SCREW THE NAYSAYERS
They Suck Anyway!
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Tim Alison
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Introduction

The Dream That Won’t Die

At one time or another, we all dream about making big changes. That’s a good thing. Because coming out of school, most of us don’t have a clue what we really want in life.

Some of us admit it. Others think they have a master plan for happiness all sorted out. Look out world, here they come. Most of those people are wrong. There are all sorts of reasons for that. (More on that later.)

Sometimes your Big Change ideas are just that: ideas. You think about it a bit, and then it slips away.

But sometimes an idea gets stuck in your head and won’t get the hell out. It goes to sleep for a while, and then pops back into your life like it never left.

“This is your 2:00 am wake up call,” it says. “Are you still trying to pretend you don’t want this?”
This frustrates the hell out of you, because the little fucker is right. You do want it, you want it bad. That’s why the damn thing is stuck to your brain like Velcro.

It gets harder to sleep. One moment you’re visualizing what your new life will look like. The next moment you’re making a long list of reasons why it’s a crazy idea. This list focuses on all the bad things that could happen if you pursue your dream…and fail. The more you want it, the greater your fear of failure.

For most of us, this fear of failure is stronger than our ability to believe we can live the life we want. This is not an accident. Our entire society is set up to encourage people to settle. Dust settles. Should you?

Dust doesn’t have much of a choice in the matter. You do. If you wanted to, you could get up tomorrow and do any number of things to change your life.

You could start or leave school, quit your job or apply for a new one, walk away from any number of human relationships (your boy/girlfriend, spouse, domestic partner, best friend etc.), fly to another continent, put your house up for sale, start a business, or simply decide to do nothing at all.

Look, I’m not suggesting that you perform radical surgery on your life without giving thought to the possible outcomes. I’m sure there are all sorts of things that you’d want to consider. For example, it’s hard to quit your job if you’re living paycheck to paycheck. But even in that circumstance, change is possible. Change is always possible.

Some people, in fact MOST people, will tell you that there is no such thing as settling. These people have opted out, choosing to accept that some dreams are unattainable. After a while, they forget how to dream.

For the rest of us, settling is not an option (if you’re reading this book you may be one of them). Those middle-of-the night wake-up calls just won’t go away. The desire for change, and all the fear that goes with it, will hang over your head like a leaky bag of cat urine. I know, because I stood under that bag of cat urine for almost three years.

There is only one way to make this feeling go away. You need to confront your fears head on. To do that you need to understand the forces that have been put in place to encourage you to settle. Let’s get started!
Part 1

Preparing for Life in the Real World
The Voice

Say you decide to jump out of a plane without a parachute. A voice in your head says, *that’s a stupid idea, even for you.*

This voice is your own personal *Debbie Downer.* The voice assumes all ideas are bad, until proven otherwise. The voice focuses on the end destination, such as hitting the ground at 200 km’s an hour, and pays no attention to the journey.

Sometimes you listen to the voice. Other times you say, “Screw you, I’m going to give it a try.” At least I hope you do. If you don’t, please stop reading. I can’t help you.

To support its position, the voice uses a database of your past experiences, supplemented with data that has been loaded onto your hard drive. The data comes from reliable sources such as your parents (“Remember your childhood lessons, dear”), grandparents, siblings, teachers, friends, enemies, Google, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. And for some of you the occasional book or magazine.

The voice hates it when you act on impulse. When the
dopamine high wears off, you often regret your decisions. The voice has been trained to see the presence of dopamine as an indicator of a bad idea.

The voice goes on high alert when you contemplate big life transitions. Changing jobs, buying a house, or dumping your partner, is considered big.

Pursuing a career in the arts is insane. This includes anything to do with dancing, music, acting, painting, sculpting, photography and writing.

Spending money on a liberal arts degree, quitting a job with a steady paycheck, or starting your own business is also insane.

Anything that involves financial risk, depending upon the amount of money involved, ranges from big to insane.

The voice reserves the right to upgrade any transition considered big, to insane, without notice.

Anyone foolish enough to try more than one of the above transitions at the same time may cause the voice’s CPU to crash. The voice will not be held responsible for any damage that may result.

When faced with a big transition, the voice goes on a search for more information. The naysayers in your life make it easy for the voice. They bombard you with uninformed bullshit. The voice becomes an open portal, and shovels all this shit onto your hard drive.

Oh yeah, there’s one more thing. The voice knows what you really want in life. This can be frustrating if you don’t have a fucking clue what that is.

WTF are Naysayers?
Naysayers come in many different guises.

The Hater

Nicole is on her way to an important job interview. She runs into Jane. Jane looks her up and down, and says, “Nicole, are you wearing that to the interview?” She makes it sound like a question, but it’s not. Jane goes through life doing all she can to make others feel worthless.

Bill goes to a local stand-up comedy act. He arrives early to get a front row seat. As soon as the show begins, he starts heckling and interrupting the comic, a young man performing his first show. Halfway through the act, Bill stands, yawns, and slowly walks out of the club. He laughs out loud when he realizes the guy on stage got distracted and forgot his punchline. Bill plays the scene repeatedly in his head, as he heads up the road in search of his next target.

We’ve all seen jerks like Jane and Bill. They get off on another person’s pain, and live to see others fail.
The Realist

Olivia has long been frustrated by the crap found in the local box stores. She believes her community would embrace a funky new home décor store. She works on her business plan for weeks, before finally sharing her big idea. Her best friend shakes her head and says, “Come on, girl. Get serious. There’s no way you can compete with Wal-Mart.”

Kyle is VP of Human Resources for a large multinational. From the outside looking in, he has it all. What people don’t know is that he’s burnt out. He tells his father that he’s thinking of quitting his job and starting his own HR practice. His dad tells him to give his head a shake. “You worked your ass off to get where you are. Besides, what do you know about running a business?”

Olivia’s friend and Kyle’s dad both believe that they are just being realistic. It’s part of being a good friend or family member. After all, someone needs to keep expectations in check, and, like the rest of us, they have been trained to look for the downside of any big change.

The motivation is different than the haters, but the effect can be the same. Sometimes worse.

The Gloater

For these scumbags, saying “I told you so” is better than sex (I’m not sure what that says about their sex life, but that’s their problem).

They always preface the “I told you so” with a somber headshake, and a qualifier like “It hurts me to say this, but...”

Want to have some fun? The next time you see a naysayer going into the “I told you so” routine, call them out. Imagine the look on their face when you tell them they’re full of shit.

The Disciples of Scrooge

When it comes to money, these naysayers believe your sole purpose in life is to protect it. Anytime you contemplate a transition that involves financial risk, be ready for an onslaught of naysayers. I sure attracted my fair share.

Here I was, a guy with a six-figure income, a company car, an annual all-expenses paid trip, and a wardrobe of tailor-made clothes. The concept of giving all that up was impossible for them to comprehend.

I’m not going to lie. I like money. In fact, I like it a lot. But for me, success is not defined by money.

The Defender of the Status Quo

Nicole brushes off Jane’s attempt to deflate her, goes to the interview, and is offered a new job! A few days later, she’s not sure if she should accept. She feels dead-ended in her current job, but a few people have told her that her new boss is a jerk. This puzzles her, because he seemed nice in the interview. Still, that was only one meeting. Cue the
naysayer. “What if you take the job, and it’s even worse than the one you have now?”

When I quit my job, people lined up for the opportunity to tell me that I would regret my decision. Ironically, none of these people had a clue what my life was like. They didn’t need to know; there was no way my new life could be better than the one I had.

This kind of naysayers will fight like hell to protect the status quo. In their world, the life you have today is always better than facing an uncertain future, even if the status quo sucks.

Hey, if they want to live their life that way, good for them. It doesn’t mean you have to.

The Historian

Because of poor grades in high school, Steven Spielberg was rejected from the University of Southern California film school. Three times!

You can bet a lot of people told him he’d never make it in film. Lucky for us, he didn’t listen to the naysayers. So far, Spielberg, has directed 51 films and won three Oscars. In an amusing twist, he was awarded an honorary degree from USC in 1994.

Walt Disney was fired from his job as a newspaper editor, reportedly for having no imagination. That was just the start of his journey. I guarantee you that he was swarmed by naysayers when he shared his vision for a theme park. He didn’t do too bad for a guy with no imagination.

Many successful entrepreneurs will tell you that their first business didn’t work out. I’m one of those entrepreneurs. Bill Gates is another one. His first business, also a joint venture with Paul Allen, was called Traf-O-Data. It went nowhere.

You don’t have to look far to find evidence of people that have encountered early setbacks, and then gone on to achieve special things. That doesn’t seem to matter to these naysayers. In their world, past failures are the best predictors of future outcomes. When they encounter anyone foolish enough to try something new, they turn to history to build a case against potential success. It might be something in your life, their own, a friend’s, or anyone else they can think of. It’s an asinine way of running your life.

A belief system that focuses on past failures makes it impossible to visualize success in anything new.

The Blabber Mouth

These naysayers are like viruses. They float around in space, waiting for an opportunity to latch onto a host. To have power, their thoughts need to multiply, and their thoughts can only multiply if they infect others. Thus, the verbal diarrhea.

That’s why these types of naysayers are so dangerous. The basic law of addition goes out the window when we hear the same negative thoughts over and over again. If ten people tell you your idea sucks, or that failure is certain, it can feel like the voices of a hundred people, or more.

Then there is my personal favorite naysayer...
The Uninformed Dickhead

Some of these naysayers are easy to identify. They ask you silly questions like, “can you make a living doing that, or, do they have indoor plumbing in Nova Scotia?” The real dickheads try to fake it. These jerks don’t understand a word you are saying. Yet somehow, they have analyzed all the pros and cons, and their conclusion is: it will never work, you are an idiot, and you will fail.

I met one of these dickheads shortly after I’d moved back to Nova Scotia. He was an economic development officer that worked for the province, and his job was to help guys like me make informed decisions. I can’t remember his name (I’m sure he’s long since retired), but I sure remember what he said to me. He listened to my idea, shook his head, and said there was no way my business could succeed in rural Nova Scotia. The shipping costs would be prohibitive.

This perplexed me since the software I planned to sell would fit on a single CD, but why bother with the details. Let’s just get on with killing the dream.

What you need to know about Naysayers

Naysayers are part of a system that has been put in place to limit expectations, and encourage all of us to be “responsible adults.” Your training begins at birth.

The one thing all Naysayers have in Common

Naysayers can smell fear. This is unfortunate, since the bigger the potential impact on your life, the higher your level of anxiety...or good old fear.

This anxiety increases exponentially when you move past the basic fear of failure. You’re no longer worried about
Coach Tim

For the last twelve-plus years, I’ve been working as a coach and mentor for entrepreneurs, wannabe entrepreneurs, creative artists and other kindred souls. When people hire me, most of them expect that I’ll come in with some brilliant solution to all their problems.

Sometimes that’s the case, but it is not because I’m brilliant. I’ve seen and experienced just about everything a small business owner is likely to encounter. That, and the ability to take an objective look at things, is a good combination.

I also find myself mentoring a lot of young adults. Paid gig or not, my real goal is to help people figure out exactly what it is they want in life. I teach them how to use WTF moments as learning experiences, and how their own personal Debbie Downer can be used as a foolproof way to figure out exactly what they want.

That’s the hard part, you know. Once you know what that is, you just need to find the courage to start the journey. You’ll attract all sorts of naysayers, especially at the beginning.

Screw the naysayers, live the life you want.