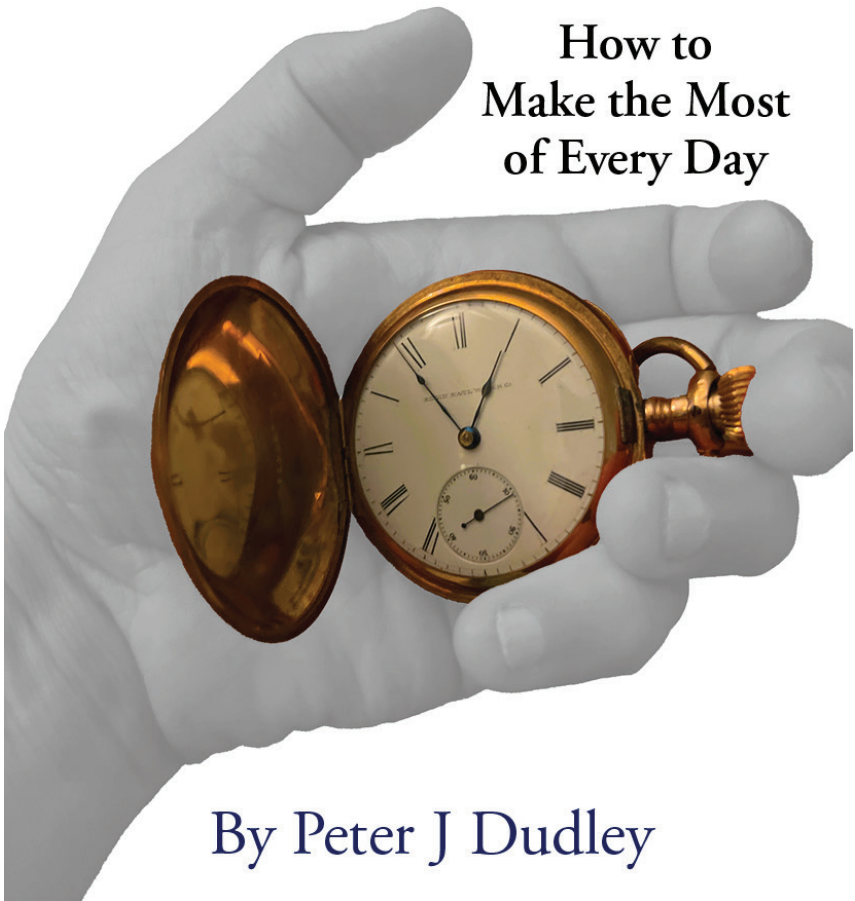


Take Your Time

Before Time Takes You

INTRODUCTION

How to
Make the Most
of Every Day



By Peter J Dudley

Contents of the Whole Book

Dedication

Introduction: *Make the Most of Today*

Section 1: *Discover Yourself*

Dear Overachiever: Do Not Skip This Section

Your Core Values

Your Strengths

Limiting Beliefs

Section 2: *Light the Path*

Your Future Self is a Demanding Micromanager

How You Betray Your Future Self

Be Loyal to Yourself

Avoid Identity Creep

Define Your Fulfilling Life

Find Your Own Solutions

Section 3: *Make It So*

Life's Not a Sprint. Neither is it a Marathon.

Someday is Not a Date on the Calendar

You're Most Likely to Fail, So What's Stopping You?

Stop Planning and Take Action

If You Don't Fall Down, You're Not Having Enough Fun

What Gets Measured Gets Managed

Celebrate Success

Section 4: *Conclusion*

Acknowledgements

Where to Learn More

More from the Author

About the Author

Copyright

Introduction

Make the Most of Today

September 24, 1987, was not a particularly memorable day. It was my 7,395th day on the planet. I was barely 20 years old. My sister, who was 7 years older and lived on the other side of the country, was enjoying her 10,031st day. It was a Thursday.

Fast forward 26 and a half years, to early summer, 2014.

My sister, now 54 years old, came west for a visit with her two teenage kids. They were about the same ages as my own kids, were nearing high school graduation, and came to California to tour colleges. While they were here, we spent a day walking through Muir Woods surrounded by the giant redwood trees hundreds of years old. Some of those trees sprouted long before the American Revolution. Some sprouted before the Mayflower sailed. And some, perhaps, were even older than the Magna Carta.

My sister was preparing to enjoy an early retirement after a very successful career in finance. I was 47, with a successful and growing

career of my own in corporate social impact. As we walked, our conversation turned to the deeper meaning and purpose in life. This often happens when people walk and talk among the redwoods on a quiet day.

“I’ve spent the first half of my life raising a family,” my sister said at one point, “and I’ve focused entirely on my career and family. Peter, you know a lot about nonprofits, and volunteering, and doing good for the world. I really want to use the second half of my life doing something meaningful for people who need it. Would you help me figure out what that should be?”

“Sure, sis,” I answered. “Give me a call when you’re ready to talk.”

I was eager to have this conversation. The annoying little brother finally getting a chance to guide the bossy big sister! A bonding opportunity after living on opposite coasts our entire adult lives. A topic that would be profoundly and personally meaningful for both of us.

So, when she called me three months later in early September, I answered expecting to have that conversation. I was ready to dig into the causes that inspired her, the kind of legacy she wanted to leave. I had all the questions ready and a set of ideas for her to consider.

Instead of talking about purpose and the second half of her life, however, she told me that she’d just been diagnosed with ALS, and that it was progressing quickly. The following March 12—not even 200 days later—she died. She was 20,062 days old. I was 17,426 days old.

September 24, 1987, was not a particularly memorable day. It would have been, however, had we known at the time that it was the

exact halfway point of my sister’s life. She lived 10,031 days up to that point. She lived another 10,031 days after that point.

I will never forget the phrase she used walking in the forest that summer day in 2014: “The second half of my life.” Under the redwoods, neither of us had any idea that the second half of her life had begun 26 years earlier and was already coming to an end.

I wonder what date marked the halfway point of my life. At 57 years old as I write this, I’m pretty sure it’s already passed. Perhaps not, but very likely.

What date will mark the midpoint of your life, do you think? That day when your life is half gone? The date after which you have fewer days left than days you’ve lived? If you knew what that date was, would it change how you approach today? Would it change how you think about family, relationships, work, wealth, health?

That phone call with my sister absolutely changed the way I thought about my life. It changed the way I thought about today, tomorrow, and next week. It changed the way I thought about the coming decades and what I wanted to do with them... if I was fortunate enough to have them.

Time became suddenly very precious, and I vowed to myself that from that moment forward, I would make the most of every day. What “the most” might mean was breathtakingly unclear, of course. What does it mean to make the most of today? What does it mean to make the most of this month? This year?

How does someone even go about answering that question? The one thing that was clear to me at that moment was that no two people I asked would be likely to give the same answer. I knew

nonprofit leaders who would have told me to focus on serving others and making the world a better place. I knew a few high achievers who would have told me that “make the most of today” would mean never wasting a single second of productive time. I had friends who would have advised that “family is everything,” whatever that means. And others who would have told me to “follow my passions.”

But at that moment, approaching 50 years old, I had no idea how much time I had to plan for, or what any given day would bring. I was unclear on what “make the most of every day” meant, but I was extremely clear on two things:

1. I was not going to waste any time or energy judging myself for getting it wrong, and
2. I did not want to waste any time or energy worrying about what other people thought about my choices.

Both were easier promised than accomplished, I can assure you.

It would be six more years before I got into professional coaching. During those six years, I made it my personal mission to find my way to a fulfilling, complete life with both peace and purpose. At first, it was haphazard and clumsy. I stepped on some toes and burned a few bridges I now wish I hadn't. Other bridges, however, I do not regret burning at all, and I am glad to leave in my past.

As I learned more about myself, my core values, and what I truly wanted in life, my efforts became more intentional and directed. I've made lots of mistakes along the way, and I hope to make many more.

This book, however, is not about me. It's about you.

If you've come to this book looking for answers, I'm going to give you permission to hand it off to someone else right now.

If you're looking for answers, you can find tons of people eager to take your money in return for a few bits of fridge magnet wisdom. I believe that these people are, by and large, not charlatans. They believe what they're selling. The problem is, if someone promises they have the answers to life's confusing and complicated messiness, they're almost always selling something that fits them uniquely well, but which probably won't fit you very well.

There is no reliably repeatable recipe for a fulfilling life. That's because we're all working with a different set of ingredients and a different set of tools, under a different set of conditions. And we all have our own unique vision for what the term “fulfilling life” means.

In the same way we each must decide for ourselves what “make the most of today” means, we also each must decide for ourselves what “fulfilling” looks like. So, even though I have a lot of answers, I'm not selling answers because I don't have *your* answers. I have *my* answers. What I do have for you, however, is all the questions I learned to ask along the way to get to my answers. I have the perspective-twisting and mind-opening exercises and observations that challenged me to think differently, that shined a bright light on my limiting beliefs, and that helped me find my own path to fulfillment.

These questions, observations, and exercises are tools that I continue to use today and expect to use throughout the rest of my life because “fulfillment” is not a destination. It's a state of

being. It's a way of living. It's how I remind myself to make the most of every day.

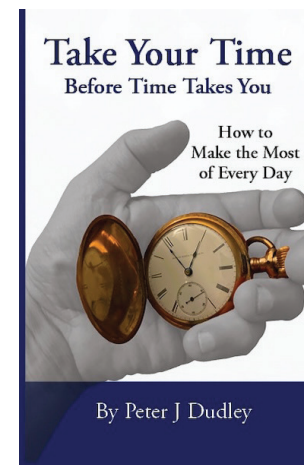
September 24, 1987 was not a particularly memorable day. My walk through the woods with my sister 26 years later, however, was a very memorable day, as was the day she called to let me know she was not going to get the second half of her life she had been expecting.

That conversation I never had with my sister, I think, is what led me to the vocation of professional coaching. The conversation that didn't happen... that is my unfinished business. I can't have that conversation with her, but I can have it with you. I can't help her figure out what a meaningful, fulfilling second half to life would look like for her, but I can help you.

And that's the reason for this book.



Miss you, sis.



Get the Complete Book

The complete book, full of exercises, provocative questions, illustrative stories, and practical advice, can be purchased wherever you normally buy books. You can also purchase it through the Gray Bear Publications web shop at graybearpublications.com.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to say this book was written in a year, but that year wasn't possible without three years of coaching hundreds of people, 30 years of managing teams and working with amazing colleagues, a diverse group of wise and fun-loving friends, a number of outstanding teachers, and of course my parents, my brother, my sister, and my own awesome children. I am also grateful to the many people who helped me become the writer I am and the many clients who put their trust in me to help them find their path in life. And I am profoundly grateful to my partner, Antoinette, who coaches me as much as I coach her.

Where to Learn More

There are over 150 articles on life, leadership, courage, fulfillment, and other important topics at the graybearcoaching.com blog as well as several exercises including core values and life purpose assessments.

Peter is available for one-on-one executive and life coaching, team facilitation, and workshops on fulfillment, courageous living, overcoming burnout and compassion fatigue, communicating powerfully, and leading with empathy and wisdom. Go to graybearcoaching.com to schedule a free, no-obligation conversation.

Want to tell your story or get your book published? Gray Bear Publications can help. Visit graybearpublications.com to learn about our book coaching, assisted self-publishing services, and current calls for submissions.



More from the Author at peterdudley.com

Peter has published multiple books, including:

- ***RELIT: How to Rekindle Yourself in the Darkness of Compassion Fatigue***

This multi-author book offers practical, relevant advice and inspiring stories from a variety of experts.

- ***Semper, Forsada, and Freda: The New Eden trilogy***

A post-apocalyptic young adult trilogy about the intersection of truth, faith, and prejudice.

- ***Together and Twist***

Two collections of poetry and photography co-authored with Antoinette LeCouteur.

- ***Lifelike***

A contemporary urban fantasy about a young woman finding her courage.



About the Author

Peter J Dudley, PCC

Peter is an award-winning author and executive coach who helps people find their courage to live and lead with authenticity and clarity. He grew up in Connecticut with summers in Las Vegas, got his electrical engineering degree from UC Berkeley, then went on a 30-year career in startups, nonprofits, and big corporations with a focus on social impact, employee engagement, and innovation. Peter has published four novels, three poetry collections, and a chapter book, and his short fiction and professional articles have been published in a variety of journals and anthologies. He is also the editor and publisher of *RELIT: How to Rekindle Yourself in the Darkness of Compassion Fatigue*. Find him at graybearcoaching.com.



Copyright © 2025 by Peter Dudley and Gray Bear Publications

All Rights Reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced or retransmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without written permission of the publisher. This book may not be used to train artificial intelligence.

Requests and inquiries may be sent to info@graybearpublications.com.

Author is available for speaking, interviews, workshops, and events.

Cover by Peter Dudley

Published by Gray Bear Publications, an imprint of Gray Bear Coaching, LLC
graybearpublications.com

ISBN: 979-8-9986341-1-6

Also available in hardcover and paperback