

# IMPOSSIBLE LIVE UNWIND THE MANIFESTO

By Joel Runyon

# IMPOSSIBLE DOES IT ALL THE MANIFESTO

Push Your Limits. Tell A Great Story.  
Do Something Impossible

# Acknowledgements

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## Do Something Impossible.

If you're reading this, thank you. I really appreciate your time and attention in this high-speed world of distraction. Also, thanks to everyone who took the time to listen to me as I hashed out thoughts for this book. Special thanks to my friend [Elisa Doucette](#) (Ms. Forbes) for helping me edit this book and finally get it out there and to [Steven Musngi](#) for all the incredible design work put into this book and the Impossible brand. Thank you.

*“It’s kind of fun to do  
the Impossible.”*

- *Walt Disney*

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# Introduction



# This is a manifesto that will help you do the Impossible.

This is a manifesto that will help you do the Impossible:

- *The things you never dreamed you'd be able to do.*
- *The things others said you'd never be able to do.*
- *The things that people say can't be done.*

In the next few pages, you'll realize that life isn't meant to just happen to you. That when you decide to live life without limits, things finally begin to get interesting. Doors begin to open and people begin to listen when you refuse to accept the standard issue life that most people live.

You'll hear about a few of the people who've decided to start doing the Impossible. By the end of this, you might even be convinced to start living a life of adventure and meaning by taking an active part in crafting the story of your life.

All by doing what can't be done.

**By doing the Impossible.**

## What This Costs

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This manifesto is free, but it's still going to cost you something. Because, whether you like it or not, **everything costs something**. If you want to do something Impossible and live a great story, it's going to cost you.

But not what you expect.

Sure, what you want to do might cost money, time, or energy; but the main casualty of the Impossible is your comfort.

The Impossible happens on the edges of reality and way beyond your comfort zone.

For this very reason, **the Impossible is not for everybody**.

The very reasons that things are Impossible are because most people don't really try to do them.

The most common excuse is that it's "normal" to accept only what others have told you is possible.

When you attempt the Impossible, you're going to seem crazy. You're going to look stupid. You will get funny looks and people will ask you questions.

*"In order to attain the Impossible, one must attempt the absurd."*

*- Miguel de Cervantes*

The meaner ones might look down on you, criticize and berate you and tell you all the reasons why you're out of your mind.

**It's going to happen.** If you're not okay with that, you can go ahead and leave now. If you're not willing to challenge your image, your current beliefs, and how other people's decisions are directing your life, it's fine. That's totally okay, you probably don't need this.

I firmly believe in this statement:

**Anyone can do the Impossible, but not everyone will.**

## Who Should Read This?

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So who should really read this? This might make some people mad, but this manifesto isn't for everybody.

It's for those few people who are interested not only in thinking different, but actually being different.

I talk about physical challenges, but a lot of the time, the Impossible takes place in your mind as much as it does in your body. Sometimes the challenge of Impossible has to do with language, culture, travel, or music. It can be a business or it can be a charity. But it's always about a challenge.

**The important thing is that this manifesto is about changing the way you view life and way you do life.**

I'm not here to tell you what the Impossible challenge in your own life looks like, only you

can decide that. But by the end of this, you should be equipped with a vision that will enable you to pursue something Impossible.

**Whether or not you do anything about it, is your decision.**

But you should know that it's going to cost your comfort. You can't do the Impossible inside your comfort zone. So if you're not willing to give up your comfort, you can leave now. It's really okay.

You'll probably have a great life and I really appreciate you reading up to this point.

Good luck with everything!



## Who Am I?

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Now that you've made it this far, I guess I should introduce myself.

So who am I?

Well, nobody really.

I'm actually a fairly normal person. I don't have all the answers and I haven't figured it all out.

### **I'm probably a lot like you.**

A few years back I decided that what other people considered "possible" for my life wasn't good enough. That sticking to other people's plans wasn't what I wanted and that the limitations I was experiencing in my own life only existed in my mind.

I'm just an average guy who decided to challenge the Impossible and attempt to tell a great story with his life - one that was worth writing about.

I have an [Impossible List](#) that's constantly evolving, where I document what I'm doing to push my limits, tell a great a story with my life and do the Impossible while helping others do the same.

Over the past year and a half, I've built a blog, a community and an entire headquarters based around the idea that the more people do the Impossible, the more they will lead lives of meaning and adventure.

But more on that later. When you make it through the rest of the manifesto, I'll share a few ways to get involved, change your life and the world in any way you see fit...

### **If you're up for the challenge.**

# Life As An Adventure



## Life As An Adventure

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You probably feel like something is a little bit off.

You look around and see your coworkers sit at a desk doing work they don't like. You see them get in a car for a commute they don't like only to come home and watch a TV show that they don't like to go to bed in a place they don't like and wonder why their life isn't what wanted it to be.

Even if it's not specifically your job, you feel like something's wrong. Like something is out of place. Like maybe you're taking crazy pills.

**You have a sneaking suspicion that this isn't it.**

That there's something more. Something else is going on...and everyone around you seems to be missing out on it...maybe even you. I want to let you know you're not taking crazy pills. You're on to something.

**See, life wasn't meant to bore you.**

Actually, contrary to most things you've heard - **life was meant to be an adventure.**

I used to be pretty bored with life. I tried playing by other people's rules and it just didn't work for me. I mean, sure, technically it worked, I was surviving all right and going through my days, **but I wasn't living**. It wasn't exciting. It wasn't interesting. There was no adventure.

I realized that ultimately, I didn't enjoy it because it wasn't what I wanted. I had cobbled together a bunch of other people's wishes for my life and called it mine, but deep down **I didn't feel like I was living my life**.

So I decided to go after something else. Something bigger. Something meaningful. Something worthwhile. Something Impossible. It hasn't been easy, but it's been a lot more fun and I've learned a ton.

## My Story – Waiting to Get Picked

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Up until a few years ago, I did everything I was supposed to do.

I had gone to high school. Got good grades. I went to college.

Got good grades. I graduated college and was hoping for a great job that would send me on another path that someone else had laid out for me. And then...nothing.

It was 2009 at the peak of the recession and companies weren't exactly in a hiring frenzy.

So once again, I followed people's advice, and did what they told me.

I sent out resumes like gangbusters. I put up resumes on all the big job-hunting sites. I applied to big companies and to small companies. Tried different versions of resumes, worked my networks and still...

Nothing. Nothing. And more nothing.

After 3 months of that, I thought maybe I was aiming too high. So I decided to lower my standards a bit.

I sent out some more resumes.

Target

Caribou Coffee

Starbucks

Nope. Nope. And Nope.

Sending resume after resume, waiting to get picked. 7 months later, I finally got picked for a job with UPS as a Driver Helper.

I was the guy who got to do all the work that the driver didn't want to. On top of that, I was only hired for the seasonal shift (late November to Christmas), which meant that the day after Christmas, I was fired and would have to start looking for another job. Neat.

At least that would give Starbucks time to find my resume.

To top it all off, since it was the peak of the recession, nobody was buying gifts or sending packages like UPS had anticipated. While I was supposed to be working, the drivers didn't actually need me, so I kept sitting at home. Double neat.

## The Question That Changed Everything

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When I finally did go out, my first check was a grand total of \$7.50 after union dues and taxes were taken out. Triple neat.

I started questioning whether this was what I really wanted out of my life? Is this what I'd really spent the last 20+ years getting ready to do? This was going to be my impact on the rest of the world? Part-time seasonal work? Waiting around for something to happen to me? Constantly waiting to be picked for a job? Even then, hoping I would be picked to go out every couple weeks for the chance to earn a few bucks?

**Was this really what I had been waiting my entire life to do? Had I really been waiting my entire life just to get picked?**

I just assumed that I was destined to do what everyone else decided and I had to hope beyond hope that what they wanted was something that ended up being somewhat agreeable with what I wanted to do with my one chance on earth.

Was I really going to just let that happen?

Everybody enjoys a good movie and I was watching a lot of them at the time – after all, I had little else to do since I wasn't getting picked to work.

I mean, what's not to love about a great movie? The characters are compelling, the plot is interesting, and there's always something the story is building towards.

I wanted to be like that.

I wanted to have a great story. **I wanted to live a life worth writing about.**

But I was stuck with a delivery job going nowhere. Unless I was writing a package delivery guidebook, nobody was going to read my story. And if they did, I was 98% sure they would experience death by boredom.

I started to wonder what was so compelling about movies that drew people like me to watch them. Why did I want to watch other people do amazing things? How could I be like them? What's their secret? Then I realized: **They have a story they are a part of.**

They have purpose, meaning, and adventure. So I stopped in my tracks and asked myself the question that changed things for good:

**Are you telling a good story with your life?  
Would anybody want to read it?**

The first time I asked myself that, I shocked myself because I realized that up until that moment, I wasn't. In fact, it had never even occurred to me that my life could be a great story and that I could actually write it.

I thought only people in movies got great story lines and that the only way I could ever have one is if somebody else would magically write the perfect story while I just sat around and waited for them to do it, exactly as I wished. I was waiting for a lightning bolt to tell me what to do. Waiting for everything I wanted to happen, to just happen.

Voilà. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. No Voilà. I realized that great life stories don't happen by waiting for them to happen. They happen by making them happen.

This sounds like a fairly juvenile concept but some

*Are you telling a good story  
with your life?*

time between our teenage years and adulthood, people strip away the possibilities from us. We're told what we can do and what we can't do. What's possible and what's not.

We're made to believe what we should do and what's simply irresponsible. Somewhere along the line, we forget that we control a lot of things.

It's your life. You get to decide what happens. There are a million different influences around you every day trying to get you to buy into what you "should" do, but ultimately you really can do whatever you want.

**You get to write your story.**

When I realized I could write my own story, things changed.

## How To Tell A Great Story With Your Life

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I was determined to make my life a great story, even if it seemed Impossible at the time. A story worth writing about.

Asking myself what story I was telling was the turning point for me.

Are you telling a **good** story with your life? The emphasis is on the word “good”, because whether you like it or not, you’re telling a story. No matter what you do, with each decision you make, you’re writing your story every day.

Whether your story is an adventure-filled page-turner or more boring than a 50-year-old-textbook is up to you. But, you get to decide.

I really hope you choose the adventure-filled page-turner.

So how do you go about telling a great story with your life?

How come we don’t see more people doing it? The answer is simple: It’s Hard. Mainly, because most people don’t know how to go about telling a good story.

One of my favorite authors, Donald Miller gives a great explanation of what a good story is:

“A story involves a character that wants something and overcomes conflict to get it.”

When I read this at that moment in my life working at UPS, I realized that if my life was a story, it would be a story about a guy sitting in a room reading other people’s life stories and wishing they were his.

*I realized that if my life was a story, it would be a story about a guy sitting in a room reading other people’s life stories and wishing they were his.*

## So How Do You Go about Telling a Great Story?

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*Not exactly compelling.* So I decided to do something about it.

After I got fired from UPS on Christmas Day, I started looking for work that I thought was interesting. I found something worthwhile that I wanted and started after it.

I started focusing on doing things I didn't know if I could actually do. Things I thought were Impossible.

In the next year and a half, I ended up getting an entry level job (not with Starbucks), getting promoted, quitting to move to a new job, and traveling the country. I began racing triathlons and ran my first marathon, all despite the fact that I had never run more than 3 miles in my life. I got invited to conferences in Hawaii and London despite the fact I had no qualifications and took 40+ people skydiving and 20+ people bungee jumping on a whim. All because I refused to accept the Impossible as it was.

I decided to tell a great story with my life. I was tired of the old boring story, so I wrote a new one. A better one. An Impossible one.

I'm not nearly finished, but I'm a long ways away from the guy on the couch, living vicariously through other people's stories.

The concept of story can be really complicated and really good writers take years to master the craft. But in my eyes, it really comes down to the three basics I mentioned earlier:

**You are a character.** *“A story involves a character that wants something and overcomes conflict to get it.”*

You're a person, going through life. You have your own individual traits, capabilities and interests uniquely suited to you. No one else has those traits and can wield them in exactly the way that you can. You are a character. And you're in a unique position:

You are not only the character participating in your story, but you are the only one who gets to choose what you do.

Unlike most stories, where the character's actions are completely determined by the author, you get to determine what things you want in your life and what things you don't. Some events are out of your control, but even then, you get to decide how you react to them.

As a character, you have your own fears, your own problems and your own desires that make you the character you are. This sets the stage for your new incredibly story.



## Know What You Want

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*“A story involves a character **that wants something** and overcomes conflict to get it.”*

What do you want?

What do you want out of life? Out of your job? Out of your family? Out of your relationships? Do you even know?

Sure, you might want something, but it's not enough to just want something.

Great characters want great things. But even more than that, great characters want great things...that are worthwhile.

Now I can't tell you what's worthwhile for you.

What's considered worthwhile is different for everyone and it's something you have to decide for yourself. Be careful because there are a lot of things that are desirable, but very few are worthwhile. Ever seen SkyMall?

Unfortunately, it's rare to find somebody pursuing something worthwhile, because those things are a lot harder to acquire and you're going to have to fight for them.

There are a lot of things that are commonplace that people pursue, but they're not really worth fighting for. They're token. They're dull. They're ordinary.

They're mundane. Nobody fights over the mundane.

But the Impossible...that's another story. The rare things in life. The things that most people don't do. The things that are hard to acquire.

Those are worthwhile. Those are worth the investment. Those are worth the fight.

When you want something, make sure you want something worthwhile.

Because eventually you are going to have to fight for it.

And it better be worth it.

# Be Willing to Work to Overcome Conflict

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*“A story involves a character that wants something **and overcomes conflict to get it.**”*

Conflict is hard. It's messy. It's not always fun.

Conflict is where you run into failure  
Conflict is where you want to give up.  
Conflict is where you decide if the story ends or it keeps on going.

But conflict happens, especially when you're going after the Impossible. Otherwise, it would be easy.

**But conflict is also where a story starts to get good.** A story without conflict is boring. There's no drama. No suspense. **No change.**

Conflict incites change. Conflict necessitates action. It engages the Impossible in a bout of fisticuffs. Yes, fisticuffs.

When conflict happens you have a few options.

1. Giving Up
2. Overcoming It
3. Failure

## Giving Up

Giving up is almost always a bad way to end this.

Unfortunately, it's also the most common.

People say they want a lot of things and go after them until they run into conflict. Then they give up and start something else only to give up once again, leaving a trail of unfinished story lines and unresolved conflict in their wake. Then they wonder why they never feel like they've accomplished anything.

They haven't...yet.

The problem is they see conflict as the end of the story, not the beginning of the best part.

Instead of overcoming conflict, they turn around and go home.

But there's another way to do it. A better way. One that takes a lot of courage and **a lot of guts.**

It also takes a certain type of character. A character that's bound and determined to succeed no matter what.

## Overcome Conflict

Another choice is to overcome conflict. To clench your teeth and decide that whatever little barrier is in your way, it will not have the final say. It will be overcome, no matter what.

### **No matter what.**

These are the characters we love in stories. They don't stop until they get what they want. Their stories are ugly, messy, and hard to watch sometimes.

There are points where the characters face almost certain defeat. But, if they keep going and you keep watching, a good story with a solid character overcoming conflict is unlike anything you've ever seen before.

- Rudy
- Hoosiers
- Rocky
- 300
- Shawshank

The best stories don't just fall into conflict. It's not as if they're simply bouncing around and all of a sudden conflict shows up and they have to deal with it.

That happens to everybody and it's fairly common-

place, so it's not special when conflict just "happens."

The best stories have conflict as the basis for the entire story. This is precisely why it's so important to want something worth while. The characters know that by choosing their desire, they're choosing to invite conflict. Instead of falling into conflict, they're actively seeking it out in order to overcome it.

### **This is why it's so compelling.**

Wanting to live vicariously through others takes relatively little effort. You can sit back and watch TV or scan the Internet, reading about people doing interesting things with the click of a button. But, because there's little effort involved, there's little conflict.

There's also little reward and little meaning.

The more worthwhile the cause, the more Impossible it tends to be. The more Impossible something tends to be, the more conflict the character invites in. But the more conflict the character invites in, the larger the story arc becomes and the more potential it has to suck you in because it's so compelling.

Conflict turns a boring story into one that's worth paying attention to. One that's worth reading about. **One that's worth living.**

People who are willing to challenge the Impossible and invite conflict in are so rare that they're naturally compelling. Even if you don't like them, you almost have to pay attention to them because their attitude and determination to do something everybody else believes can't be done is so uncommon.

Finding these people is hard, because overcoming conflict is hard. The more worthwhile the causes, the greater the "thing" that you want, the harder it gets and the more rare it becomes.

It's almost Impossible.

Their success is too far-fetched. The limits are too constricting. The rewards, too far off. And the odds, they're way too unlikely...

But those are also the exact same reasons why the character takes on the challenges in the first place.

*Those are also the exact same reasons why you have to take on those challenges in the first place.*

In spite of all these reasons not to try, and all the reasons why they should let conflict persist, these great characters do it anyways.

## Failure

Now I didn't forget about failure. It happens. It's a fact. In fact, failure happens a lot. The consequences of failure are often overrated. **Most of the time failure isn't fatal.**

Just because you fail doesn't mean you have to stop.

Fall down seven times, stand up eight – Japanese Proverb

Failure is a big deal. It hurts and it isn't a lot of fun.

But it's also unavoidable – it will be a part of your life if you're living a good story. If you don't fail at least a little, you're not aiming high enough. If you don't do something because you're scared of failure, you'll never do anything.

After all, if it was easy, there would not be so many people saying it was Impossible.

Acknowledge failure. Accept that it comes with conflict. **But don't let it stop you.** Failure is inevitable but it doesn't have to be inhibiting.

Failure is a part of a the story, ***but it's not the whole story. It's just another obstacle waiting to be overcome.***

## Why Your Story Needs To Be Good

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It can be tempting to want your story to be good so that you have a “better” story than your friends. But that's not how great stories work - they're not based on competition.

If you start doing that, you'll start doing things because other people think you should do them or because other people approve. When you do that, you're not choosing goals that you believe are worthwhile, you're choosing goals that others believe are – and then we're back to square one.

Choose Impossible goals that are worthwhile. Do it for yourself because, if for no other reason, you have to live it out. If you do it because you hope someone else might approve, you'll give up as soon as you run into conflict (and we already know how that story ends). If you live a good story, some people will pay attention to it and some might not. If you're telling a good story, you'll tend to attract more attention than others.

But just because you tell a good story, it doesn't mean that others will pay attention, write about you or shower you with accolades. That doesn't matter.

**Living a good story is an amazing reward by itself.**

Even if nobody knows what you're doing, you're enriching your life by immersing it in a story. Instead of having arbitrary goals and accomplishments, by

living a great story, you create narrative for them.  
A context. A purpose.

Instead of just crossing stuff off a list, you're experiencing a story. **You're living an adventure.** One that's worth writing about.

One that's definitely worth living.

When you approach your story like an adventure worth taking on, no matter whether people read it or not, you're more likely to keep going when things get rough. You'll be better equipped with the will to push through conflict, do something Impossible, and live a life of adventure and meaning.

# Limits and Other Non-Existent Things

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# Limits

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Let's talk about limits real quick. This is important because when you start to live a great story, people will immediately bring up limits. Limits are interesting. When people talk about limits they're talking about artificial caps on what you can and cannot do.

They're creating predefined guidelines within which they believe you need to live your story. They're talking about the Impossible things that you can't do and shouldn't attempt. These limits are like the tags on mattresses that people say you shouldn't remove. They're a rule that everybody follows, but nobody knows exactly why.

The big problem with limits, when they come from other people, is that other people are pre-defining and limiting your possibilities based on their beliefs, not actual facts. They're limiting the potential of your story based on what they have or haven't been able to accomplish.

The funny thing about limits is **they're not real**. In fact, if you try, the only really Impossible thing is to really try and reach your limits. Because they don't exist.

It's Impossible to reach your limits.

Some limits have a basis in science so they seem like they would be rock solid. But those get broken all the time. Things that used to be Impossible no longer are. Fire, light, cars, flight...just to name a few.

Their seeming Impossibility is based in current understanding, so the best way to increase their possibility is to get a better understanding. That happens by challenging exactly what is possible.

This affects your story. The really great stories are about pushing the limits and seeing what is possible. Not stopping ahead of time because the challenges seem too great, but rather pushing forward exactly BECAUSE they seem so daunting. You see a massive conflict ahead, but realize that victory is just going to be that that much sweeter.

Frodo, Harry, Mario, Bond, Odysseus, Holmes, Superman, and more. They all do this.

But the great part is that it isn't just in books that people break through limits. There are real people every day who have real, physical, tangible limits and don't care one bit about them. They decide to do what they want to do, regardless of the other limits



people say are insurmountable. They listen only to themselves and they do the Impossible anyways.

Here are a few of their stories:

## The Blind Man Who Can See

Daniel Kish was born with a form of cancer that attacked his retinas. In order to save his life, both of his retinas were removed.

**At 13 months old, Daniel was blind. Literally.**

Most people would accept blindness as a finality. Especially if they were blinded at such a young age. For most people, blindness would be a reality that they would have to deal with and a disability they would have to settle with for the rest of their life.

Most people...that is, but Daniel.

*Fast-forward 40 years.* Daniel is living a remarkable life. He rides his bike, travels the world, cooks, swims and dances. He camps and has a cabin in the woods that he hikes to for fun.

**He's still completely blind but he doesn't act like it.**

See, Daniel didn't want to live life like everyone told him he should – staying at home, memorizing a few notable routes and relying on people with vision to help him with anything more than the basic tasks of life.

Daniel decided he wanted a different life. He wanted to be independent – as independent as any person who could see.

So he did the only logical thing he could think of - **Daniel taught himself to see.**

Daniel began to use echolocation (a type of sonar that bats and dolphins use) in order to perceive the world around him. He creates a short brief click with his tongue. That click then produces a sound wave that bounces off every object around him and returns to his ears with details of his surrounding environment allowing him to do everything a seeing person can do.

**He's completely functional.**

He's attended University of California, received two master's degrees (in developmental psychology and special education) and teaches other blind students how to do the same through his non-profit organization, World Access for the Blind.

Daniel's actions have come with a price, as he's had a few accidents where he's crashed his bike or run into a pole. But, Daniel takes this in stride:

"Running into a pole is a drag, but never being allowed to run into a pole is a disaster," he writes. "Pain is part of the price of freedom." - Daniel Kish

That attitude hasn't made him a lot of friends. Pain isn't fun and most people avoid pain as much as possible. It's messy. It's another form of conflict.

But Daniel embraces pain.

Many mainstream blind organizations look down on what he does and he doesn't get a lot of support for his methods because **they don't know what to do with him.**

To them, he's just some daredevil guy who goes around doing what he wants, not listening to the "conventional" advice, and clicking all the time. It doesn't fit into their box of what is possible or normal, so they dismiss it as irrelevant, crazy and dangerous.

**Daniel's considered "weird" because he's extended his abilities beyond the possible limits and expectations of what other people set for him.**

But that doesn't change the truth – that Daniel is just as capable as many of his seeing counterparts. Possibly even more so, because he knows he has no excuse for not overcoming the small barriers in his life – like not being able to see – that are in the way of achieving his overarching goals.

Daniel just keeps going, clicking away and helping as many people as he can through World Access. Doing the Impossible while letting everyone else debate just how Impossible his case really is. **For Daniel, the Impossible isn't a limit... it's a reality.**

## The Dyslexic Virgin Billionaire

Richard Branson was born in London. Growing up, he suffered from dyslexia and performed poorly in school. He dropped out of high school at 16 to work on a magazine. When he did, his headmaster told him, “You will either go to prison or become a millionaire.”

After experimenting with selling records through his magazine, he made enough money to open a record store. Pretty soon he began a recording studio and followed that with a record label, which he used to start signing some of Britain’s premier musical talent.

Seeing success with his music ventures, buying an island and launching a few more businesses, Richard found a new opportunity. After having a flight delayed, he decided to lease his own aircraft and invite other delayed passengers to join him. It worked so well, that he started his own airline. That started a long line of entrepreneurial ventures that resulted in what’s known today as the Virgin, a conglomerate worth some \$20+ Billion dollars.

If Richard listened to traditional standards of the time, he should have given up a long time ago. Dyslexia is a tough thing to deal with and for most

people, it’s just not worth it. His bad grades should have meant he was doomed to failure.

Richard didn’t really care what anyone else said. **Even though he was dyslexic, his first successful business venture was a magazine.**

Richard wasn’t interested in becoming like everyone else. He was aiming for big things. Unachievable things. Impossible things. His attitude is contagious:

My interest in life comes from setting myself huge, apparently unachievable challenges and trying to rise above them...from the perspective of wanting to live life to the full, I felt that I had to attempt them.

– *Richard Branson*

He’s worth \$4.2 Billion these days and has started over 400 companies. **By attempting to achieve things that seem absolutely Impossible, Richard was able to do just that.**

## The Hall of Fame Paraplegic Triathlete

Back in 1977, a 15 year-old Rick Hoyt told his dad that he wanted to participate in a 5-mile benefit run for a Lacrosse player who was paralyzed in an accident - a reasonable request from a conscientious teenager.

**There was only one problem: Rick couldn't walk at all, much less run 5 miles.**

You see, back in 1962, when Rick was born, he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy due to oxygen deprivation from his brain. He was also a quadriplegic and doctors told Rick's parents, Dick & Judy, from the start that they should institutionalize Rick as there was little hope for Rick to live a "normal" life as a quadriplegic with cerebral palsy.

Luckily no one listened to the doctors.  
**Especially Rick's dad, Dick.**

Dick refused to let the doctor's orders be an excuse for his son and raised him with as much care & love as he would a son without those problems. Now, fifteen years later, Dick was faced with another decision. Once again he refused to listen to what everybody else thought was Impossible.

Despite not being a runner himself, he decided to push Rick in his wheelchair for the whole 5 miles of the race. After the race, Rick told his father, "'Dad, when I'm running, it feels like I'm not handicapped.'"

That was the spark Dick needed and the start of Team Hoyt. Since 1977, the father/son duo has completed 6 Ironman Triathlons, 68 marathons, 92 half-marathons, and a total of over 1,000 total races.

When Rick was asked what he would do if he could give his Dad one thing he said:

"The thing I'd most like is for my dad to sit in the chair and I would push him for once."

Rick can't walk, bike or swim and according to the doctors who delivered him, from the start he was never going to have an "ordinary" life.

**Thanks to his Dad, in an amazing turn of events, they were right.**

# The Expanding Universe Of Impossible.

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*“It’s always Impossible  
until it is done.”*

*- Nelson Mandela*

Scientists say that the universe is rapidly expanding. Since the beginning of time, the edges have been rushing outwards, expanding the universe and the space within. The concept of that is incredible, but it’s amazingly similar to the concept of the Impossible.

Let me explain. Ever since you were born, the universe of possibilities available to you has been constantly expanding. The absolute edge of the limits of what you can do have been rushing outwards.

It was Impossible to walk...until you learned how.  
It was Impossible to feed yourself...until you learned how.  
It was Impossible not to poop your pants...until you learned how.

So on and so forth with a million different areas of life until you learned enough to become a functioning adult that society can accept as “good enough.”

**We always seem to stop at good enough.**

*But why stop there?*

Why stop now?

**Just because everyone else stops, doesn’t mean you have to.**

When you start to challenge what’s Impossible you begin to realize a whole new world of things that aren’t actually Impossible. They only represent the limitations of other people’s imaginations.

Once you’ve shot through the limits that are placed on you by other people, you begin to realize that there are still things beyond your limits that now seem within reach. So you keep going and going and keep discovering new so-called “Impossible things” that are now somehow doable.

**Every time you challenge the Impossible, you gain a new understanding of what is actually possible.**

You realize how small a world you had created for yourself with your own self-imposed limitations in the past. And how big of a future is possible. Pretty soon, even the most ridiculous things in the world don’t seem out of reach if you really want to achieve them.

# Perspective Shifts & Subjective Reality

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There's a sense you get when you're downtown New York and see the Empire State Building for the first time.

It seems so big, so massive. **How could anything be bigger?**

Then you go drive out west and see the massive Rocky Mountains for the first time. Wow. Now that's impressive. **How could something exist that's even bigger than this?**

There's another sense you get on top of Mauna Kea in Hawaii at night and see every single star in the universe and see how big everything really is. **You realize how little of a speck you are in this massive place known as the universe.**

THE UNIVERSE IS HUGE

And it keeps getting bigger...

It's hard to imagine something bigger than the Empire State Building when that's the biggest thing you've seen up to this point. It's hard to imagine something being more massive than the Rocky Mountains when you're in the midst of them for the

first time. It's hard to imagine something bigger than the entire universe in the night sky when you can't get off this earth. You have to gain perspective in order to change your perception of reality.

The Impossible is the same way.

It's hard to imagine owning your own business when you're stuck working at UPS getting chased by dogs in the snow. It's hard to imagine running a marathon when you can barely jog a mile without heaving up a lung. It's hard to imagine traveling the world when you haven't even been out of the state.

You have to gain perspective.

If you're sitting around wondering if you can have a more interesting life, and do some things you've wanted to, it's pretty simple.

# Do Something

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Start a project. Jog a mile. Drive somewhere on a weekend trip.

“But it’s not possible.”

**Yes it is.** When you decide that you’re going to do it...no matter what...you can do it.

When you start a small project and it succeeds, a business doesn’t seem so far away. When you jog a mile, jogging a mile and a half doesn’t seem ridiculous. Once you go on a weekend trip once out of state, going on an extended road trip doesn’t seem so bad. Who knows? You might even go out of the country next time.

If you keep doing this, you’ll find out that most of your limitations are in your head. This is exactly what happened with me. Less than two years ago, I had never even run 3 miles straight. It worked the same way:

- I would have never thought I could actually run more than 3 miles...until I ran a 5k.
- I would have never thought I could actually run more than 5 miles...until I ran a 10k.
- I would have never thought I could actually run a marathon....until I did.

It’s hard to make huge jumps sometimes and imagine yourself in a completely different world living a completely different life than you are now. But that’s because of your perspective. Your current perspective colors your subjective version of reality.

Push the boundaries of Impossible and you’ll see that it expands. Keep pushing and you’ll see that your subjective version or what’s possible isn’t as accurate as you think it is. The boundaries of the Impossible are constantly expanding. So keep pushing them.

Now, the question isn’t whether or not you’ll be able to test the limits of the Impossible (you already have by being on this earth).

**Instead, the question is whether or not you’ll keep doing it.**

## Vicarious Living & Inspirational Cocaine

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A lot of people are addicted. Not to drugs or alcohol, but to information consumption & inspiration.

Inspiration is like junk food. A little bit of it after you've had a full meal isn't bad. But if you have it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, it's only going to make you fat.

Inspiration is the same way.

If you use it after you've done some substantial work to motivate you when you're stuck, it can be very helpful. But, if you use inspirational stories, videos and other media in order to live vicariously through others, **you're going to confuse the satisfaction of doing something meaningful with the satisfaction you get from watching others doing something meaningful.**

Instead of putting in the work to get the satisfaction from doing, you settle for the easy route of getting satisfaction from watching. Soon you don't even bother doing anything yourself because it's so much easier to watch other people be successful.

That's why reality shows are so popular. They allow the viewer to live vicariously through the show participants and feel motivated without actually doing anything. It helps dull the boredom of their everyday life.

It's much easier to watch someone lose 200 pounds over 12 weeks while sitting on your couch eating potato chips than it is to actually get off your butt and go lose 20 pounds yourself. It's easier to watch other people volunteer to help a hard-working family than it is to give up a week of your life and go volunteer your own time. Pretty soon, they're strung out on inspiration and vicarious living, getting high off the satisfaction they get from watching other people do something that they can't bother to actually do themselves.

You might know a few people like this. You might even be this person.

I was.



## How to Fight It

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**Do something.** I said this earlier but it bears repeating. The easiest way to confuse the feelings of accomplishment with the feelings of inspiration is to forget what accomplishment feels like. If you've accomplished something recently and remember what it feels like, the lure of watching someone else do something isn't nearly as attractive.

If you're simply watching it to get inspired, it feels cheap compared to going out and accomplishing it on your own. If you're watching it to get challenged, then you want to go out immediately and do it.

Instead of thinking "That's nice, good for them! Maybe I'll do that someday" you begin to think *"That's awesome, I should go do that right now."*

# Final Thoughts



# The Impossible Isn't

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The Impossible isn't. Everything you think is Impossible isn't. Even if it seems like there's no way you could do it, go find out for yourself. If there's something that seems truly Impossible, why not try and see if it really is or if everyone else is just trapped by their perception of the way things currently are. The worst that can happen is that they're right. Luckily, since we're all human, the chance that they wrong is often pretty good. Even if you try and fail, you'll have a better story to tell than the people who watched you do it and you'll have a better perspective on why it's "Impossible" and what to do different the next time.

Nobody ever tells a story about the guy who played it safe.

Nobody talks about the girl who did what everyone expected her to do.

Nobody makes a movie about the person who spent all their life blending in.

Do something remarkable. Something worth writing about. Something Impossible.

## There's No Good Excuse

But...but...but?  
Stop it.

There's a million reasons why not to do something. Money. Time. Obligations. Society. Failure. That's just a few.

They don't matter. At all. In order to do something Impossible, you only need one good reason "why". Just one.

### **Because no one else will.**

No one will live your life story for you. No one will make your life one worth reading about for you. No one will challenge what's possible with your life for you.

No one that is...except for you.

All those reasons why not, those excuses...they probably suck. If you really look at them honestly, they probably really suck. I know - **I'm really good at making up excuses myself.**

## Dealing With Fear

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But if I step back and am honest with myself, I know they're terrible and I'm just avoiding doing what I know I have to do.

A while back, I was "working" on a project and a friend asked me why I hadn't started yet. I started sputtering up excuses of perfectly good reasons why I hadn't, when he stopped me, looked me in the eye and said:

**You know what you need to do...just do it.**

It hurt, but it was true.

Chances are, you probably already know what you need to do. That thing you have in the back of your mind. That thing that gets you excited about life. That thing that keeps you up at night, but you're scared to try because everything might fall apart. That's the thing you need to do most.

If you really don't want to do it and you really don't want to put the work into it, that's fine. Call it what it is and keep doing what you've always been doing. But please, stop making excuses for why you can't have what you say you want.

**Because you can.**

There's no good excuse not to.

Ah. but fear. Fear.

The great paralyzer. The one thing in the universe that stops the great dreamers from becoming the great doers.

You read this manifesto. You get excited. You get ready to do something amazing. Something incredible. Something Impossible.

But then you get scared.

- *What if it doesn't work out?*
- *What if people don't like the idea?*
- *What if people make fun of me?*
- *What if? What if? What if?*

Instead of charging ahead, fear whispers in our ears all the terrible and unforeseen consequences that might take place no matter how plausible they may or may not be, freezing us in our place.

So what do we do with fear?

I'm not going to sit here and tell you fear doesn't exist. Exactly the opposite. Fear does exist.

Fear is real.  
Fear is universal.  
Fear is normal.

But there's something else about fear.

### **Fear is beatable.**

Fear is a natural preservation reaction. It helps keep us in check when we might do something stupid to hurt ourselves. That was really good when we were running around with sticks and chasing mammoths. Fear would keep us from trying to take home a saber-tooth tiger as a pet and becoming lunch meat instead.

Thanks fear!

In fact, without a good amount of healthy fear, we probably wouldn't have survived up to this point.

There are probably still good times to be afraid.

- *If you're scared of picking up a rattlesnake because you might get bitten and die - you probably should be scared.*
- *If you jump out of this plane without a parachute, the freefall might be fun but the landing might hurt a bit - you probably should be a little bit concerned.*

- *If you try to drive the wrong way during rush hour, you'll probably cause an accident and make some drivers angry (not to mention that you'll just make traffic worse) - you might want to think twice.*

Those are rare occasions where fear can be somewhat rational. But a lot of fear isn't rational at all. It's not there to prevent you from dying and it doesn't help you live a story full of adventure and meaning.

Instead of preserving our life, fear paralyzes it. Yes, with any decision, there might be consequences, but they're seldom as fantastic and elaborate as the one your imagination creates.

The horrifying truth is this:

### **Most decisions don't end with you dying.**

If they did, then there would be a lot more dead people around here. People would die figuring out what to eat, where to cross the street and how to get to work.

## *Most decisions don't end up with you dying.*

If you're not going to die, what's the worst that could happen?

What's the absolute worse thing that could happen?

You might lose a few bucks, get a bruise, take a few steps back or have to start over.

Frustrating? Maybe. Devastating? Definitely not.

Why choose to do something that's frustrating then?

The simple reason is that doing something and being frustrated is much better than never trying anything in the first place. In other words, going forward and failing is better than standing still, never deciding and not moving one way or another.

By doing, you gain a deeper understanding than you could ever get simply by spectating. Spectating is a cheap alternative to the actual adventure you get from diving in and attempting something on your own.

*“It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.”*

**- Teddy Roosevelt**

### The need for courage

The great myth of fear is that you overcome it. Fear isn't a barrier and it isn't something that you overcome. It's simply a constant.

You don't learn to get over fear. You learn to coexist with it and press on anyways, in the midst of it's presence.

That's why you need courage.

Courage allows you to look fear dead in the eye and tell fear to suck it.

People who do great things don't have an absence of fear. They have an abundance of courage, which allows them to do the Impossible, in spite of the fact that they're scared out of their mind.

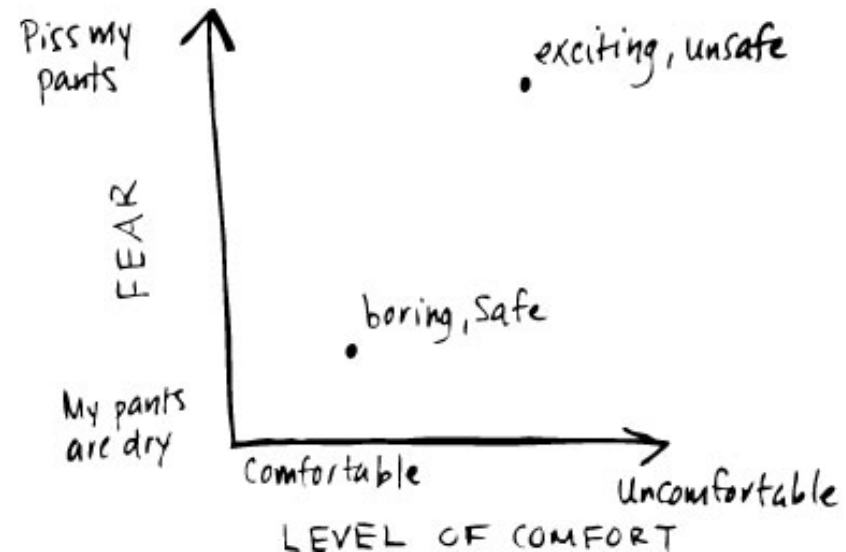
## The Fear Barometer

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A general rule of thumb I've begun to embrace is this:

The more I fear something the more I know I need to do it.

I call it my Fear Barometer and it's a great tool for figuring out whether or not I need to do something.



You have a lot of decisions to make in life and we're fortunate enough to go through most of life without worrying about little things. Most of us have so many options available that we can choose to do a lot of fear-free things in life. Unfortunately, the trade-off is that most of those things are boring.

On a micro scale you might not notice the consequences of these decisions. But over time, as you slowly pick one safe option after the next, you begin to collect one boring option after the another. Time passes and you wonder why you're bored out of your mind. **You've been lulled to sleep by comfort.**

We're trained to pick the safe options. The sure thing. It's completely counter-intuitive to us to do anything outside our comfort zone. An arbitrary zone determined by an anonymous collective of what is safe and advisable.

What's the danger?

Well most of the time you don't know. Most people haven't tried it because it seems inadvisable. Because it's inadvisable, most people don't try it.

It's a never-ending cycle.

Pick the inadvisable route.

Every time I've made a decision to take the scarier route, I'm glad I did.

Every time I've made a decision to take the easy way out, it has always come back to haunt me.

**I realized I wasn't meant to be comfortable.**

Excitement comes from not quite knowing what's coming next. When you travel the road that everyone else paves for you, it's fairly easy to know what's next, because they tell you.

When you pave your own, you have no idea. No one has ever done what you're about to do. You can have reference points from mentors but for the first time in your life, no one is telling you what's up ahead.

There's bad news and good news:

**The bad news:** *Nobody can tell you what's next.*

**The good news:** *Nobody can tell you what's next.*

**You get to decide.**



Life is meant to be a story. It's meant to have ups. It's meant to have downs. Fear tries to prevent either of those from happening. Instead of having a story arc, it wants to create a flat line.

If you're in a hospital, and your heart flat-lines, you die.

If you're living your life and your story arc flat lines, you'll feel like you're dying from boredom.

When we attempt to avoid the valleys, we miss out on the peaks. By trying to avoid fear and possible failure, we also eliminate the chance for adventure and success.

**Remember: Most decisions don't end up with you dying.**

When you think about that, a lot of fears drop away.

It never goes away completely, but you begin to learn to live with it. You begin to become courageous.

To courageous people, fear isn't a barrier. It's a barometer.

The more you encounter fear, the more you know you're outside of your comfort zone. The further

away from your comfort zone you get, the closer you get to doing the Impossible.

The closer you get to something that scares you, the closer you get to an adventure and the closer you get to doing something that you probably need to be doing. Instead of running from fear, turn around and face it. And when fear tries to keep you from doing what you're meant to do, take it as a sign. Grit your teeth, look fear dead in the eye and **do it anyways**.

## One More Thing

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There's one more thing you should know about living your story and doing the Impossible.

**It's not all about you.**

Yes, it's great to do Impossible things and live an amazing life. It's awesome, inspiring and a lot of fun. But it's not the end game.

**Life isn't all about you. The Impossible isn't all about you. Your story isn't all about you.** Doing the Impossible is about telling a great story. You can be a major character, but the real fun is in stepping back and realizing that EVERYONE is telling a story.

There are 7 billion (7,000,000,000!) other stories taking place on the face of the earth. Yours is just one of them.

The best way to make your story even greater is to do something to influence others to live a great story as well.

For Daniel Kish, it wasn't enough just to do the Impossible and be a blind man who can see. He took the next step and decided to help others in the blind community to do the same through his World Access For The Blind Foundation.

For Richard Branson, it wasn't enough just to make billions and head up a bunch of successful companies.

'Ridiculous yachts and private planes and big limousines won't make people enjoy life more... It would be so much better if that money was spent in Africa...it's about getting a balance.'

Richard has launched countless charity efforts, including Virgin Unite, a philanthropic arm of the Virgin Group. He has committed to donating over \$3 Billion dollars in the next 10 years to fight global warming and other problems on earth. It was about helping others.

For Dick Hoyt, it wasn't about just running triathlons for himself. It was about helping his son not only experience but participate and dominate multiple athletic achievements. All while inspiring others to overcome their own barriers in life. **It isn't all about you.** Lots of people have lived great stories, but the ones that have the most impact are the ones where the authors look back to see how they can help other people tell great stories as well.

Remember when we talked about limits? How other people will try to keep you from doing Impossible things and living a great story by limiting you based on their experiences?

**This is where you fight back.**

Not by telling them they were wrong and getting into a yelling fight with them, but by undoing what they did. What they do. Instead of placing artificial limits on people, you lift them. Instead of telling people what is Impossible, you help them see what is possible.

You take it one step further. You don't just tell them, you show them.

**Words are simple. Action carries weight.**

Showing people that pre-fabricated limits don't apply to you, and that they don't have to apply to them either is powerful. Instead of fighting words with words, you simply show them that the Impossible can be done and prove their words wrong with action.

You become living proof that it's possible.

By conquering the Impossible and helping others to do the same, you'll go even farther than you would have gone alone. You're no longer just living your own great story, but helping and enabling others to do the same. You expand your influence and multiply your impact.

I've never met anyone who's conquered the Impossible alone. In fact, the Impossible gets a lot easier when you get a bunch of people working on it. So enable and enlist other people along the way. They're a huge help and besides, it's usually a lot more fun.

**Push your limits. Tell a great story. Help others do the same.**

**Do Something Impossible.**

## What I'm Doing

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You might wonder what exactly I'm doing about this whole Impossible thing. I run [Impossible HQ](#) where I create tools and resources for others to do the Impossible in their own lives.

It all started with my [Impossible List](#) - a short list of every limit I've ever put on myself or believed from others that I think are worthwhile actually doing. It's constantly expanding as my universe of Impossible grows and grows. You can check it out or make your own.

If you're interested in taking this further, you can interact with a small community of incredible people doing Impossible things in the [Impossible League](#). If you're serious about **doing something Impossible**, we'd love to have you.

You can follow along with my adventures at the Blog of Impossible Things via your favorite [RSS Reader](#) or [subscribe via email](#) and get updates directly in your email inbox.

**The world needs you.** There are 7 BILLION people out there that need you to change whatever little corner of the world you have control over. I've found that once you start taking control over whatever corner you're in, that little corner begins to expand... just like the edges of the Impossible.

# Do Something Impossible

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**Do something Impossible. Do it now.**

Go do something you can't even fathom completing. Something that's so big, you're almost certain you might fail. Something that literally seems Impossible. Commit to doing it right now. **It doesn't matter so much what exactly *it* is.**

**What matters is that you do it.**

Stop telling yourself all the reasons why you're not able to do it and start doing it. Figure the rest out on the way.

You don't need more knowledge. You don't need more inspiration. You don't need more time.

**You need to start.** You need action.

You need to do something.

You need to do something Impossible.

## Thank You

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Thank you for taking the time to read this short manifesto. Please come over and **post a short comment** on the site or take 5 seconds to share it with someone who can use it.

I would really appreciate it.

Also, feel free to write me at **Joel@ImpossibleHQ.com**  
I hope you're telling a great story.

- Joel



# Resources

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## Do Something Impossible.

Here are a few resources that can help.

The HQ | [Impossible HQ](#)

The Blog | [Blog of Impossible Things](#)

The Community | [Impossible League](#)

The Manifesto | [Impossible Manifesto](#)

The T-Shirt | [Impossible T-Shirt](#)

*“It is either easy  
or impossible.”*

*- Salvador Dali*



**IMPOSSIBLE**  
DO SOMETHING  
**IMPOSSIBLE**

**IMPOSSIBLE**  
**IMPOSSIBLE**