

52 CHANGES



LEO BABAUTA

EBOOK: 52 CHANGES

Written by Leo Babauta

For my lovely children: Chloe, Justin, Rain, Maia, Seth and Noelle. I love you all immeasurably and boundlessly, without end.

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Disclaimer: This book can't substitute for the advice of health or financial professionals, and you should assume responsibility for any risks you take.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How to Use This Book
Introduction
The Principles
Change 1: Meditate
Change 2: Unprocrastinate
Change 3: Walking
Change 4: Flexible Mind
Change 5: Identify Your Essentials
Change 6: Mindful Eating
Change 7: Most Important Things (MITs)
Change 8: Clear a Shelf
Change 9: Start Saving
Change 10: Yoga or strength training
Change 11: Floss
Change 12: Pay a small debt
Change 13: Mindful Exercise
Change 14: Budget Simply
Change 15: Create a support crew
Change 16: Eat some veggies
Change 17: Gratitude
Change 18: Clear counters
Change 19: Slow down
Change 20: Play
Change 21: Flow
Change 22: Let go of a vice
Change 23: Don't wish things were different
Change 24: Clear a closet
Change 25: Let go of TV
Change 26: Get more sleep
Change 27: Value time over money
Change 28: Replace opinions with curiosity
Change 29: Read

Change 30: Cut out shopping
Change 31: Learn that you're good enough
Change 32: Create
Change 33: Eat real food
Change 34: Explore work you love
Change 35: Help others
Change 36: Breathe
Change 37: Enjoy the habit
Change 38: Solitude
Change 39: Unclutter a room
Change 40: Iterate the habit
Change 41: Less busywork, more impact
Change 42: Disconnect
Change 43: Let go of a goal
Change 44: Treat failure as a learning opportunity
Change 45: Reduce commitments
Change 46: Turn problems into opportunities
Change 47: Savor
Change 48: Clear your inbox
Change 49: Teach
Change 50: Compassion
Change 51: Reflect
Change 52: Realize you're not missing out

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This is a book of 52 changes you can make in a year, one per week.

It's not meant to be read all at once. Instead, consider browsing through it but focusing on one small chapter per week. Open the book the following week and focus on a second chapter, and so on. We'll call it single-tasking.

You don't need to make all the changes in this book. You can easily pick 10 things, or 20, and focus on those, and do some of them for 2-3 weeks. You could pick 12 and do one per month.

Not all 52 apply to everyone. Some people aren't in debt and don't need the financial chapters. Just keep working on one of the other changes instead, or take a break.

However ... if all 52 changes apply to you, feel free to do them all. You don't have to do them in this order, but it could be fun to give it a try.

This is a book of the 52 changes that I've made that I think matter most. Why are there exactly 52, instead of 45 or 73? It's a convenience — 52 weeks in a year, 52 changes, one per week. I could have picked 12, but that would have been less fun!

INTRODUCTION

My name is Leo Babauta. Many of you might know me as the creator of Zen Habits and someone who writes about simplicity and forming habits.

What makes me qualified to write this book? In short, I've transformed my life using some simple principles. I've learned how to make changes and have fun doing them. I do little experiments, one or two a month, and I see what happens. I stick with the changes that feel good, and leave behind those that don't work as well for me. That's what I suggest you do.

In the last 7 years (since 2005), I've made uncountable small changes — and yes, small changes are what work best. I started running, eventually running a marathon at the end of 2006 and two more in the next couple years, along with a number of other races and triathlons and the like. I started eating healthier, and am now a vegan, and have lost about 70 lbs.

I started waking earlier, meditating, learning to focus and stop procrastinating, paid off a lot of debt, started saving and then investing, created a popular website, wrote several books and created some popular courses, started traveling, moved my wife and six kids to San Francisco from Guam (whew! that was a biggie), gave up our second vehicle on Guam and then went car-free when we moved to San Francisco, and on and on.

I've made all the changes in this book at one time or another, though sometimes I have to revisit some of them. Yes, it's OK to let some of them go when it feels best for you, and revisit them when you feel up to it.

The changes in this book aren't a way to improve your life. Let me stress that: this isn't a self-improvement book. It's an experimentation book. It's a change lab. It's a way to explore yourself, to figure out what works best for you, to get out of your comfort zone, to learn how to change, and to be OK with change. And that's the most important thing: learning how to be OK with change.

It's about living life in a way that will give you the greatest fulfillment, will help you help the world, and to live more fully and in the present.

I present 52 Changes, with gratitude to you for reading it.

THE PRINCIPLES

1. One Change at a Time. Just one. Don't make several at once, because then they'll all fail.
2. Small Changes Only. Don't try to run 30 minutes if you haven't been running. Just do 2 minutes. Small changes are more likely to stick.
3. Enjoy the Change. If you don't enjoy it, it's not worth doing. And it won't stick anyway.
4. Iterate. If a change fails, figure out why, and improve the method. Or pick another change.
5. Pick a trigger. A trigger is something already ingrained in your routine that you use to anchor a new change. For example, go for a walk (the new habit) right after drinking coffee in the morning (the trigger).

Q: If I make a change one week, do I stick with it for the rest of the year? A: Yes, if it makes sense for you. Some changes are fundamental and can make powerful changes in your life, and you should keep these. But which changes are fundamental are different for each person — you'll know it when you feel it.

Q: But I can't possibly do 52 things a day, every day! How can I keep all the changes? A: You can't. Some changes will stick, others won't. Some changes you won't even attempt, because they might sound dumb or just not right for you. So do one of the other changes instead. Some changes you won't need to do every day — if you declutter a shelf, you just need to learn how to keep it decluttered, instead of doing it again every day. Even if it gets cluttered, you probably only need to do it once every few months.

Q: What do I do at the end of the year? A: You can review the

changes you tried, see what worked best, see what you didn't stick with that you would like to try again. Go over the book again, and pick out ones to try again. Some of them you only want to do every 4–6 months anyway (clearing out a closet, for example).



CHANGE 1: MEDITATE

THE CHANGE: *Find a quiet place and sit for 2 minutes, focusing on your breathing. This is a simple form of meditation.*

WHY: Meditation is a way to practice mindfulness, which is a skill you can carry into your everyday life. When you're mindful, you are living in the present. You're more aware of your body, your thoughts, your emotional reactions, the people you're interacting with. You are less stressed, and more at peace. You are present in anything you do.

This mindfulness is the foundation for all the other changes in this book, so even if you feel silly trying it, I highly recommend you give it a try.

HOW:

1. Commit to just 2 minutes a day.
2. Pick a time and trigger.
3. Find a quiet spot. Sit comfortably.
4. Start with just 2 minutes.
5. Focus on your breath.

When you notice your mind wandering from the breath, just notice it and don't berate yourself or try to push away the thought, but gently return to the breath. Repeat this process as many times as you need to.

If you do well the first 2 or 3 days, feel free to expand to 5 minutes if it feels good. Otherwise, feel free to stay with 2 minutes the entire week. I recommend sticking to this 2-5 minutes a day for as long as you find it useful — possibly all year, or for the rest of your life. It's really essential practice. If you drop it for any reason, pick it up again later.