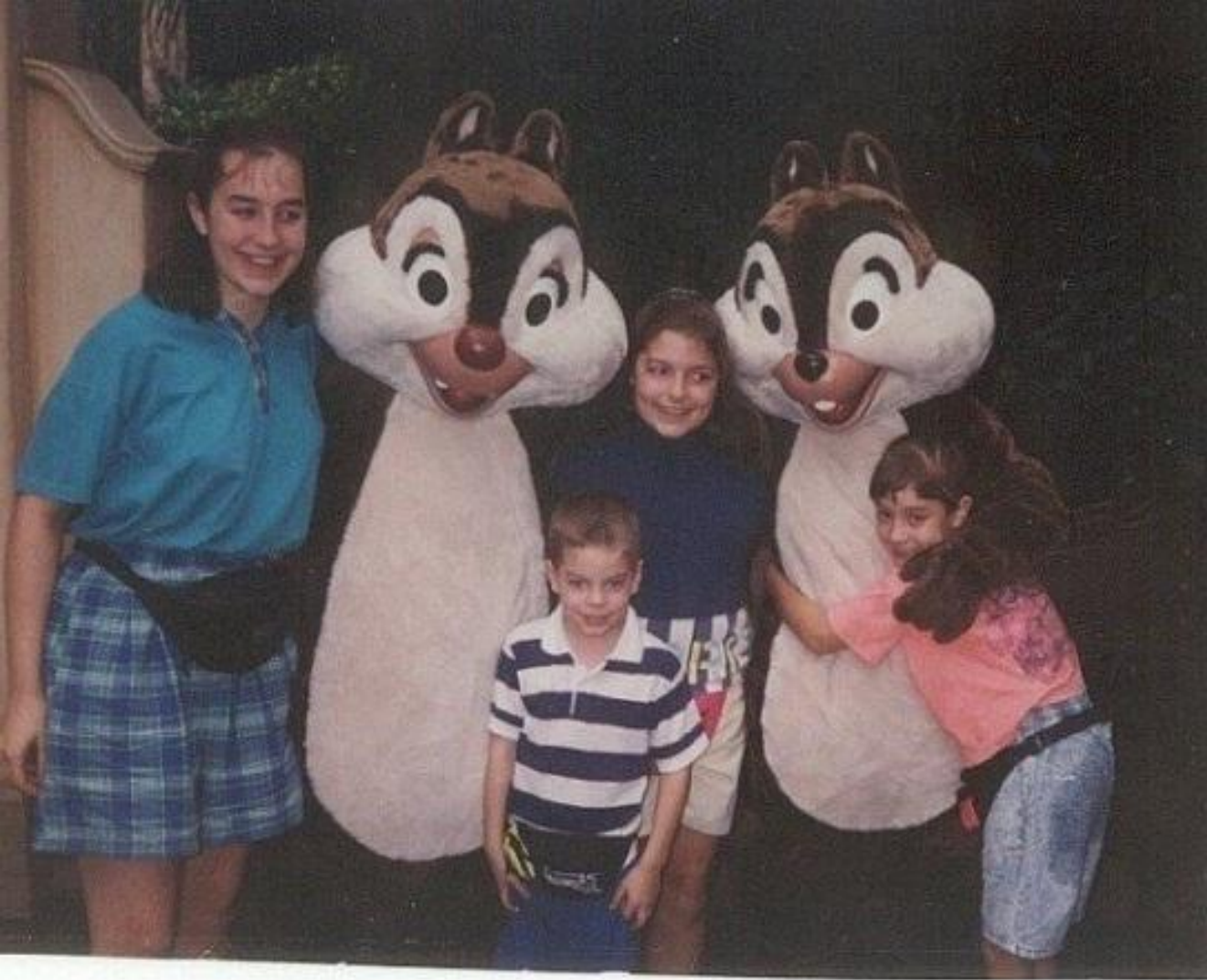
<http://www.happybrainscience.com/>



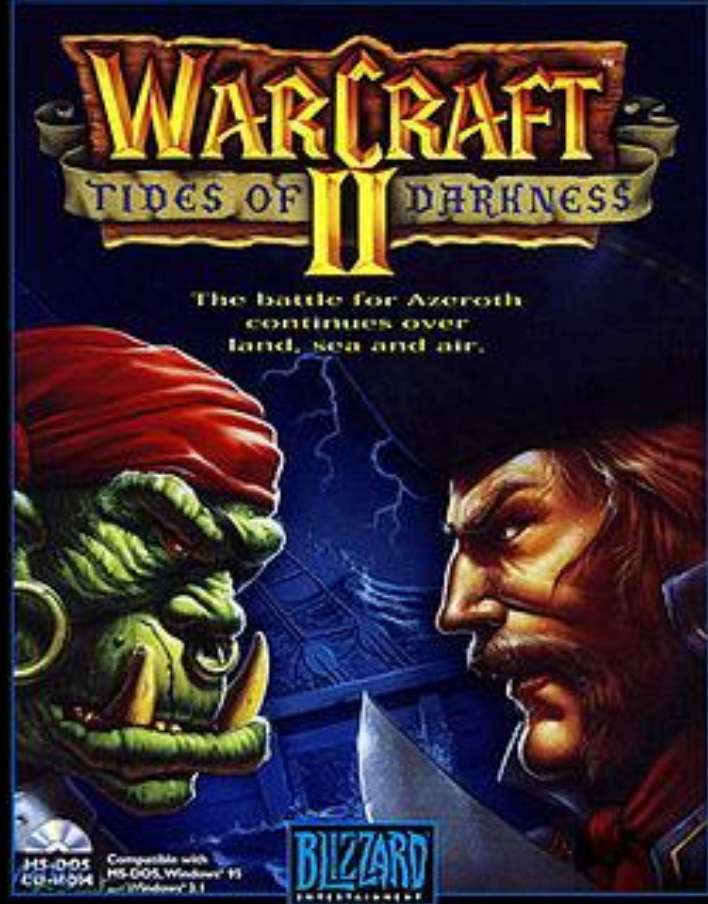
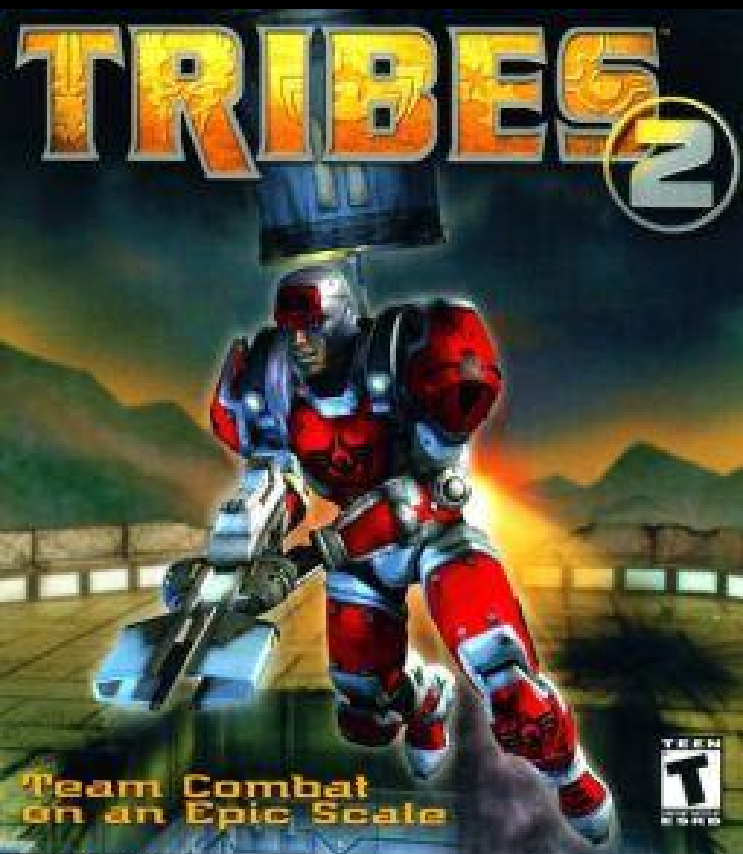
CINCINNATI



REDS













Full Sail
UNIVERSITY





Science!

“...humans are conditional hive creatures. We have the ability under special circumstances to transcend self interest and lose ourselves, temporarily and ecstatically, in something larger than ourselves.”

Jonathan Haidt

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion

Help the team build an emotional connection and bond with each other and you







Have more dance parties, do karaoke.
Synchronicity builds trust







Leadership

“...transformational leadership changes the way followers see themselves—from isolated individuals to members of a larger group. Transformational leaders do this by modeling collective commitment (e.g., through self-sacrifice and the use of “we” instead of “I”), emphasizing the similarity of group members, and reinforcing collective goals, shared values, and common interests.”

Kaiser, Hogan, Craig

Leadership and the Fate of Organizations (2008)



TL;DR

- Similarities build unity
- Synchronicity builds trust
- Competition builds strength
- External/internal pressures build cooperation
- Producers build teams

Break Time!

- Standup
- Turn to a person near you
- 30 seconds each, discuss takeaways

“But the real great man is the man who makes every man feel great.” - GK Chesterton

When Things Fail

(because *something* inevitably will)

About Me

Senior Producer @ Gearbox Software

I've worked on:

- Borderlands

- Borderlands 2

- Borderlands 2: Tiny Tina's Assault on Dragon Keep

- Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel

- & Unannounced Projects

Ideal Scenario

Ideal Scenario

Perfect Communication

Everybody's Best Friends

Team is in Control

Cooler Heads Prevail





3 Things You Must Do

3 Things You Must Do

1. Panic

3 Things You Must Do

1. ~~Panic~~ Remain Calm

3 Things You Must Do

1. ~~Panic~~ Remain Calm
2. Diagnose the issue

3 Things You Must Do

1. ~~Panic~~ Remain Calm
2. Diagnose the issue
3. Communicate!

5 Common Issues

1. Miscommunications
2. Personality Conflicts
3. Team loses control
4. Outbursts
5. “Dead to me”

1. Miscommunications

“Why didn’t they tell me about that change?”

“I don’t understand why that guy can’t be bothered to give anyone else a heads-up.”

1. Miscommunications

Response:

*I don't know for sure, either.
Why don't we go find out?*

2. Personality Conflicts

Obvious Signs:

- Eye-rolling
- Curtness

2. Personality Conflicts

Subtle Signs:

- Ascribing negative motivations to someone else's behaviour
- Pattern of disagreement
- Campaigning

2. Personality Conflicts

Response:

More direct contact.

3. Team Loses Control

Loss of control is when some outside force creates a change in circumstance for the team, such as the dreaded Mandate From Above.

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Loss of control is when some outside force creates a change in circumstance for the team, such as the dreaded Mandate From Above.

Example: Significant change to the product requirements, adding a gameplay mode to the game with less than a year to ship.

3. Team Loses Control

Response:

People who manage the portfolio do actually get to make calls about the nature of the things in the portfolio.

Challenge people to come to a different conclusion given the same inputs.

4. Outbursts

4. Outbursts

When passion / emotion boils over

4. Outbursts



4. Outbursts



5. Dead to Me

Sometimes you have situations where people have written each other off.

It can happen, but sometimes it can be recoverable.

5. Dead to Me



5. Dead to Me



5. Dead to Me

"F*** *THAT GUY.*"

5. Dead to Me

How does it happen? Easily!

It it doesn't take much for people to feel like others aren't on their team.

5. Dead to Me



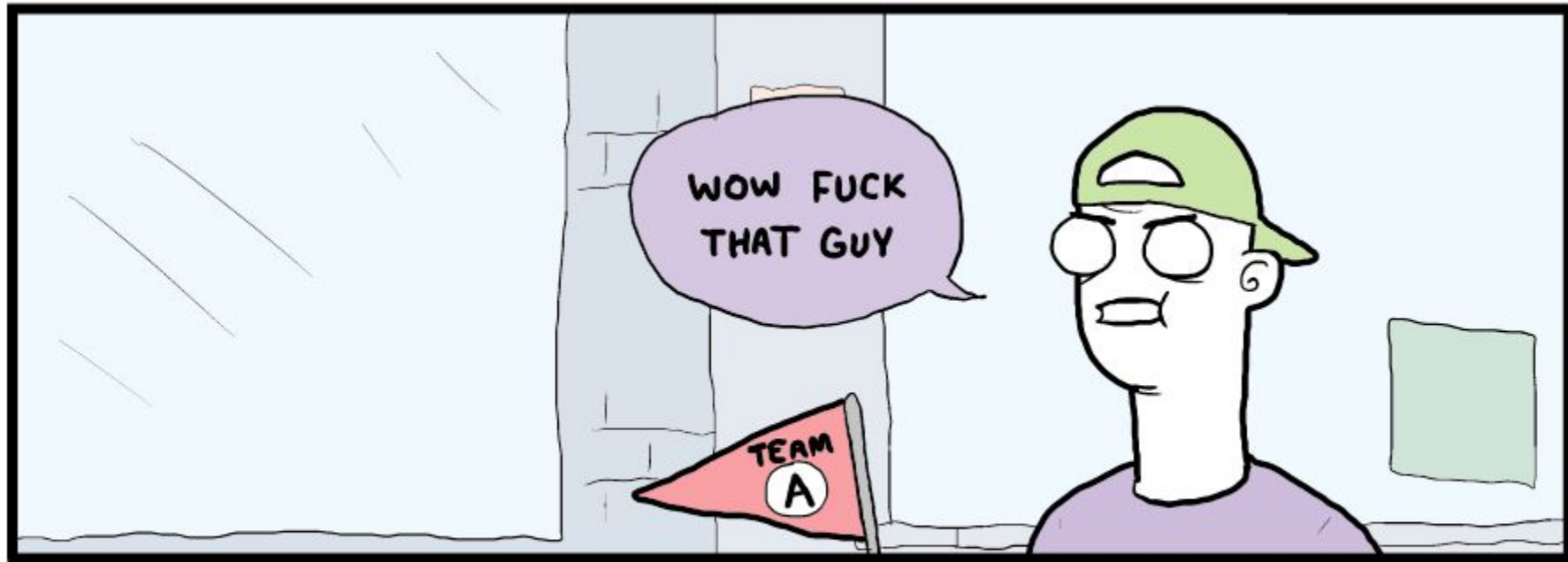
5. Dead to Me



5. Dead to Me



Dead to Me



5. Dead to Me

Response:

Identify the source(s) - it's probably complex.

Communicate the stakes.

Challenge people to find common ground.

Recap

- Diagnose & Respond Quickly
- Why? - “5 Whys” Toyota technique
- Be proactive where possible
- Encourage ‘problem-solving’ thinking to cool down heated situations
- Stay calm

Break Time!

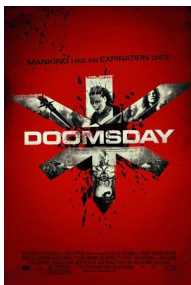
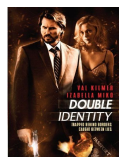
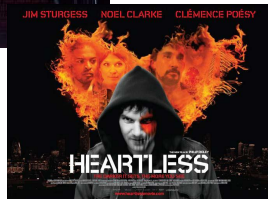
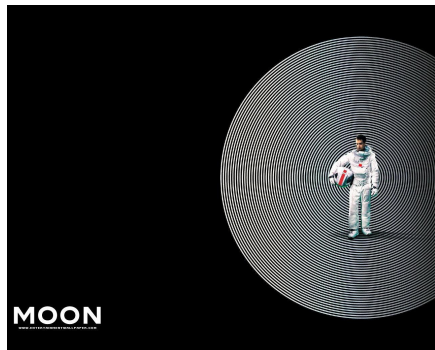
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3 Production Tools

Tool 1 - Overview Tracker

Tool 2 - Creating a weekly rhythm and sticking to it, or not

Tool 3 - Talking



Hi, I'm Michelle!



679

ROUGH
TRADE



RECORDS

Mm



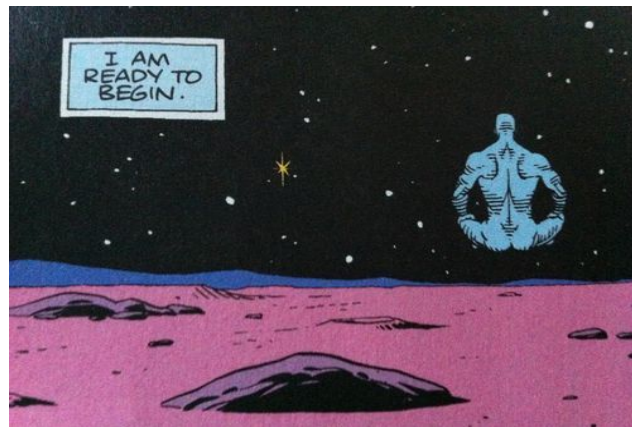


Tool 1 - Overview Tracker

What is this?

It's the picture of the project, the strategic view

- Timeline of year ahead, one cell per week
- Milestone dates
- High Level Schedule by person and area
- Demo's & Milestone Builds
- Team holidays
- Public Holidays / Short weeks
- Marketing & PR requirements / key dates
- Scenario building - planning



52 weeks in a year = 52 excel cells & more to show shipping the game & beyond if you can go that far

3 months look like this...



A	B	C	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
			26-Sep	03-Oct	10-Oct	17-Oct	24-Oct	31-Oct	07-Nov	14-Nov	21-Nov	28-Nov	05-Dec	12-Dec	19-Dec	26-Dec	02-Jan
			EUROGAMER UK	THIS WEEK MILESTONE DUE		REVIEW MILESTONE		PAX AUSTRALIA	MILESTONE DUE	REVIEW MILESTONE							
weeks		H	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
ART & DESIGN	REX		ozzie FOLLOW-UP (fortune teller (maxine park))	END OF THE GAME NEEDS FIGURING OUT			BRIEFS FOR END OF THE GAME - GRAND TEAR 23rd PAX AUSTRALIA NEED TO KNOW WHAT VEGAS DEMO WOULD BE		PAX AUSTRALIA		INTRO TO THE GAME W/IDAN?? THE MESSAGE WHENRIK		CREATORS OASIS				
DESIGN	CHRISTOPHE		HOLIDAY	leaf light motif in cave. Try new scraps from review and motifs. Base scraps not walking fast enough (review notes) STANDING STONES (5) BUGS - blockers	MOORLANDS (10)			CAVERNS 15D			CONTROLLER 15D			THE LAB 15D			
DESIGN	VIKTOR		VASSAIL ORCHARDS FIRST PASS 15D	VASSAIL ORCHARDS 10			VASSAIL ORCHARDS [+2]	FISSURE (15)		SHOW FLOOR DEMO FOR VEGAS?							
DESIGN	BJORN		VASSAIL ORCHARDS FIRST PASS 15D (+10D)	VASSAIL ORCHARDS 10			VASSAIL ORCHARDS [+2]	HOLIDAY		FISSURE (15)		BTP 15D			THE TEAR 15D		
ART	RICHARD		STANDING STONES - GREEN MAN STAGE & LAYOUT - TBC	FINISH MOORLANDS THIS WEEK CONNECT WITH ORCHARD?	[NEW] MOORLANDS HANDOVER TO CHRISTOPHE STANDING STONES						HOLIDAY						
ART	NAOMI PT		FRIDAY Atoi/Iota customisations	FRIDAY Atoi/Iota customisations	2 DAYS		2 DAYS	2 DAYS	2 DAYS	THE YOU?							
ART	SEBASTIAN		PIG RACE ART PASS (5)	PIG RACE REVIEW SICK	VASSAIL ORCHARDS ATMOSPHERE LEVEL		VASSAIL ORCHARD ART PASS		FISSURE (15)		THE LAB (15)			BTP (15)			
ART	KRISTOFER		HOLIDAY	HOLIDAY	VASSAIL ORCHARDS ATMOSPHERE LEVEL		VASSAIL ORCHARD ART PASS		CAVERNS (15)								
ANIMATION	MIQUEL		PIG RACE CINEMATICS	PIG RACE CINEMATICS PASS IOTA/IATOI SELFIE POSES X4	IOTA/IATOI SELFIE POSES X4			BARN CINEMATICS PASS (NEEDS ESTIMATE!)			NEEDS SCHEDULE						
AUDIO DESIGN	ED			MAYPOLE FIELDS - CONTENT CREATION & IMPLEMENTATION	NEEDS TO REVIEW STANDING STONES NEEDS TO CATCH-UP WITH RX & PRIORITISE NEEDS TO CATCH-UP WITH VYKS			GODLY POWER INTERACTIONS WITH CREATURES									
AUDIO DESIGN	TODD																
CHARACTER/STORY	LUCI		SOGPORT TAVERN TEXT & CHARACTER PASS	SOGPORT TAVERN TEXT & CHARACTER PASS													

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY 25TH DEC - 5TH JANUARY

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY 25TH DEC - 5TH JANUARY

TEARAWAY UNFOLDED



HOLIDAY 25TH DEC - 5TH JANUARY

[illegible]

It's the picture of the project, the strategic view, it helps us understand what the birds eye view of the project is!



A	B	C	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	
			26-Sep	03-Oct	10-Oct	17-Oct	24-Oct	31-Oct	07-Nov	14-Nov	21-Nov	28-Nov	05-Dec	12-Dec	19-Dec	26-Dec	02-Jan	
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CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY 25TH DEC - 5TH JANUARY

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY 25TH DEC - 5TH JANUARY

Tool 2 - creating a weekly rhythm

What is this?

It's the picture of the week - realistic

Monday

- team update presented to studio/team by product owners & molecule Spokespeople (Cabals)
- 1:1 follow-ups

Tuesday

- continue 1:1 catch-ups
- urgent reviews/follow-up meetings where needed

Wednesday

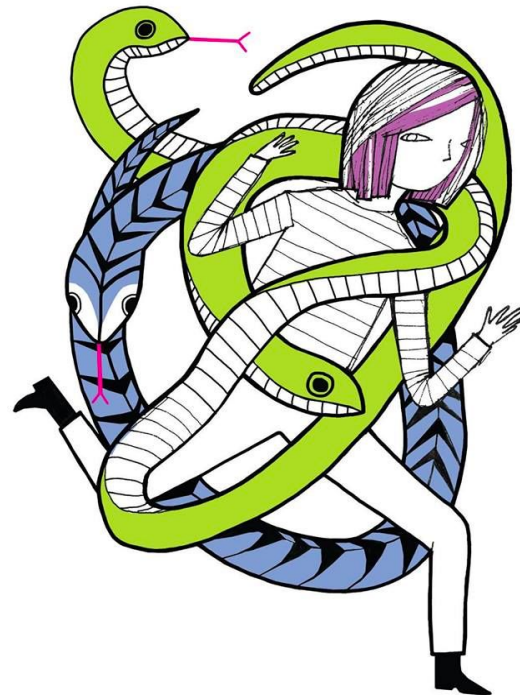
- urgent reviews/follow-up meetings where needed
- Spokespeople Sync

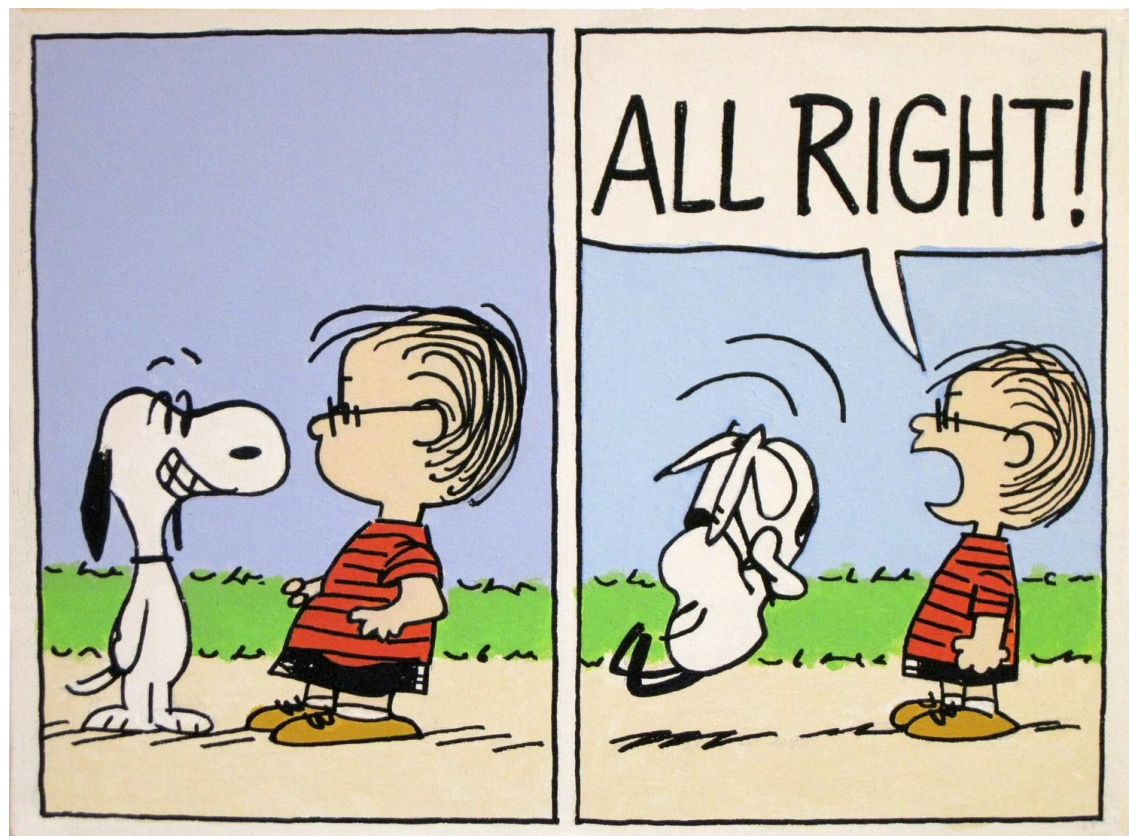
Thursday

- Meeting free day for team, heads-down
- Weekly Production meeting
- QA sync

Friday

- Submitting report based on previous day info
- 1:1 check-out with team
- Friday feature





3 Talking Problems through / and also being the person who can listen

What is this?

It's the granular & people

- Be the person who people can come to



3 Talking Problems through / and also being the person who can listen

- Finding the people who can offer suggestions and help you zoom out



3 Talking Problems through / and also being the person who can listen

- Finding the people who can offer suggestions and help you zoom out
- Finding a person who can be your soundboard



3 Talking Problems through / and also being the person who can listen

- Finding the people who can offer suggestions and help you zoom out
- Finding a person who can be your soundboard
- **Finding your tools**



**It can be an emotional burden, and so
ask for help if you need it!**



Summary

Tool 1 = BIG PICTURE

Tool 2 (feeds into big picture) = WEEK PICTURE

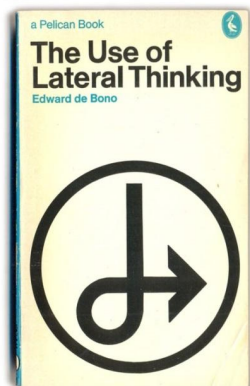
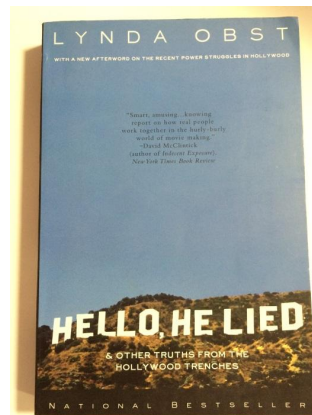
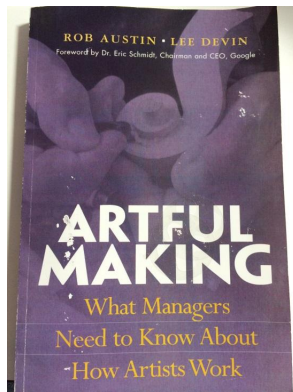
Tool 3 (feeds into tool 2) = THE GRANULAR AND PEOPLE



Reading/music list, because there are things that inspire me and are my go to's when things get tough -

Books I keep coming back to -

Artful Making
Hello He Lied!
Lateral Thinking



Music I often have on loop -

Boards of Canada
Memory Tapes
Plaid
Aphex Twin
my soundcloud likes : soundcloud.com/michyboo

Illustrations by -

Ashley Amery - <http://www.ashleyamery.com>
Lily Nishita - <http://lazerlily.tumblr.com>
Disa Wallander - <http://disawallander.tumblr.com>
Peanuts, Charles M Schulz
Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons, Watchmen
Clint Reid - <https://www.behance.net/beardedbrother>

thank you!



e : michelle@mediamolecule.com

 @michyboo

Break Time!

- Standup
- Turn to a person near you
- 30 seconds each, discuss takeaways

Who am I?



Who am I?



BACKFLIP™
S T U D I O S

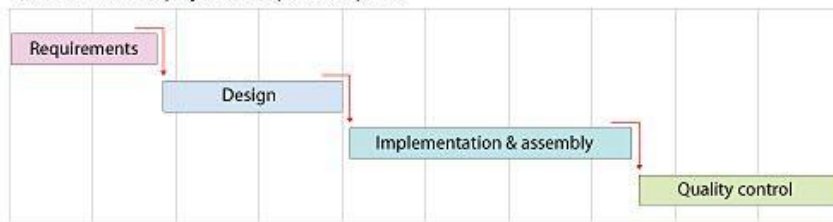
Who am I?



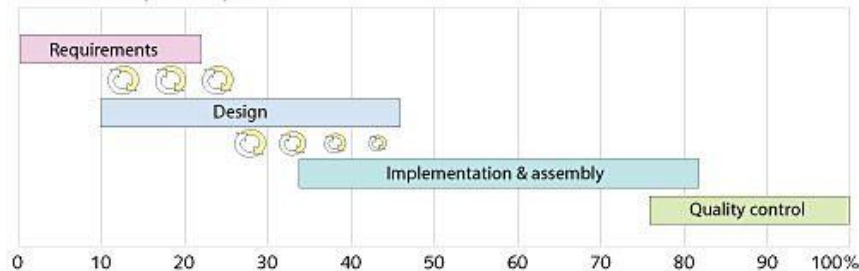
Preparing Yourself to Thrive



"Waterfall" or linear project development sequence



Iterative development sequence



Backstory



Backstory

It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it.

- Lou Holtz

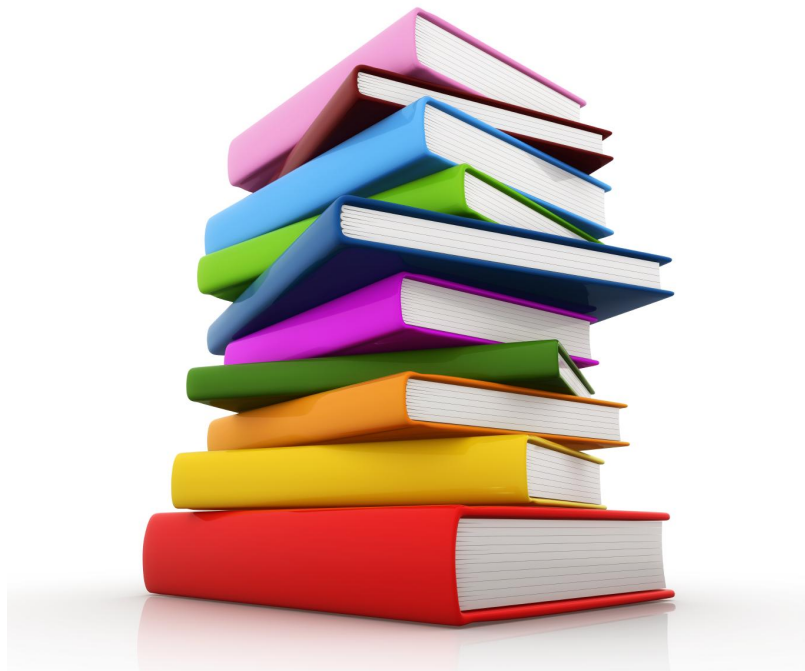


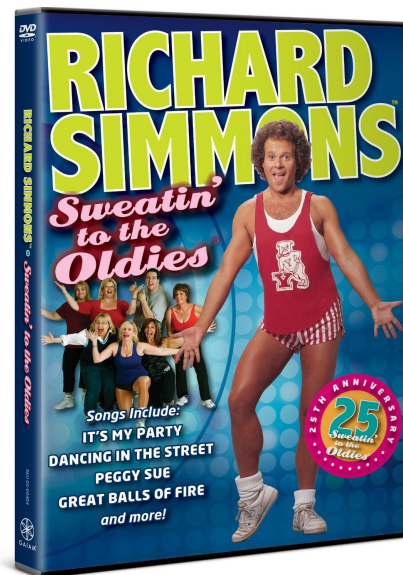
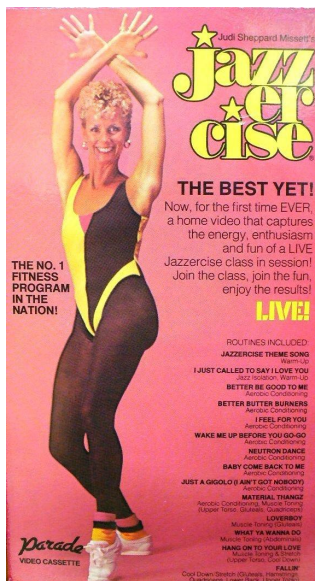
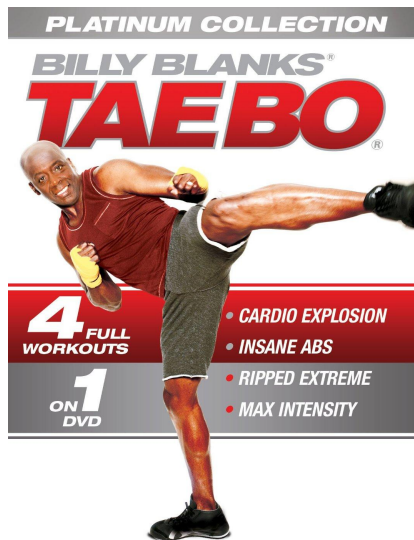
Getting Back Up



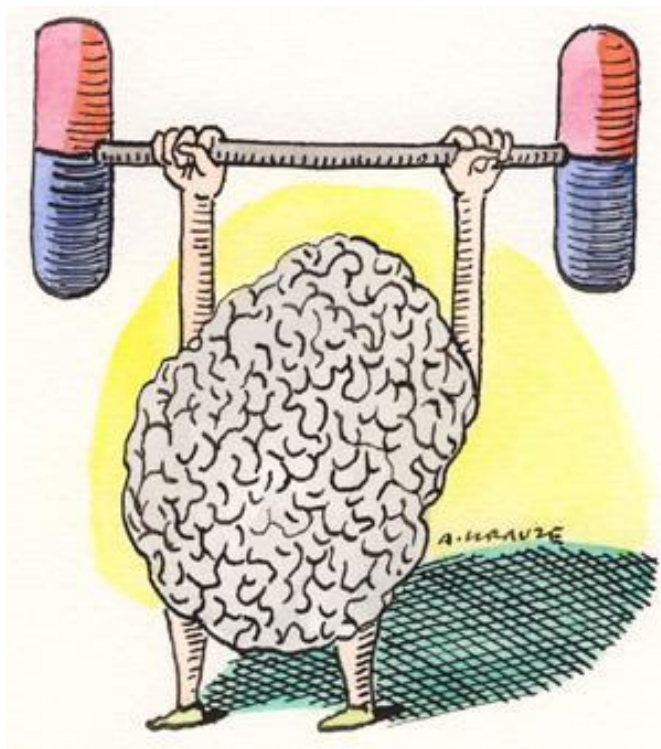
You have power over your mind,
not outside events. Realize this,
and you will find strength.

- Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

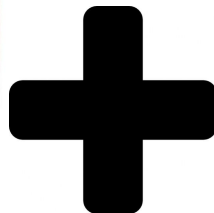


















H.O.P.E.S.

HEALTHY | OPTIMISTIC | PATIENT | ENDURING | SYSTEMATIC

DISCLAIMER!



HOPES

HEALTHY

DIET | EXERCISE

HOPES - Healthy

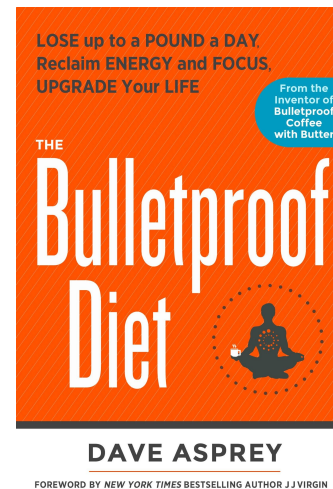
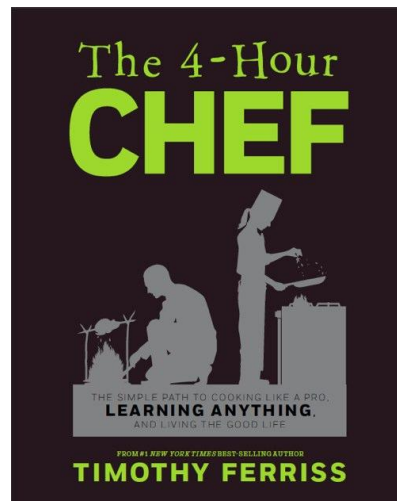
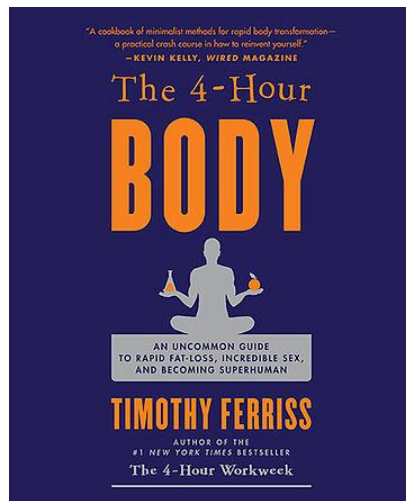
- **Diet**

- Exercise

- Energy
- Outlook
- Cognitive Ability
- Increased Immunity
- Stress Management
- Overall Health

HOPES - Healthy

- **Diet**
- Exercise



HOPES - Healthy

- Diet

- **Exercise**

- Increase Energy
- Reduce Stress
- Improve Sleep
- Boost Brainpower
- Enhance Immunity
- Reduce Anxiety
- Increase Productivity
- Improve Self Esteem

HOPES - Healthy

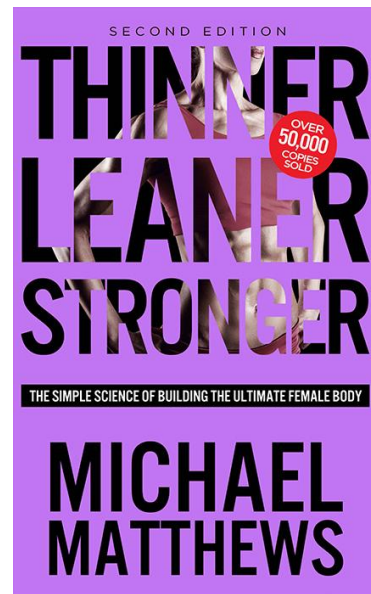
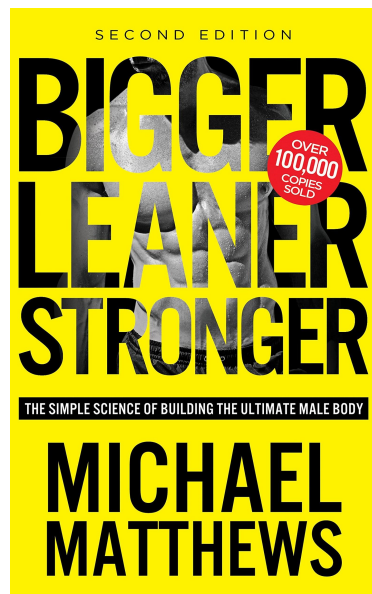
- Diet

- **Exercise**

- At least 3 hours a week
- 5 Days a week
- Every week

HOPES - Healthy

- Diet
- **Exercise**



HOPES

OPTIMISTIC

GRATITUDE | JOURNALING

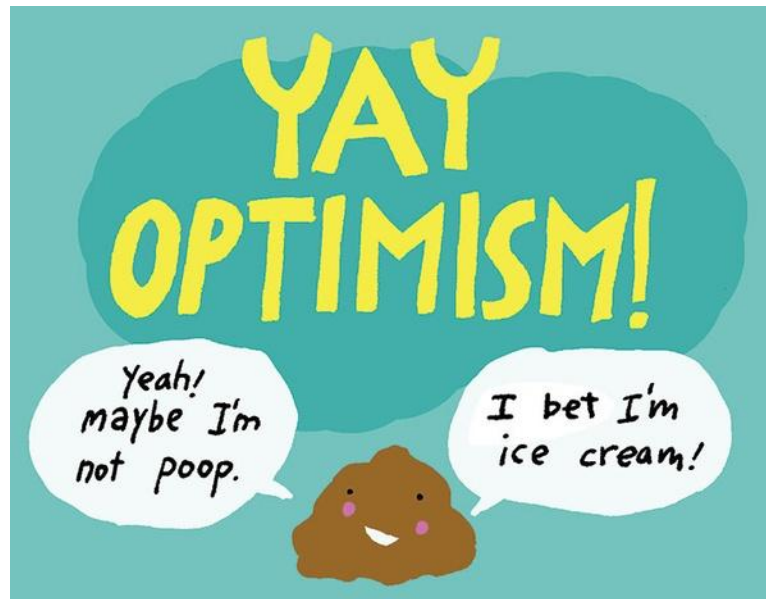
HOPES - Optimistic

- **Practice Gratitude**

- Journal

HOPES - Optimistic

- Practice Gratitude
- **Journal**



HOPES - Optimistic

The
FIVE-MINUTE
JOURNAL

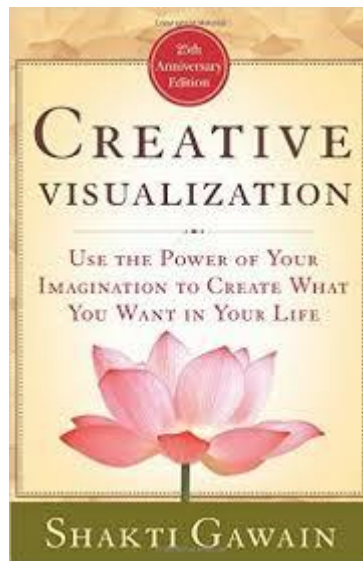
The simplest, most effective thing you
can do everyday to be happier.

HOPES

PATIENT

MEDITATION

HOPES - Patient



HOPES

ENDURING

BREATH | TAKE INVENTORY | FOCUS | IGNORE

HOPES - Endure

- **Breath**
- Take inventory of yourself
- Gain Perspective
- Focus on problems you can solve now
- Ignore anything outside of your control

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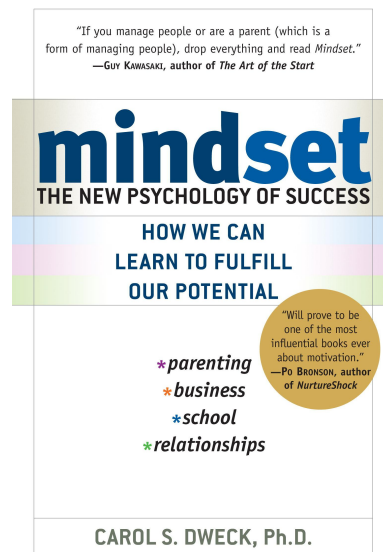
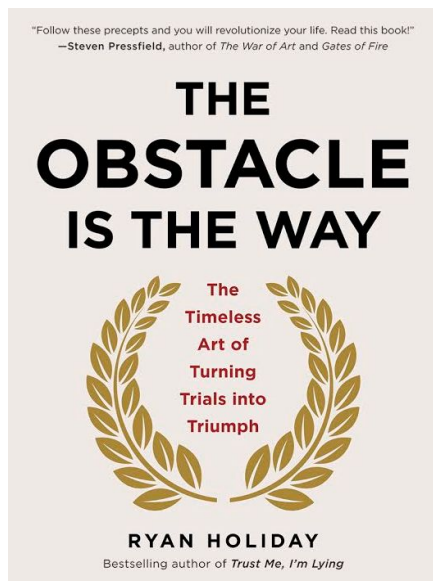
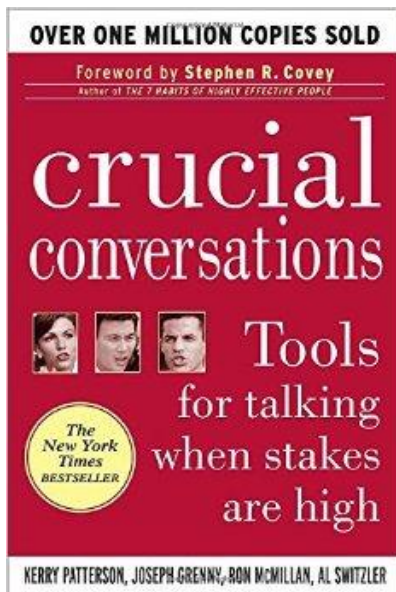
HOPES - Endure

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HOPES - Endure

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- Gain Perspective
- Focus on problems you can solve now
- **Ignore anything outside of your control**

HOPES - Endure



HOPE**S**

SYSTEMATIC

KEYSTONE HABIT | BUILD ROUTINE | PROTECT

HOPE**S** - Systematic

- **Find a keystone habit**

- Implement habits one at a time
- Build a daily routine
- Protect what you've built

HOPE**S** - Systematic

- Find a keystone habit
- **Implement habits one at a time**
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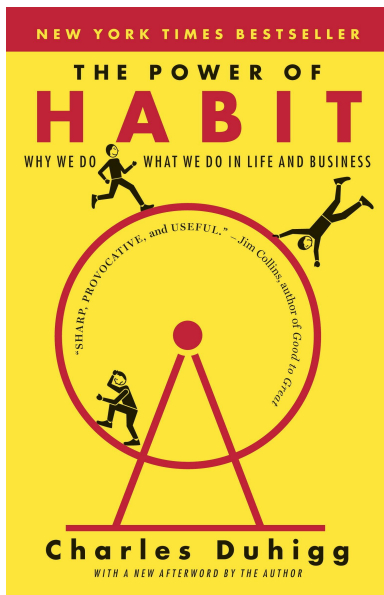
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- Find a keystone habit
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HOPE^S - Systematic



Thanks for listening!



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Break Time!

- Standup
- Turn to a person near you
- 30 seconds each, discuss takeaways

Q & A

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- Matt - @djsatis
- Greg - gregstone@outlook.com
- Michelle - @michyboo