

The 'Undeclared for Life' Manifesto

A **Plan of Attack** for the Person with Many
Interests and Creative Pursuits in Life

Written by Emilie Wapnick

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INTRODUCTION: Finding My Place

No idea is new.

Everything is derivative.

All writers build on each others' ideas.

* * *

Back when I came up with the topic for my blog [Puttylike](#) and for this manifesto, I hadn't read any of the literature that exists on 'multipotentialism' (which I now know is the dictionary term for the quality you and I possess). I had no idea whether anything else had even been written on the topic.

At that time, I was going through a period of intense brainstorming, trying to come up with an

idea for the website I wanted to create. I had been wracking my brain, trying to figure out what I was an 'expert' at- what knowledge I had that I could share with others. There were so many things I was interested in, but I was having trouble picking one of them to focus on.

One night I was dozing off to sleep and it suddenly hit me: I might not be an 'expert' at any one thing, but I'm pretty darn good at having a bunch of different interests and refusing to settle on just one. In other words, I'm a non-expert expert!

And with that, Puttylike was born.

Once I chose my topic, I began doing some research into what else was out there. I

discovered a handful of articles about people with many talents and people who were self-described 'jack-of-all-traders', but I didn't find anything major.

That is, until I stumbled across Barbara Sher's book [Refuse to Choose](#). Not only had she coined a term for this type of person (a 'Scanner'), but she also wrote a very comprehensive book describing us.

My heart fell a little. I thought: 'Not only has this been done before, but Barbara sounds like a real expert who has been working with 'Scanners' and writing about them for over 30 years. What could I possibly have to add?'

But then I picked my shattered ego up from off the floor and reminded myself that **everything has been done before** and that I *do* have expertise in this area because, well, I've lived it.

I've had this 'multipotentiality' thing going since I was a kid. I also told myself that I have my own voice and my own personality that will come through in my writing. Like each of us on this planet, I have something unique to share.

I have since read [Refuse to Choose](#) and enjoyed it very much. And as I suspected, my focus is quite different from Barbara's. She does a wonderful job of defining what a Scanner is, identifying different types of Scanners and helping Scanners select career paths.

I, on the other hand, don't know much about traditional employment. I've spend most of my time being self-employed and finding my own ways around 'the system'.

My goal is to use Puttylike as a way of bringing together several of my otherwise scattered interests: lifestyle design and life hacking, productivity, personal development, entrepreneurship, digital nomadism, writing, creativity, branding, art, etc.

These topics may seem unrelated, but the connection is that it's learning about such things that really helped me take giant leaps toward pursuing my dreams and overcoming my insecurities about the future. So with that said, I

would now like to add my voice to the conversation.

A handwritten signature in dark brown ink that reads "Emilie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and is underlined with a single, smooth, dark brown stroke.

PART ONE: Who Are You and What Are You Doing Here?

If you're reading this, you likely feel misunderstood. Chances are you drifted from interest to interest throughout your life, becoming intensely curious in every new thing you tried. Maybe you tried something out long enough to master it and then got bored and moved on to the next thing.

People regularly ask you why you 'quit' just as you are hitting your stride. They assume you must be unfocused, non-committal or that you have low self-esteem, sabotaging your future like that. They aren't sure quite what your deal is, but *something* must be wrong with you.

Or perhaps you have a lot on the go all at once. One minute of the day you're studying biology, the next you're practicing with your band, the next you're putting together a bicycle coop, and the next you're organizing a meet-up group for young entrepreneurs. Maybe you have a rotten time fitting all of your interests into your busy work schedule or just focusing on one thing long enough to make any progress.

Your many interests likely seem unrelated to other people. For instance, I regularly get asked the question: "you went from film school to law school? What's the connection there?"

I hate that question. Why does there need to be a connection? Why are we expected to only to be

interested in one area and anything else we become curious about is seen as some bizarre aberration from who we truly are? I mean, why can't I produce my web series and study refugee law at the same time? Why can't I work in graphic design for a while and then try my hand at zoo keeping? (Not my particular dream, just a hypothetical)...

I also hate the assumption that I went to law school in order to make money because I am an 'artist at heart'. It couldn't possibly be that I was interested in law. Nope, I'm an artistic soul who is 'giving up on herself'. Sometimes I follow this comment up with 'I don't plan on being a lawyer' and jump into all my various exciting plans for the

future, which sadly only makes people more confused. You just can't win.

Society Doesn't Get It

From a very early age, we are taught that everyone has one thing they're good at. Our job is to figure out what that thing is and pursue it.

I agree that we're all good at something. But I also believe that many of us are good at more than one thing. So what happens to those of us in this boat? Well, conventional wisdom tells us to pick one of our interests, go with that, and neglect the others. It's a simple act of committing.

I'm sorry to say it, but that is complete garbage. Our lives are long and there's plenty of time to play! Moreover, this special quality should not be

looked down on as some sort of shortcoming; it should be celebrated. It's a gift and it makes us more interesting.

PART TWO: Defining Your Dreams

The Biggest Lie You've Ever Been Told

(The following is an excerpt from a post I originally published on Puttylike. You can read the full thing [here](#).)

If you've ever agonized over the question 'what am I going to be when I grow up?', then this is for you.

Going forward, we're going to refer to this as 'The Question'.

The Question has a tendency to creep up on us each time we near the end of an academic program. High school, undergrad, graduate school... The final year is often spent worrying over

what our purpose in life is, how we will make a living, and what on earth we will do next.

The Question also arises when we are not in school. It nags at us throughout our employed lives, often in one of its other forms, like 'am I really going to do this forever?' or 'is this really what I'm meant to be doing?'

We are often assaulted with some variation of The Question at family gatherings or in social settings.

Basically, The Question is everywhere.

To those who have answered The Question and have committed to one specific career path, good for you. I don't mean to put you down or criticize your life choices here.

(You should know though, that you will likely be faced with this question again... I read a statistic once that said that most college graduates change jobs an average of eight times before sticking with something long-term.)

In any case, for many of us, The Question remains unanswered. More than that, it is a repeated source of stress. There is something inherently off-putting about The Question too. Something about it makes us feel uneasy.

First of all, how on earth are we to choose *one thing* to dedicate our lives to at the age of 18, 23 or 26 (or any other age for that matter)?

Second, the reason it feels wrong is that it may actually be unhealthy. Wrapping your entire

identity up in one thing and excluding all other possibilities can severely limit your ability to grow in new and unanticipated ways. On some level we sense this so we resist making such a seemingly-permanent commitment.

Finally, what if you answer wrong?! What if twenty years from now, you wake up and realize that you hate your job and had some other dreams or passions all along, but were too afraid to pursue those things back in your early twenties?

All of these concerns make answering The Question a really daunting and uncomfortable process for many of us. But thankfully, I've got some good news for you...

The Good News – The Question is a Lie

You actually don't need to answer The Question at all! At least not with one definite answer. What you need to do is reformulate the question.

Instead of asking 'what is my one true calling in life?', ask 'what are the many things I would like to experience throughout my life?'

By changing the question from **one** career choice or life purpose to **many** long term goals, you get to relax and suddenly the pressure involved in making a lifelong commitment is gone.

Furthermore, you can add and subtract things as you wish. I usually revise my list of goals/things to do before I die once or twice a year.

Once you adopt this kind of thinking, you literally never have to ask yourself The Question again and that is incredibly freeing.

The Practicalities of All This

So now that we know that we don't need to be one thing in our lives and that there's plenty of time to do everything you want, we need a way of figuring out exactly what that looks like. With all of our many interests, how do we know what we want and where to even start?

Designing Your Ideal Life

This is going to take a bit of introspection, but the process is surprisingly fun.

Before you begin this process you must agree to banish all negative thoughts from your head.

Anytime you instinctively think something can't be done because you're not 'smart enough' or 'rich enough', banish the thought. For now, we're not worrying about things like this.

These thoughts are limiting beliefs, meaning that it is *the belief itself* that will stop you, not the validity of the statement. If you look at people who have accomplished remarkable things in their lives, you'll see that many of them come from very humble beginnings and have overcome all kinds of horrible life circumstances throughout their quests. Similarly, many people who are born into great wealth, with every privilege in the world, do not accomplish much at all.

We have a very complicated excuse mechanism in our heads. We like to come up with reasons *not* to do something. This kind of rationalization allows us to renounce responsibility so that we don't have to put in the work and tackle our fears. Excuses allow us to blame the state of our lives on circumstances outside of our control.

While going through the following exercises, imagine you have unlimited resources. Time, money, intelligence- none of these should concern you right now.

There are many ways to figure out your dreams. I'm going to list a couple that I've found most useful.

1) Imagine the Perfect Day

Picture yourself waking up in the morning. What does your life look like? What do your surroundings look like? Who's there? What do you do when you get out of bed? Do you head out to your garden and drink a coffee while reading the paper? Do you head into your home office and write for an hour? Do you have a quick philosophical discussion with your partner or canine friend?

What do you do next? Do you head to a cafe and work on your freelance/online business? Do you wine-and-dine clients or head to a meeting with a team of colleagues who inspire and challenge you? At night, do you check out the live music scene with friends or do you stay in and get cozy on the couch? Imagine your ideal day in vivid detail from start to finish.

Next, write it down or cut out pictures that represent the various aspects of your vision and construct an 'image board'. Hang this collage or description by your bed or in your office. You want to constantly be reminded of what you're working toward. Trust me, you will need this for inspiration in those moments when you feel lost and can't remember where this is all leading.

2) What do you want to experience before you die?

Make a list. Include everything and AIM BIG. Do not rationalize down your dreams into their 'practical' version. Be honest with yourself and include absolutely everything you can think of. What do you really long to try, deep down inside?

Imagine yourself on your death bed looking back over your life. Remember, the only thing in life we can't get back is time, so don't waste yours. Start making this list now.

Chances are you will add and subtract things to the list as time goes by. That's okay. It's actually a good sign because it means you're learning more about yourself and really starting to pinpoint precisely what you want. I like to revise my life list every six months or so.

3) What bugs you and/or inspires you?

What are some things in the world you would like to change? This process isn't just about your own desires. Think about the kind of legacy you would like to leave. I'm someone who firmly believes that

you can both make yourself happy *and* do good in the world. In his book [The Art of Non-Conformity](#), Chris Guillebeau says that you should never find yourself having to choose between these two objectives. I agree.

What are some things that move you? What gets your heart racing and fills you with inspiration? It doesn't matter if it's something silly. For me, I've always been moved by really well-written television. Other people think this is ridiculous- it's just TV! But I love being able to connect with characters week after week. They become like friends. I get emotionally invested in their stories and they teach me things about myself.

I find myself wanting to inspire others in the same way. One of the goals on my life list is thus to create at least one beautifully written season of television (or a web series- as long as it's something I can release in a DVD box-set, I'll be happy). I've gone as far as imagining myself sitting around a table with my writers, throwing around ideas and pumping out scripts week after week.

For all of these exercises, detail, specificity and emotion is key. Instead of envisioning yourself with a million dollars in the bank, imagine the things you would do with that money and the experiences you would have. For one thing, we are far more motivated by emotion than we are by logic. And secondly, you might later find that

the lifestyle you are imagining doesn't actually require massive wealth to construct.

Taking Action

Now that you've imagined your perfect life and have constructed a list or description of your dreams, you want to change your life conditions to match up with that image.

Pick one dream. What are a couple small actions you can take right now? This might be as simple as sending out five emails to people who have achieved your goal before and asking for advice.

The key is to break up your goal into small actionable steps and work a little each day. You want to avoid getting overwhelmed, so really try to only focus on the small tasks right in front of you.

If there are many things you could do, pick the ones that will produce the greatest impact and do those.

I will write more about productivity in Part Four, but for now I'm going to get into the unavoidable task of financing your dreams. Here, you'll notice me advocating many unconventional methods. If you are married to the idea of fulltime employment, this might not be the right guide for you, as it is really not meant to be a career-selection tool. But if you have an open mind and a desire to do things a little differently, read on.

PART THREE: Financing Your Dreams

You can look at your passions as either:

- 1) **A source of income, or**
- 2) **Something you do with no intention of making money, while financing your passions through some other, radically different form of income.**

Hopefully there is some overlap between these two approaches. In other words, some of the things you choose to do primarily for pay, also happen to be fun, and some of the things you do primarily for fun have the potential for making you money. I personally believe that you should strive to create as much convergence as possible. In

Jonathan Mead's wonderful ebook [The Zero Hour Workweek](#), he writes about the idea of being “paid to exist”. I love this idea.

People have different views, however, when it comes to monetizing their passions. I have certain hobbies that I do purely for fun. I have no interest in monetizing them, and I'm fine with that.

In any case, chances are that if you're reading this, you probably have so many different interests that you wouldn't mind turning one or two of them into revenue streams.

The good news is that **you can absolutely turn your passions and hobbies into income**. Most people don't realize this. In fact, it goes against

most of what we've been taught growing up. But the truth is, even really weird hobbies can usually be monetized. In fact, small niches can sometimes be the most profitable.

Another option is to get your toes wet slowly. You can see how much money you begin making as you pursue your passions and if they turn out to be profitable, you can then scale back the income streams that are less fun. For example, the traveler who does IT consulting a few hours each day via Skype while traveling the world and blogging about their travel adventures. Lets say this person starts making money on their blog by selling their own travel-hacking guide. They might then scale back on the consulting and turn the website into their primary source of income.

What's important to get out of this is that **the way you make money and the way you spend your time can be two entirely different things. But they can also be one in the same, if that's the setup you prefer.**

Diversifying Your Income Streams

I'm a fan of having a few different income streams so that my eggs aren't all in one basket. As someone with many interests, you are in a great position to do this. It will also allow you to keep things varied so that you don't get bored doing one thing all day/week long.

Lets take a look at some possible income streams now. These can be mixed and matched as desired.

The Blog-Based Internet Business

I adore this model. First of all, it's cheap and really easy to set up. Second, it allows for location independence. This means that you can travel and work on your business from anywhere, as long as there's an internet connection. If you're not into traveling, location independence will still give you the freedom to settle in your ideal spot. You will no longer have to be tied to a particular city because of your job.

There are a few ways of starting an online business and there are a ton of resources online. This is just a general overview of the business model to give you an idea of how it works.

The basic idea is that you pick a niche- something you are really passionate about or know a lot about. Then you work on building your audience around a blog (I highly recommend using Wordpress), while writing up a lot of free, valuable content.

Once you have a sufficiently large audience, you can monetize your blog in various ways. You can create a product, like an ebook, course, or membership site or you can sell other people's products that are related to your niche and receive a commission for each sale (known as affiliate marketing).

If you're an artist, you can use a blog to promote yourself and sell your art right off your website. I

recently wrote a blog post where I go into the details of making money online as an artist. You can check that out [here](#).

You can also set up a shop at [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com) and link to it on your blog. The same goes for freelancing or consulting. Your website will essentially act as a means of promoting your services, which you can offer directly to the community of loyal followers that you've built by putting out free valuable content on your blog.

What's great about this model is that it's way less skeasy than traditional marketing campaigns. You put out awesome helpful advice that enriches other people's lives and as you get to know your readers, you ask them what kind of product they

want and then provide them with exactly that. You are essentially building a community or 'tribe', where people look to you for guidance and leadership.

It's called [permission marketing](#) (first coined by Seth Godin), and unlike traditional marketing, you don't shove products in people's faces. You actually have them raise their hands and say 'I want this!' and then you give it to them. Ta-da. Everyone's happy.

Here are some examples of blog-based internet businesses:

- Nathalie Lussier calls herself the Raw Foods Witch and has a [blog](#) by the same name. She writes regular posts and records videos

about various aspects of the raw food lifestyle, (including some of the most delectable recipes I've ever encountered)! She generates her income by selling courses such as 'Cure Cravings Forever' and 'Bewitch Your Spouse' and through consulting that she promotes on her website.

- Matthew Archambault worked for years as a freelance illustrator. Beginning to feel burnt out and wanting to diversify his income, he started up a [blog](#) where he began writing about drawing and posting free videos of himself giving art tutorials. He began selling instructional DVDs through the site, which his audience was happy to buy because they knew and trusted him.

- Al Wood turned his passion for the ukulele into a blog when he started [Ukulele Hunt](#). His site contains free written content and YouTube videos, as well as free resources for his community such as chords and tabs to popular songs. He makes money by selling his own instructional ebooks directly off the site.

Choosing a Business Idea

If you would like to learn more about selecting an idea for your business (something that can seem incredibly daunting to the 'puttylike' individual), I wrote up a little companion report that you can download for free.

It's called 'Invent Your Own Job: A Guide to Pinpointing that Awesome Business Idea'. It's all about using your multipotentiality to your advantage and creating a business that doesn't end up feeling like work.

You can get that at [Puttylike](http://puttylike.com), along with the weekly newsletter which includes exclusive tips and Puttylike updates (sign up is on the right-hand sidebar).

Freelancing (Including Teaching and Consulting)

Unlike the online model, with freelancing you are exchanging hours for pay. What I mean is that you don't put your product online (like you would with a website) and make profit while you sleep. But

that aside, some freelancing work pays *extremely well*, so it's definitely worth considering.

If you have a skill like web or graphic design, that's great because again, you can do that from pretty much anywhere. The same goes for most types of consulting.

If you don't have those kinds of very specific skills, there is still almost always a way to turn the skills you do have into a freelancing gig. Make a list of all the things you can do. Don't worry if you don't feel like an 'expert'. There is always someone you can help- someone who is less advanced than you, who could use the knowledge you do have.

If you make a list and still feel like you have no skills, think a little bit harder. Do you speak English?

Then you can teach English as a second language. Do you cook? People will totally pay you for that. Play guitar? You can give lessons. Can you walk? Well then you can take a few of the neighbourhood pooches out for a nice stroll. There's always some way to leverage your skills. (Check out [this post](#) I wrote in response to a friend who wanted to turn her passion for organizing into a freelance business.)

The pay from something like guitar lessons might not seem like a lot, but think of it as a way of diversifying your income. Lets say you make a mere \$60 extra per week giving two hour-long guitar lessons- that's \$200/month. You can funnel that into a savings account (or even keep it in an

envelope) and at the end of the month you've got \$200 more with only 2 hours of work per week.

From there you can increase your hours to match a specific goal or monthly expense you'd like covered. For example, lets say you have some debt to pay off. A few hours of freelancing each week would be a perfect revenue stream to take care of that for you.

Another option is to use the money to save up for a trip or large purchase. Having a clear goal for where your supplementary money is going is key. Know what its purpose is and then funnel it directly into an account or envelope so that you don't get tempted to spend it on everyday items.

Traditional Employment

Lets say you don't hate your day job, or self-employment just isn't your thing. If that's the case, you should at least try to find a job that isn't too stressful or too time consuming. Find something that leaves you with enough time and energy to pursue your passions outside of work.

I personally am not a big fan of traditional employment. I prefer to be self-employed, as I like to be fully in control of my finances and I just get bored really easily when I work for somebody else... (If you too have a problem with boredom at work, check out this recent Puttylike post, aptly entitled [Does the Idea of Having One Job Forever Make You Want to Hang Yourself.](#))

If you have a job that you don't want to leave, there may be some ways that you can negotiate a bit of freedom around the edges in order to have more time to pursue your passions.

Tim Ferris writes extensively about the idea of telecommuting in his book [The 4-Hour Work Week](#). It starts with becoming more valuable to the company. If you are indispensable to their operations, they will bend over backwards to keep you around or give you the flexibility you desire. Seth Godin also writes about how important it is to become invaluable to your employer in his book [Linchpin](#). If you're not interested or ready to quit your day job, you might consider checking out these two books. Also,

check out tell-a-worker.com if telecommuting is something you want to look into.

The 'Opportunity' Job

The opportunity job allows you to do something cool (like travel) while you're working. Some examples include teaching English overseas and working at youth hostels in exchange for food and accommodation. If you're into traveling and living in far-off places, you might like this option.

Here are some starting points:

- [HelpX](#)
- [WWOOF \(World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms\)](#)

- [SWAP](#) (for Canadians who want to go abroad or foreigners who want to come to Canada)
- [GoAbroad](#)
- [Projects Abroad](#)
- [Work Overseas Jobs at Student Traveler](#)

Grants for Artists

A lot of artists apply for funding from various governmental and private organizations. The opportunities vary tremendously depending on where you live. Most grants are highly competitive, so I wouldn't suggest relying exclusively on them. However, they're definitely worth looking into.

Here's a really cool trick that an artist friend once told me: Most artists will come up with an idea for a project and then look around to see what grants might be well suited to their project. Instead, try doing the opposite. Do your research first and then come up with an idea for a project that perfectly matches what a funding agency is looking for. The more you give them exactly what they want, the more likely it is that you'll be selected.

You might be thinking: 'yeah, but this will limit my creative freedom.' Maybe. But very often, having boundaries placed on your project can actually make you *more* creative. Boundaries can sometimes push us to come up with ideas we never would have thought of.

PART FOUR: The Skills You Need to Live a Life that Integrates Your Many Interests

So far we've looked at some techniques for defining your dreams and turning them in to achievable goals. Now lets take a look at some skills you will need in order to apply all this and start living your multifaceted life. Many people skip over this part and just assume that it will be easy to put their plans into action. Big mistake. It's not easy at all. All kinds of things will get in the way and many of these are internal. In fact, as you may have noticed, we often turn out to be our own worst enemy.

There have been several studies that looked at the difference between people who take action and people who don't. The truth is that the vast majority of people, including those who know what they passionately yearn to do, don't take the steps necessary to get there.

They believe they are being held back by circumstances outside of their control. They get scared and doubt themselves. They compare themselves to others (or to 'statistics') and give up prematurely. They allow Resistance to prevent them from working. They tell themselves that they're just waiting till everything aligns and they feel perfectly prepared. These are a few of the common rationalizations we tell ourselves to justify

not taking action. But as Barbara Winters of [Joyfully Jobless](#) says, “you can have your excuses or you can have your dreams. But you can't have both”.

Obstacles that Get in the Way

There are a few things that will try to get in the way of you pursuing your dreams. These things are inevitable and it's best to learn to recognize them and know how to address them when they arise.

When Other People (Such as Nay-Sayers, Gate Keepers and Critics) Get in the Way

As we've seen, society doesn't really understand the 'puttylike' individual. Growing up, we've been taught to believe this idea that we each have *one true calling*. We are also taught to be

practical/realistic and that it's better to settle into a comfortable life than to 'take risks'.

When others see you starting to live your life differently, they may respond negatively. They may express disapproval or seem outright threatened. This is their own issue. Chances are that they're just jealous and resentful that you've found a way to break free and pursue your dreams. To some people the way you're living will feel like a direct affront to their own life choices. The best thing to do is limit your time with people like this.

It's sometimes difficult to remove negative people from your life, especially if the criticism's coming from someone close to you like a family member.

In these cases, ignoring the nay-sayer or refusing to engage is usually a good strategy. If you prefer to argue with them, good luck. I've found that sometimes people are receptive, but more often than not it puts me in a defensive state where I find myself having to justify my life choices again and again. It's no fun (though neither is listening to someone tell you you're throwing your life away, so use your own best judgment here).

Ashley Ambirge of [The Middle Finger Project](#) wrote a fantastic two-part post on dealing with 'dream-zappers': here's [part one](#) and [part two](#).

In any case, going forward, you might want to be very selective about who you reveal your plans to and how much you share.

When You Get in Your Own Way

The biggest obstacle you will ever face is yourself. More specifically, it's your own fears. But here's a little secret: **everyone who pursues their dreams is afraid. They take action anyway.** Sometimes it takes a few little tricks to get yourself to the point where you can stand up to your fears. But it's important to start getting comfortable with your fears now, because they are not going away.

There are many fears, but some of the common ones include: fear of failure, fear of being laughed at, fear of the spotlight, and fear of being unable to support yourself or your loved ones financially. These fears can lead to serious procrastination problems. In other words, your fears lead to what's

known as 'Resistance': a force inside that makes it impossible to work.

Barbara Sher has an interesting take on Resistance. She believes that it's our body's way of trying to keep us safe by making us avoid anxiety-raising activities. But Resistance is primitive and cannot distinguish between an activity that is truly dangerous and say, painting a picture. To that primitive part of our body, anything that gets our heartbeats racing must be bad.

So how do we trick Resistance into leaving us alone for a while so that we can work? Well here are a few techniques I've found useful:

Identify Your Fears and Respond to Them

Why is it impossible for you to work? Are you afraid that if you write this one blog post, you will come closer to running out of things to write about, and you will have to shut down your blog because you've run out of ideas and you'll be a big fat failure? (I've had this type of Resistance before). What could you do to avoid this? The answer might be as simple as saying the fear out loud or to a friend or even making a list of 50 topics for the blog and keeping that on file. This will often be enough to reassure me and get me back into work mode.

Or maybe you've just got too much to do and you'll feel guilty about working on your wacky business idea when you should be studying for

finals. You're afraid that if you work on your project, you'll fail your exams and flunk out of school (another fear I know well). Perhaps just sitting down and making a schedule will help. I find that sometimes planning out the upcoming weeks and slotting my school work into my schedule will be enough to reassure me. Once I do this, I know that my work will get done because it's right there on paper and so I can go ahead and work on my personal project. My Resistance has suddenly disappeared.

Go Crazy for Five Minutes

Forget everything else and just focus on your project. Work for five minutes- that's it. But for those five minutes, go nuts!

What you'll often find is that five minutes is enough to break the Resistance and once you start, five minutes suddenly turns into an hour.

The truth is that the pain you're running from by avoiding the work, **is not in the work itself, it's in getting to the work**. That slight distinction makes all the difference. We tend to forget that once we're working and are in that flow state, we actually feel really good.

In addition to these techniques, there are skills you can develop that will help make you more productive overall and less likely to be hit with Resistance again and again.

Developing Confidence

I've heard confidence referred to as the 'secret sauce'- the thing that distinguishes those who take

action from those who do not. I've found in my own life, that my level of confidence has a direct impact on how much I get done, whether I follow through with my goals, and whether I take opportunities that present themselves to me. So yes, I obviously think developing your inner confidence is *hugely important!*

I'm tempted to just define confidence as happiness because the two seem to always go hand-in-hand. But the truth is, it's a little bit more complicated than that. (But just a little.)

Confidence is the ability to affect the world around you, it's a feeling of empowerment, it's feeling good about yourself, and it's the thing inside that allows you to show yourself to the world

regardless of what fears or external pressures you might be dealing with.

Having confidence also gives you the strength to connect with others, from things as basic as being able to sustain eye-contact to approaching someone at a seminar who might be able to help you in your quest. Preparation and conscious planning are vital, but without confidence, opportunities are difficult to seize.

So how do we become more confident? Well that's a huge question, one that goes beyond the scope of this little manifesto. But I'll dive in, just a little...

Condition Yourself Every Day

I once heard someone compare confidence-building to bathing; you can't do it once and expect it to last forever. There are many different confidence-boosting exercises that are thrown around in the personal development literature. I use a few different methods.

When I wake up, I usually take a few minutes to check in with myself and have a bit of 'me' time. I occasionally pump myself up with some Tony Robbins-style incantations, watch inspiring videos on YouTube or Ted Talks or just blast some music and dance around my apartment.

I usually take a look at my big goals that I've hung by my desk and try to visualize them and get

excited. Other times, I just dive right into some project- usually this means doing a creative activity for twenty minutes to an hour. Sometimes I'll write a blog post for Puttylike. Just getting that done early in the morning is often enough to make me feel like I've already accomplished something, which is a total state booster.

I also usually plan out my personal and professional goals for the day. I know other people who meditate or go for a run in the mornings. Find a morning ritual that works for you and then stick with it. Once you get into it, you'll see that setting aside some time each day to regroup and get in-tune with yourself is actually quite fun.

If you work on developing confidence as you simultaneously begin taking action towards achieving your goals, you'll start seeing that you have the ability to influence and inspire others and that you can turn your dreams into reality. Seeing concrete results will boost your confidence further by making you feel even more empowered. It's a wonderful little feedback loop. You need to take action though. Positive thinking will get you nowhere without consistent, focused action.

Adopt the Behaviour of a Confident Person and You'll Start to Feel like One

There's some truth to the whole 'fake it till you make it' saying. But it does require a little unpacking. Basically, if you start emulating the

behaviour of a confident person, something happens where your mind starts internalizing those actions and you start *feeling* confident as well.

What is the behaviour of a confident person exactly? Well confident people take action. They're assertive. They lead. They do what they want (assuming it doesn't hurt others). They are also comfortable making others feel good because they don't derive their validation from being better than anyone. [Confident people don't compare themselves to or judge others.](#)

Take Mini-Risks

What I like to do is break this process down into tiny steps and start small. Since confident people are assertive and take action, I start by taking mini

risks- I'm not talking about doing anything dangerous or potentially harmful. What I mean is, in any situation where you have the choice of staying silent and not acting versus speaking up, moving and taking the lead, choose to do the latter. It can be something as simple as making small-talk in an elevator or asking for directions on the street. It can even just mean looking someone in the eye and smiling. Look out for any opportunities you can take to be proactive and friendly throughout your day and start taking them.

It doesn't matter what happens. Your results should be based entirely on your own action, not on the outcome of the interaction. So if you see an opportunity to talk to someone and you take it,

that's all that matters. If they aren't interested in continuing the conversation, that's fine, who cares. What's important is that you did it. See that as a victory in and of itself and allow yourself to feel proud. Taking small actions throughout the day will help you build massive confidence over time.

I specifically make a point of taking these mini-risks, especially on those days when I have a presentation or some other nerve-wracking engagement. I use this technique throughout my day to prepare myself for the big event and it usually helps a lot.

Developing Systems of Productivity

There are two main components involved in achieving your goals. The first is passion and the second is routine. Being excited about a dream is a necessary first step, but excitement tends to come and go depending on our mood. That initial period of inspiration at the beginning of a project also has a tendency to taper off, especially if we allow our fears to creep in, causing us to doubt our original idea.

So how do we ensure that we pursue our dreams once the high fades? Well, we need to implement systems of productivity and routinize the process.

Take Small Daily Action

I wanted to write a television [spec script](#) ever since graduating from film school. It took me four years to finally get around to doing it, but once I did, I wrote the whole thing in one month. The reason it took so long to get started was that I had the passion but lacked the routine. I hadn't learned to schedule in small daily action and I allowed myself to get overwhelmed by what seemed like an enormous task, so I procrastinated.

When I finally set out to write the script, I forced myself to write one scene every morning immediately after waking up. After about a week of this, I started seeing how fast the script was coming together and that encouraged me even further to keep it up. Once the month was over, I

had this polished forty-page 30 Rock script in front of me! It was the greatest feeling.

The key to achieving a big goal is taking small daily action. Create a daily or weekly schedule and slot in times to work specifically on your projects. It also helps to determine the periods during the day when you are most productive. I call this your [magic time](#) because it is the optimal time for working on the projects that mean the most to you. When you create your schedule, work with your body's natural productivity rhythm and assign tasks accordingly.

Dealing with Perfectionism

As I mentioned earlier, we have fantastic rationalization and excuse mechanisms. We can

always come up with brilliant reasons to avoid working on any project.

One of the things that often trips us up is the desire to wait till we are 'fully prepared'. This is a trap. People who claim to be perfectionists are actually gutless. They are terrified of taking risks and will wait and wait and wait till they know they won't fail.

The thing is, perfection never comes. You will get better only by trying, failing and trying again. So don't be worried about failing. It's really just a process of learning what works and what doesn't so that you can modify your action and get better results the next time around.

Jay and Sterling from the [Internet Business Mastery podcast](#) talk about how the best approach is to learn only as much as you need to get started and then take **bold massive action**. I like this approach and try to apply it to my own work as much as possible.

Dealing with Overwhelm

Try not to think about the enormity of the final goal or allow that to overwhelm you. Just focus on the small task right in front of you and eventually you will look around and see that you've indeed made incredible progress.

For the puttylike individual, picking one interest and focusing long enough to get anything done can sometimes be difficult. We often have so

much going at one time that it's difficult to get down to business. If this happens, don't fret. Make a schedule and slot your many projects in on different days or even different hours during the day if you prefer. I tend to get bored easily, so I often slot two or more different projects in on one day. Do what works for you.

You can also put some projects on hold and come back to them once your current project is complete. But often just writing your goals down and scheduling them into your life will help eliminate the overwhelm.

Get a Buddy to Help with Support and Accountability

I mentioned earlier that it's best to be careful about who you reveal your plans to. There's one major

exception, and that's the support/accountability buddy.

Find a friend or mentor who believes in you- maybe someone who is looking to pursue their own dreams or unconventional lifestyle as well. Then tell them your goals and break it down into small components. For instance, when I started writing my spec script, I told my buddy that I would email her an outline by the end of the weekend. She responded with: "okay, I'm expecting that outline in my inbox by Monday morning!"

I regularly call on this buddy of mine whenever I'm having a hard time getting started on a project. I tell her that I'm going to send her a blog post or a few pages of something I'm working on by a certain date and she holds me accountable for that.

In addition to accountability, a good buddy will give you support and help pump you up when your fears start to take over. They will encourage you to keep going and will help you see the big picture when you cannot.

If you find a buddy who is working toward their own goals, that's even better because you can help them out in the same way. I heard about a mastermind group who meet up once a week on skype and those who haven't achieved the goal they set the week prior are required to make a \$25 donation to [KIVA](#). Great idea.

CLOSING: Some Parting Words for Your Journey

The two main reasons I started Puttylike were to encourage people to pursue their dreams and to cultivate a supportive community around this idea of designing a multifaceted lifestyle. I want people who have struggled all their lives with this puttylike quality to know that it's okay to have multiple interests in life and that you don't have to settle on just one of them to the exclusion of all the others. You are not unfocused or non-committal and most importantly **there is nothing wrong with you.**

Finally, try to keep in mind that it's the journey that counts, not the outcome. The best thing about

pursuing your dreams and working toward building your dream lifestyle, is not being able to check things off a list, but the enjoyment of the process.

Simply put, having goals makes life more fun.

What Now?

I gave this manifesto out for free because I'm really passionate about this stuff and I wanted to share my knowledge with as many people as possible. However, I worked hard on this manifesto, so if it meant anything at all to you, please help me out in one or more of the following ways:

Share It!

- Retweet it
- Post it on Facebook
- Email it to a friend
- Post it on your website

Please send people to this URL to get the manifesto:

<http://puttylike.com/undeclared-for-life-manifesto/>

Feedback!

I would love to know what you think, so please post a comment on [the original blog post](#). You can do it anonymously if you like, but really, a bit of feedback would mean the world to me. You can also email me at comments@puttylike.com if you prefer.

Get More Goodies!

Check out the free companion report that I wrote up to go along with this manifesto. It's called 'Invent Your Own Job: A Guide to Pinpointing that Awesome Business Idea'. It's all about using your multipotentiality to your advantage and creating a business that doesn't end up feeling like work.

You can get that for free at [Puttylike](#), along with the weekly newsletter which includes exclusive tips and Puttylike updates (sign up is on the right-hand sidebar).

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Finally, thanks to my readers, without whom I would be forced to live a life of quiet desperation working 80-hour weeks in some soul-crushing law firm somewhere.

About the Author



Emilie Wapnick is a writer, film maker, (soon to be ex-)law student, entrepreneur, web designer, musician and traveler. She's from Montreal, Canada but at the time of this manifesto's release is living in Denmark, finishing up law school abroad. She is working toward a location-independent lifestyle that integrates her many interests and keeps her inspired. Emilie blogs regularly at puttylike.com.