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If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own back yard. Because if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with-

Dorothy Gale (Wizard of Oz)

I love that movie quote. She spent her whole adventure trying to get back to the place she was running from. In our childhood world there was innocence. A place where we felt comfortable belonging. For the majority of us it's the happy place. Certainly, even troubled teens have a happy place. In my youth, I had a place near a river I called my thoughtful spot. Winnie the Pooh had one too. A place where you (alone) could think. Do you remember Poo saying "think, think, think?" In frustration one day, I ran all the way to my spot and jumped in the river. It was not such a great idea because it was bitterly cold. Yet, If I needed to blow off steam, that was the best place to do it. It brings me back to Dorothy. If she couldn't find happiness in her happy place then she was never going to find it. I think her statement also is saying that she had happiness all along. It was inside her from the beginning.

We tend to look for this nice feeling called happiness. Is it in that hot guy you met? The bar on a Saturday night is a happy place. A million dollars could be a very happy place. Yet, when the chips fall (and they will) where do you go to find peace? Wasted time can be created when we search for meaning in all the wrong places. I know Disneyland claims to be the happiest place on earth. It just might be! Yet, we all go home at some point. To face the next day outside of Disneyland. Why is a place like that a safe space? Disney wanted to make a place that brought out the child in us. That point in time when everything was innocent. Childhood (for most of us) is a safe place. We believed in flying, the hero, princess, and micky mouse. Barney the Purple dinosaur was cool and Mr. Rogers was a favorite show. Being a kid is the best of

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times. I feel that we waste time trying to recreate that feeling with in a bottle or a relationship. Trying to be a kid again because life is hard as an adult.

We're not kids anymore, are we? Oh sure, I try! This guy is not your typical fifty-five-year-old. Yet, I have had my share of pain. Frustration is a part of me. I am as human as you. The Bible (again) has a great quote by Jesus: Luke 9:62 "*No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.*" Let's put this into modern English. "*Anyone who looks back on life while trying to move forward will not function properly in their own world.*" With that said we must (for a small moment) return to the past. To wallow in our unhappy places? No! I assure you; it must be done to find our dreams and make them a reality. We need to find our happy place that is buried deep inside us. What were you dreaming of when you were a kid? What made you feel whole? One last time lets return to the past. Our happy place must be inside that past somewhere.

I chose the word *execute* for a reason. This word can be used in two ways. One is to make something happen and the other is to kill things. We are going to do both. This list that you made in the last chapter holds the key to your happy place. Instead of thinking happiness is found in your childhood, let's move that picture to you. "You" were happy in your childhood. You were the happy kid in your dreams, hopes, and desires. I fell in love with reading and writing. I love music (with one ear). Today, I am all those things and more. For the most part, life is fun these days. I have used what made me smile in my childhood and applied it to my adulthood. Those adults that you think were weaned on a pickle (sour faced) have ignored their happy place as if someone executed it.

Let's begin by executing the notion that people, places, and things ruined your dreams. On top of that, we must see that the physical person called "you" were in every memory. In

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every hope, dream, and desire. Let's begin to think about that. The person in the mirror was happy at one time. Through the years some people, places, and things attempted to change you for the worse. Yet, you desire to be happy. I bet you love to laugh. That person? The one in the mirror? He or she is still here reading this book. If you want your happy back, then you must claim it back. Let's reach into your past and take them back. There yours!

Your list of dreams and happy moments are real. They need to be remembered. I do realize that we all have hurtful memories. Physical places we try and avoid. Who really wants to go to the scene of a crime over and over? I have a friend who had a girlfriend. After they broke up, she died. Yet, he still loved her. It's odd and honorable that he asked the family if he could mix a bit of her ashes in his new tattoo. Yet, this single man posts her death every year. He displays this tattoo often in memorandum to her. Is he stuck? She has been dead for quite some time. She was a happy moment. Yet, wasted time is being created by living in a past that is long gone. If that was his happy place then how can he find happiness anywhere else? It's good to remember, but it's not good to dwell, whether it's happy or sad times.

My friend needs to execute this memory. Kill it? You will always remember, yet where do hopes, dreams, and a future reside? Are they found in a sad or happy place? Where are my friends current happy place found: in the past? Why does he look for happy places in his long-lost girlfriend? I fear that the woman I mentioned, consumed in a terrible twenty-eight-year abusive marriage is dwelling. She remembers the wedding night. She desires the same feeling she had when they first met. The memories of better days are good. Yet, is happiness only found in those past events. Part of the trouble this lady has is in finding those same feelings today. That marriage has been destroyed and dead for a very long time. Yet, she is still searching through the rubble for happy places.

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I'm betting some of your happy moments came when you were dreaming. When good times eclipsed bad times. People do get stuck trying to capture moments. For some it's the wonderful event like a marriage. For others it's reliving horrible moments of sadness like a rape. In the years that follow, people rate their lives based on powerful events that seemingly shaped them. It's not uncommon for people to bash themselves over and over for making a mistake. Far too often an abused child becomes the abuser. There are feelings attached to the things that changed us. Sometimes those feelings get too comfortable in our lives. Why do people gamble? It's the thrill (or feeling) of the win. They say serial killers need to kill to feel a certain way. They are not looking for the victim half as much as the feeling. Are you searching for happiness or a feeling?

So, let's look at some of our bad memories. How do you feel about them? Now take up the pile of good memories and think about them. They are warm, fuzzy, and feel good, don't they? Now, I need you to realize that all those memories (good and bad) are feelings attached to events in your life. The event itself has passed on. The feeling however, lingers doesn't it. Ok, let's look at your current life. What similar things make good feelings now? Where do you feel growing fears similar to terrible past events? Are they related or do you just get a feeling? Finally, I want you to think about what you're trying to achieve in your relationships. What are your goals within your life in general? Are you trying to fix a bad marriage? Are you a repeat offender during certain situations? Where do your feelings tend to run amuck the most? It's the places that make you too feel high on life or sink you too fast? Can you see those current places? They might be trends in your life when it comes to feelings.

I have lived a life of abuse. Some people close to me have said over and over that I don't measure up. As a kid I lived in that world. I married into that world. I would even say that I

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tended to attract those type of people in my life. Is it just my bad luck? Was I destined for abuse? What if I looked for it? What if I secretly liked the shame and depression like a drug? The trouble with that is new people and new situations. They don't understand why I react the way I do. Am I begging for it? Struggling to find a way out of the cycle? I believe that is why divorce is higher the second time around. We didn't get ahold of it in the first marriage. Yet, we took a ticking time bomb into the second relationship.

I totally believe there is a way through. How do we separate the feelings from one event? It's all about recognizing who you are first. Why do you love that memory so much? Why does that tragic event still bother you? New people and new situations can inadvertently trigger old feelings. Yet, we tend to act like Dorothy trying to avoid unpleasant memories while hunting for good ones. Trying to capture good vibes. Dorothy should have been able to see herself on the farm. To be happy with what the mirror displayed to her. Not that many of us are happy in our own space. Quite a few of us are trying to find Oz. What if we were looking in the wrong place?

My grandfather is a good example. For years and years, he lived an unhappy life. He was a war veteran who was injured early in the second world war. He never walked right after that tragic day when an errant shell hit him in the back. My dad opened my eyes to my grandfather by saying he never was able to see his dad run or throw a ball. Where was my grandfather's happy place? It's tragic but most of us never find peace. Something is always missing. Yet, at around sixty-eight my grandfather decided to get an arts degree. He began to paint pictures. Picasso is not the point. Accomplishing your dreams is. I'm betting he always wanted to paint.

It's amazing that he spent years and years in pain doing all the wrong things. So, he couldn't run. He couldn't dance. Yet, he could paint. How much time was wasted dwelling on what he couldn't do? I certainly don't want to pick on a war vet. He paid a terrible price for my

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freedom. Yet, his freedom was taken from him. I know a guy who was in that war. He wrote a book that turned into the *Band of Brothers* miniseries. I just wish my grandfather had tried to capture his dreams earlier. He died not long after that degree.

I am betting that he smiled when the paint brush went plop into the water for the last time. The painting was done. All those young students gathered around as the old war vet had completed a desire. Was it Picasso? Oh, no it wasn't, but I still have that painting. It was my grandfathers. It may have taken him years to gather enough strength to paint, but he did! That painting is a beacon of hope that we can accomplish anything even while were in great pain. I have a wooden boat that my great grandfather gave to me. He made it. Part of my office desk was made by my father. He made it. The point I'm really shooting for is the word *he*. These men were able to give me a piece of their happy place. That is the best gift ever.

Dorothy is happy or Dorothy needs to be happy. Which is it? My thoughtful spot is not my happiness. It did not stop me from jumping in the river in frustration. I need to find happiness wherever I am. Carry it in me. They always talk about the joy of Jesus. What exactly is that? Some people will even say *be joyful like Jesus*. Others think that in Jesus is joy. Yet, many Christians have little joy. Why? It's because they don't really believe the promise. That knowing God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit have your best interest in mind. If you knew that you were covered, then your day is blessed. No matter what goes down, your happiness is found inside you. A happiness that is knowing God is with you rain or shine. You must believe that your covered. It's not feelings but assurance. I would equally say it means that your joy remains under all circumstances.

We need to execute the feelings. That's certainly easier said than done. However, if we detach feelings from people and events then we can separate what is the feeling and what is

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everything else. I believe it! Let's take a terrible memory that I have experienced. One day my brother and I were hitting the ball around in the park. In my mind, I was clobbering it. I literally hit one shot clear across the park and into the window of a parked car. Man could I hit the ball. Yet, when we got home my dad said it was nothing. I couldn't hit a fly if the boy across the street had thrown the ball at me. I got to tell you, that stung. Let's break it down. What pile is that feeling of rejection in? Duh, the bad one. Further to that it's attached to my dad. It's attached to my abilities. My childhood. What to do with that feeling now?

Let's say for argument that I make a live stream at church. I think I did a pretty good job. Someone says to me that I am good. What if my feelings about being told I can't (by my dad) crept in.? Patrick, you know you are not that good if? If what? So, let's take that moment and make two piles. One is of my dad. The second is of me playing sports. I loved hitting the ball. I loved being a hockey goalie. I can skate too. On the flip side my dad and I went to football games for 40 years. I loved that. I loved my dad singing little ditty's while we drove home from his work. I loved going to the car races with him. Here is the choice. Put the happy memories in my dad's pile. Just execute the few terrible moments. Come on there are way more good times. Just do it!

It's not that hard. It's two piles. There is Dad and Sports. Ok, now someone will say it's three. The pile of bad feelings associated with Dad or ability to play sport. Now, let's look at the great Dad memories. Is rejection in those too? Nope, they are great memories. You have now just officially executed bad feeling associated with Dad. Just dwell on the great times. Does that exonerate his bad actions? Nope, but you do realize that you can separate them. The good and the bad. Far too many people fight like hell to keep the bad memories. Why? You hate them, don't you? Then let's fight like hell for the good ones. You love them! Refuse to let those few

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bad moments spoil the wonderful moments you do have. Exercise your mind to fight for the good things we have. Kill, exterminate, and execute the bad feelings. Why are they more powerful than your wonderful feelings? You give them permission to own you by holding them in high esteem. Just don't do that anymore, you're free to love good memories now. But how? It's because you assist the librarian now. Love the good memories and refuse to give the bad one's power. In the trash bin!

Now let's also put the love of sport in a pile. Why put negative comments in that pile too? YOU love sports. YOU love hitting the ball and stopping the puck. Don't put negative memories in the sports pile. You can't put negative memories in the dad pile anymore. Why? It's because one or two bad memories don't belong mixed in with a ton of good memories. I had fun with my dad a lot. I would go out today and hit the ball as hard as I could if it wasn't winter. Treat all your other great moments in life the same way. How to lessen the impact of a bad feeling 101? Reject it for the good feelings. The good feeling of hitting the ball. Wonderfully great memories of watching football with my dad. Which one are YOU going to give power to? Which one will you dwell on? Execute the bad feelings.

I read a book the other day called *Don't Quit in the Dip* by Shaun Hapsted. He made this comment that we blame many things for our failures including God, yet we don't tend to blame the devil, do we? Let's translate that into wasted time English. Why are you ruining new experiences by putting old misplaced feelings on them? I could blame my dad. I could blame the boy next door. Yet, the fact remains that I love football and I love hitting the ball. Why won't I hate the bad feelings? Accuse them of ruining new relationships and adventures. Why not execute those feelings before they ruin you? Why not hate the Devil?

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1 Corinthians 10:13 “*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*”

James 4:7 “*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*”

The Bible is clear that we can resist. We can escape. I love the part where it says *common to man*. Do you really have any idea how many people have your struggles? Out of 7 billion people? We all struggle. You don't need to struggle. Why not start blaming your feelings for ruining a good day. Why not chop off the head of that snake? If you were raped. Love sex and execute the rapist. Take what man meant for evil and make love your beautiful thing. Easy? No, but replacing those feelings with good ones takes effort. It takes repetition and time. Start having good sex! Want good sex! In the movie Signs, Merrill is haunted by striking out because he swung far too much. Yet, he was a great hitter when he connected. As the alien is approaching them, Merrill's brother says *swing away* Merrill. What feels better, missing or swinging the bat? What would feel better, avoiding sex or making good sex purposely? Swing in bed Merrill.

My dad belongs in the good times pile that is filled with Disneyland and football games. Playing sports belongs in the fun pile with farting and the Rocky Horror Picture show at midnight. Execute the bad feelings. They have no business being in those good memory piles anymore. Conversely, you must take note of the good feelings. A great party is not defined by the feeling of being drunk. A win at the casino cannot be attached by the euphoria of the win. Addiction comes from dwelling on the feeling. You're not even addicted to winning half as much as the feeling. Merrill swung because it was fun to swing. He got depressed because he wanted to attach homeruns to that feeling. Just swing Merrill.

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One of weirdest things I have ever experienced was at a Christian party. People were drinking eggnog and laughing. I didn't hear people swearing or popular music. In the air was laughter, worship music, and a ton of talking. To the non-believer that sounds terribly boring. Think about it. You just might be attaching drinking to fun. Loud music to good times. Yet, within it all you are with people. At a party, what is the best part? People or drinking? I do drink. I do love rock and roll. Yet, I equally love a Christian party. My church has one every Sunday. We are literally deaf after church! Yet, it's super fun. It's people that make life fun, not the stuff sounding them. It's happy getting on a cruise. It's terribly sad getting off. What feeling defines your cruise? What if cruising is fun because the boat and you made it fun. It's not about feelings but experiencing life.

I attach fun to me. I have fun wherever I go. I don't attach fun to objects, people, or events. Sure, I know Disneyland is fun. September 6th, 2003 a train ride derailed in Disneyland and one died and ten were injured. Is Disney less fun after that event? I suspect it's safer and way more fun now. Execute the bad feelings while executing a plan to make it fun wherever you are. It's a choice to have fun. It's a choice to let negative feelings ruin new things. To review just a bit. We must become the assistant to our piles of memories and feelings. It's imperative that we separate our memories into piles like dad, fun, and bad experiences. Further to this we must separate them further into good moments with dad and bad ones. Execute the bad ones. Count the good ones. If all you have is bad memories then execute the memory. How many bad things have happened to you compared to the good? Trust me, the pile of good most certainly towers over the bad. Toss the bad.

Dwell on the good memories. Take each one and feel the good feelings involve with them. Yet, we must realize that the common factor in all of your memories is you. You have fun.

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Certainly, you are fun. Work can be fun. How can work be fun? It's because you are there.

Divorce is not fun but finding new love is. That means you can have fun in a relationship. Stop attaching feelings (good or bad) to your life. Instead attach (the fun) you to those memories.

Attach the person in the mirror to where you're going. If you are fun to be with then it makes sense you will have fun.

One more point, I'm beating a dead horse. How can we execute bad memories and bad feelings? We do remember. Agreed! Someone recently told me a story of bouncing things we should not do. What they meant is that you see a temptation and immediately say bounce. I chose to bounce another way. To looking or go another way. It takes will power. It takes fortitude and guts to turn your face and chose another way. Yet, if others have bounced bad feelings, then you can. I chose to look at my Ex as my high school sweetheart. I loved those memories. I refuse to tarnish them with a few bad days. People will say, but Patrick, she divorced you. I will counter, that there were some great moments with her. I told my heart to love those moments. Let the others slide into the distance past. They are gone forever sliding deep into the sea of time. I choose to remember fun and make it a priority. Let fun win!

Ok, let's comes back all the way to our dreams. Let's say that you have helped your librarian sort out all your memories, hopes, and feelings. They are in better places. There is one pile left. Your dreams. Where to put those? How do you feel about them? Is there disappointment? Frustration? Sadness because it never happened. Do you think your dreams were ridicules? Ok, let me ask you this. Are you ridicules? Were you ever stupid, untalented, or a waste of time to someone? The real answer is no! No, you are God's good creation. You are the best person made in your image. Your talents, desires, and dreams are perfect for you. See that word: you!

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Now, let's take a look at these dreams. First of all, I want you to put them in one pile and call it your amazing dreams. They are yours. Remember you are fun now. Now, take each dream and put it in I will, I could, and the pending drawer. I dreamed of being a producer. I am doing that within my own live streams and my church. I probably won't be flying into space at fifty-five years old. Yet, I love space stuff. Keep swinging Merrill. Be a space guy. Let's take a look at the maybe stuff. I could run a marathon if my body holds up. It might kill me early too. Run Merrill run! I could publish a book. Write Merrill write! You want to love but are afraid of past failures. Love Merrill love! Take a chance and swing! You are not the sum of your bad experiences. No, today you are fun and lovable. Why? Because you always dreamed of good love. Be the best lover! Swing for it!

Wasted time happens when we fail to execute. Destroy what is destroying you. The flip side is failing to execute the dreams. Put these dreams in-front of you. Have your eye on the prize. Look, a good goalie tracks the puck well. A good hitter sees the ball flying over the fence. Aim for the dreams you once held dear. Relish in the fact that you loved them. Relish the fact that you believe you are fun. That you love hanging out with you. Be prideful that you put warning signs up for bad memories and feelings. Stop! You will be executed if you pass this line. The line? The line is you, your time, and your dreams.

I listened to a podcast talking about entitlement. There was a video clip of a woman telling her story. She went on and on about how the world around her denied her to excel in life. She had a wonderful husband but marriage denied her. Her parents and work were good but they denied her. She became desperate to be free. This woman divorced everything. You might think she executed anything that stopped her from being herself. Here is my issue with this. I believe she has created and will create wasted time. How so? The power of being the best "you" is found

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in thriving within people. Within the memories you make. I have tried to help you detach from putting feelings on events and people. They come and go. Yet, we tend to place feelings on things. Instead, I am asking you to thrive as the best person you have ever met. You are an incredible creation of God. You are the “many things” girl or boy. It comes back to Merrill. Swing at work, home, and in the mirror.

If that woman detached herself from feeling marriage was holding her back, she could thrive within a marriage. She could have been an amazing spouse. Clearly, if your husband told you no or you can't, then there are issues that must be fixed. Yet, most spouses will want you to excel. Half the time we never tell them our dreams. We never ask them for help. The blame game is a waste of time. People are usually called loved ones for a reason. They would love to see you soar. People that execute their life and seek something new usually leave a wake of destruction. Being a wrecking ball to get what you want is not a good plan. In the end you will be king or queen, but alone in your castle.

Show the world that you're amazing by being amazing within their world. Make the world around you take notice. Why not become the light of the world. Could other people say they want to shine like you? Be a beacon of hope to those who are lost. What if your zeal for life rubbed off on your spouse, kids, and co-workers? A friend of mine eventually split-up with his spouse. Six months later he is dating. Why is time needed alone before you date again? It's because time is needed to discover yourself. Time is needed to be the best “you” possible for someone else. If that didn't happen in your first marriage, why do you think it would happen in a second relationship six months later? Do you take time to make your life better for yourself and for others?

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Let's say you have been stuck in the past. It's causing you wasted time. Not anymore, you're swinging for the fence now. Swing Merrill! Let's say that a failed marriage feels like you wasted time. Chase "you" and chase the dream of finding true love. Swing Merrill! Take the time to build yourself up. Make "you" a wall that old feelings will fear. Know the real you better than you have. Love what you have always loved. Separate good and bad feeling from who you are. Be what makes life fun. You are more than just feelings or bad experiences. Swing for better days Merrill! You are finite. There is no more time to waste. The game is still on. Swing!