PRAISE FOR RICHIE NORTON & THE POWER OF STARTING SOMETHING STUPID

“Thank you Richie Norton for inspiring us to authenticity and greatness.” — FORBES

“This warm, wonderful book will inspire and motivate you to do more in your life than you ever dreamed possible.” — Brian Tracy, author of The Power of Self-Confidence

Richie Norton’s new book The Power of Starting Something Stupid is already getting me in a heap of trouble. As I was reading it, I made notes to Steve (my husband). When I was done I handed it to him and said, “This could change the way we live.”

— Brené Brown, bestselling author of Daring Greatly

I absolutely love this book. I love how it makes me feel. It energizes me, inspires me, and gives me confidence. It reminds each of us that all things are possible. . . . This book disrupts conventional thinking—in a smart way.

— Stephen M. R. Covey, New York Times and the #1 Wall Street Journal bestselling author of The Speed of Trust and coauthor of the #1 Amazon bestseller Smart Trust

Today I have over 120 million YouTube views; it only seems like yesterday when people thought that following my dreams could only be a hobby. Fortunately, as Richie teaches, ‘stupid’ was the smartest thing I could do.

— Devin Graham, content creator for the YouTube channel devinsupertramp

“When I wrote The E-Myth Revisited, I wasn’t an author and I really wasn’t interested in business, but I had discovered something about business that nobody else seemed to see, or understand, and I decided to write a book about it. It came like a gift, a huge aha from out of nowhere, and I ran with it. Today, that ‘stupid’ idea (everybody told me it wouldn’t work!) has created the most successful book on small business ever written because of that one, great stupid idea. I thought I was just lucky: Richie just told me that I’m in really good company. Find out why stupid is now the New Smart. Read it, you’ll love it, you’ll find out why thinking stupid makes the best sense in the world.”

— Michael Gerber, the world’s #1 small-business guru and author of The E-Myth Revisited

“Once in a great while a new author bursts on the scene to light a fire under us. Richie Norton is that rare spark. His certainty that the secret to success is to start something stupid is right on and will alter your future. Thirty publishers thought Chicken Soup was stupid before it sold over 100 million copies. This new book could not have come at a better time and Richie’s urgent and authentic style is readable, convincing and a compelling blueprint for success. Be smart: read The Power of Starting Something Stupid.”

— Jack Canfield, New York Times bestselling author of The Success Principles, and cocreator of the Chicken Soup for the Soul® series
1. FIRST THINGS FIRST
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DO YOU BELIEVE:

1. that your life matters?
2. that your life has purpose?
3. that you are meant to be happy?

Before you embark on the next 76 days, you must first internalize these three truths. You must embrace them completely—not just as general ideas that apply to the “collective we” or that exist for some kind of specific social categorization. You must believe that these three things are true of you, of your life.

You start here, because in order to create the meaningful life satisfaction and success you seek, you must first believe that you deserve this kind of life. You must believe that you deserve a life that consists of more than commuting, working, eating, surfing the Internet, sleeping and watching TV. There is an entire world full of excitement, energy, influence, purpose-driven projects and experiences, authentic meaning and joy—right at your fingertips. Reach out and take it!

This 76-Day Challenge will help you start your very own “something stupid.” This plan will take you by the hand and prompt your authentic self as you consciously make the kinds of choices that will give your life a sense of sincere purpose, leave you feeling vibrant and alive, and ensure that you live a courageous life, a life without regret.

Go make some waves! Go start something stupid!

Richie Norton, Author
The Power of Starting Something Stupid
FIRST
THINGS
FIRST
...

COUPLE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1. This ebook is a companion action guide to my book *The Power of Starting Something Stupid*. Throughout the *76-Day Challenge* I make reference to page numbers in *The Power of Starting Something Stupid* so you can take a deep-dive approach to making the principles I teach come alive. If you don’t have the book yet, you can get it by clicking on this link: *The Power of Starting Something Stupid*. That said, I’ve written this action guide in a way that you can still get incredible value and results by taking the steps without the book. My objective with this guide is not to sell you a book (besides, if you’re reading this you probably already have it). My objective is to help you live your best life. So read on and have fun!

2. I recommend you print this action guide and take it one day at a time, checking off your progress as you go. Sure you could read this action guide real quick today and assume you know it all and move on with your life — *that method won’t make any lasting change*. Want to really start (and finish) something awesome? Really? Commit to actually taking action on the prompts I provide in the guide one day at a time. Try it out. If you really do the work, things will start to happen. Before releasing this action guide to the public, I first tested it with a select group of people who told me that it helped their progress if I followed up by email. If you downloaded this action guide from my website, I’ll send you follow up emails to help you along the way. If not, you can sign up here (you can opt out at anytime). Thanks!
A (VERY) BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE 76-DAY CHALLENGE...
When our second son (Cardon) was born, he had a difficult time falling (and staying) asleep. After many long, sleepless nights, and many tears shed—both sweet Natalie’s (my wife) and Cardon’s own—we did what any good parent would do. We threw our hands up in the air and admitted that we had no business being parents. Clearly, we had exactly zero idea what on earth we were doing.

We consulted with our pediatrician. We devoted hours upon hours to personal study. We tried every holistic (possibly read: voodoo?) trick in the books (and books and books). We devoured ever piece of information we could find in an attempt to solve our baby’s sleeping problem. Then, well then, we stopped everything and simply banged our heads against the wall (which ironically seemed to help the situation as much as any thing else we tried, go figure).

Nothing worked. Nothing, that is, until one glorious day when we discovered the magical key that unlocked the golden gates of sleeping euphoria: FOCUSED SOUND.

The hum of a fan, the whoosh of Natalie’s hairdryer, the sound of dense rainfall recorded to a compact disk (yes, this was long enough ago that we were actually still in possession of a CD player) . . . the exact type of sound didn’t matter. Our infant son, with his newly developing brain, didn’t have the skills necessary to turn down the volume on all the sensory input around him. Thus Natalie and I, as his parents, stepped in and helped him soothe and calm those distractions by introducing a clear sound for him to focus on. Once that focus was established, he was able to secure a healthy sleep pattern that blessed all our lives.

For the first time in nearly eight weeks (that’s approximately 64 days, but who’s counting?), our son (and his crazed parents) got more than two consecutive hours of sleep.

Our once fussy, miserable baby had transformed, literally overnight, into the happiest baby in town.
THE PURPOSE OF THE 76-DAY CHALLENGE
Life, like infancy, can be exceptionally overwhelming. Many of you are, in this very moment, overwhelmed beyond description. To you, I offer my most sincere empathy. Please, rest assured that you are most certainly not alone, and trust me when I tell you that there is another way, a better way, to live.

Overwhelm, anxiety, worry, fear, procrastination, confusion, lack of direction, lack of purpose and joy, the disparaging opinions of others... all of this discontent and more are symptoms of a very real and very powerful foe—an epidemic even—that is running absolutely rampant in today’s day and age. THE DISEASE OF DISTRACTION.

At every turn, we are met with forces, powerful ones, which relentlessly (often, ferociously) vie for our undivided attention. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these competitors for our time are mere distractions that cloud our thinking and prevent us from consciously and courageously engaging in the projects we are most passionate about, and thereby, prevent us from living the life we are truly meant to live—the life of our dreams.

Friends, this is a frightening diagnosis, yes, but there is a way out.

The trick is to turn down the volume on competing, unnecessary influences, so that you have the capacity to hear and follow the most richly necessary (guiding) influences of your life. The 76-Day Challenge exists to help us do just that.

Just as the simple presence of one, soft, consistent sound—a sound that was capable of gently drowning out all the others—was enough to help our infant son focus his senses and guide him into deep, restful sleep, there is purpose-filled, guiding direction available to you. Over the next 76 days, as you work to consciously take your life by the reins, you will uncover your very own clear and authentic sense of direction. This clarity and sense of direction will help you turn down the volume on the things in your life that matter least, and help you turn up the volume on, and make room for, the things in your life that matter most.
OVER THE NEXT 76 DAYS:

• You will exercise the courage to acknowledge your stupid ideas, despite doubt, fear, or the opinions of others.
• You will dig deep and get in touch with a project or idea that authentically matters to you.
• You will accomplish at least one thing each day that is aligned with that overarching goal.
• You will acknowledge less than ideal life circumstances and commit to courageously stop letting them have control over the trajectory of your life.
• You will define and evaluate existing thought and behavior patterns and consciously recalibrate them as necessary in order to align them with your overarching goals.
• You will face and overcome fears.
• You will face and overcome pride.
• You will face and overcome procrastination.
• You will develop a sense of your best possible self, become authentic, and embrace positive personal change.
• You will set and maintain standards for yourself: personally and within the framework of your project as a whole.
• You will embrace the principles of S.T.A.R.T (pgs. 115, 193-199, *The Power of Starting Something Stupid*) and develop a plan of action to implement them into your personal project and your life as a whole.
• You will work to identify and leverage existing resources by carefully, and authentically, engaging art of Mission Matching to accelerate success.
• You will occasionally reference the book, *The Power of Starting Something Stupid*. (Remember, the 76-Day Challenge was created as a companion guide to *The Power of Starting Something Stupid* and is best understood by referencing the book as you move along.)
• You will face obstacles. Naturally, everyone’s experience will be different. However, no matter who you are or the goals you are working toward, there may be will be difficulties and roadblocks along the way. Don’t become discouraged! Develop the mantra, “Learn and lean.” When challenges, mistakes and/or setbacks arise, *learn* from them (now: when the stakes are relatively low). Then *lean* in to the journey, and keep moving forward. The lessons you learn now will help you incrementally gain the skills necessary to face future challenges (later: when the stakes will likely be higher).
• You will face success! The 76-Day Challenge is driven by results. Take time to acknowledge, celebrate and be proud of even the smallest of wins and successes along the way!
• In short, you will get clear, get real, and get things done.
There is a wonderful world out there—a world of direction and purpose, a world of satisfaction and inspiration, a world of surety and peace. Yes! There is a wonderful world out there, waiting . . . for YOU.

**WHY 76 DAYS?**

In my life, the number 76 is significant. 76 is the number of days our wonderful son, the inspiration for Gavin’s Law—Live to Start, Start to Live (pgs. 7-14, *The Power of Starting Something Stupid*)—lived with our family here on earth. I often set project goals within this time frame, because it helps me to stay focused and committed, tethered if you will, to what matters most. It may sound silly, but this time frame makes me feel like I’m consciously leaving a legacy for my son with every stupid project I complete.

The practical reality is that 76 days is more than enough time to move any (yes, any) project from idea phase to measurable, and sustainable, action. Aside from the personal significance of the number, the reason this time bound action plan has proven to be so successful for people is twofold:

1. First, the *76-Day Challenge* walks us through the process of breaking our big-picture goals into smaller, more manageable and actionable projects (to be completed over a consciously specified period of time). As we do so, we simultaneously transform the overwhelming psychology of an idea as a whole from complex and impossible, to manageable and actionable. Suddenly the very ideas that we didn’t think we could possibly begin at this point in our lives don’t seem nearly as daunting. This simple change in identification can very quickly transform an abstract thought into an actionable task or assignment.

2. Second, research indicates that consistent, daily action toward specific ends in mind, over an extended period of time, actually creates lasting change in the chemistry of the brain! Neural pathways that affect thought patterns and behavior are altered by consistent focus on and practice toward desired progress and change. Thus, consistent, focused attention on intentional, positive and productive thought patterns and behaviors helps our brains replace old, potentially destructive, thought and behavioral patterns with healthy, new ways of thinking and being.

“The brain is built to change in response to experience. . . . brain circuits [are] malleable by the environment and are potential targets of training.”

- Richard Davidson, one of the world’s leading researchers of brain development

As you focus and commit, you will use the next 76 days to successfully bridge the gap between where you are now, to where you truly want to be—building purposeful, productive and lasting momentum toward meaningful success.

**BE DILIGENT. BE HAPPY. HAVE FUN.**
76-DAY CHALLENGE
PHASE ONE: GET CLEAR DAYS 1-14
Ready?

Let’s do this thing!

**DAY 1—Prepare your physical environment**

Everyone works well in a different type of physical environment. For me, I need a clean space, free from distraction. My wife, Natalie, likes to surround herself with books, images and quotes that inspire her. I like to listen to loud music—it sincerely helps me focus. Natalie requires absolute silence in order to get into “the zone” and get stuff done (so, yes, this can be a source of contention when we are both attempting to work from home, ha!). The point is, there’s no right or wrong process here, the goal is simply to create a space that works for YOU.

**TIPS:**

1. *The space should be inspiring, but not distracting.*

Images that inspire you, quotes that fire you up—these are elements of inspiration. Piles of mail, mundane to do lists, television, cell phones etc—these are elements of distraction. Remember, we are trying to create a space where we can turn down the volume on all outside distraction so that we can dedicate our fiercest focus to specific “Dream Work.”

2. *The space should be different from where you normally work.*

If at all possible, try to select a space that is different from where you do other work. For example, if you generally sit down at your desk to pay bills and this is a stressful task for you, this isn’t the ideal environment for you to work on The Challenge.

Let me offer a personal example to illustrate. A few years ago, a close business partner and friend took advantage of me. He had essentially left our company with a tremendous debt for which he should have been personally liable, however he was unwilling to take any kind of responsibility for his damaging actions. This was a trying time in my life, to say the very least. As I went through the days and weeks of cleaning up this financial mess, my mind was nearly overcome with feelings of betrayal, anger, fear, injustice and intense, nearly debilitating stress. I spent hours and hours on the phone and in front of my computer working to clean up this horrendous mess. In the end, everything worked out, and I was able to get things back on track. I have forgiven my old partner and completely moved on from this experience. Even so, I still cannot even think about the physical work environment where I spent those stressful days and weeks without conjuring feelings of anxiety and stress.

Again, it is important that you work from a space that is fresh, clear and new—free from any kind of past stress, pressure, anxiety, sorrow and so on.
3. **Stock up.**

You need to be prepared in advance with anything you may need to make the very best, and most effortless, use of your work time. Remember, the overarching goal here is to rid yourself of as many distractions as possible.

Imagine for a moment that you have to get up and find a pen that works in the middle of a focus session. Chances are, you’ll look for the pen in the same drawer where you’ll also happen across a picture of your old college roommate. This will make you wonder what the heck they’re up to now, so clearly you’ll have to take a fast peek at Facebook (2 seconds, promise). On this long lost roommate’s wall, you’ll find a link to a video of Kid President saying something totally hilarious and simultaneously profound (worthwhile right? All in the name of fueling creative energy). Suddenly you re-emerge from the abyss of the World Wide Web, and 3 hours have passed. You still don’t have a pen that works, and for some reason you can’t explain, you find yourself watching a YouTube video of a cat that has learned how to flush the toilet.

Eliminate potential distractions by preparing your workspace with a journal or notebook, pens, and anything else that you need to keep you focused.

4. **Get a timer.**

Keeping a timer at your workspace will help you stay on track. There will be times when you need to sit down and work, when you really don’t feel like it. Setting a timer for a specified amount of time, will ensure that you stick with it—even when everything inside of you is screaming, “save it for later!”

Set a timer, strap yourself in, and do the work. Getting started is often 90% of the battle. I highly recommend buying a simple egg timer etc rather than using your phone. . . this leads me directly into the final workspace tip. . .

5. **Disconnect.**

I highly recommend a workspace that is free of Internet access. There will always be a million reasons to quickly jump online. Resist the temptation by eliminating access. This goes for cell phones too. Turn them off during focus time, or better yet, leave them in another room all together.

Don’t underestimate the importance of creating an intentional workspace. There is a reason this step comes before any of the “real work” can begin. The environment you create for yourself will serve as a solid foundation for the work that is to come.
Imagine for a moment a photographer’s relationship with their camera. If said photographer had a big event coming up, they’d certainly spend some time inspecting and preparing their gear. They’d likely clean image sensors, update software, organize equipment etc to ensure that they were prepared for peak performance on the night of the big event.

For the kind of work you’re preparing to engage in over the weeks ahead, YOU are your gear. YOU are your equipment. YOUR personal preparation for what lay ahead matters as much as (if not more than) anything else.

I cannot stress this enough: You are the greatest tool for success that you have at your disposal.

Over the next week, it’s your mission to inspect and prepare your emotional gear. If you’re not sharp, clear minded and present, you won’t be able to work at your optimum capacity, and thus you won’t realize your highest potential for forward momentum and success.

Here are some ideas to help you prepare your emotional environment. Over the next few days (Days 2-10), you’ll use the following list as a sort of menu to help you prepare mentally and emotionally for the work that lies ahead. You may go through the list chronologically, or you may select the activities that feel most meaningful and applicable to you as you go along. If you find a particular exercise works especially well for you, don’t be afraid to repeat it again. Each time, you’ll learn something new and find yourself in a healthier, more centered, mental and emotional space. The activities for days 2-10 can be done in any order you choose.

**NOTE:** these activities are designed to take a total of approximately 20 minutes a day. However, you’ll find that the shift in thinking they evoke will remain with you throughout the day. The cumulative effect of this process, aka doing these writing exercises every day, is quite remarkable as it relates to preparing your emotional environment and getting your “gear” ready to make big things happen in the weeks ahead.

**DAY 2—Engage in something you love.**

Mental and emotional clarity often follow engaging in something you truly love, something that really fires you up. Nothing clears my head like being in the water—surfing or swimming. Hiking in the mountains or doing yoga both help Natalie get her head on straight. For you, it may be spending an afternoon reading a favorite book, going for a long run, attending a concert, having dinner with an inspiring friend or family member, beating the stuffing out of a punching bag, attending a church service etc. The activity itself isn’t important, except that it has to be something that infuses you with energy and helps you gain a greater sense of clarity. The goal here is to help you find your sense of mental and emotional equilibrium by doing something you truly love.
DAY 3—Spend some time alone.

Life is high pressure and fast pace. The level of mental input and processing is nearly incessant. If you’re in a state of absolute mental and emotional overwhelm, a smart way to settle your mind down to a state of greater calm is to spend some time away. I’m not talking a weekend away (though that would be great if you can swing it), even 10 minutes 2 times a day will make a significant difference over 3-4 consecutive days. Just find a quiet place, free of outside distraction, and focus on deep breaths. If your mind wanders, simply bring it right back to your breath. Acknowledge the distraction that momentarily took you away from the breathing, don’t fight it, but then just gently bring your focus back to your breath. It may sound hippy, but Natalie and I swear by the long term benefits of meditation. Seriously, ten minutes, twice a day. Doctor’s orders.

DAY 4—Explore obstacles that may have held you back in the past.

Chances are you’ve met with obstacles in the past. Many were likely out of your control, but for this exercise, those aren’t the challenges we’re focusing on. Take a solid 15-20 minutes (set your timer and don’t stop writing until the timer goes off) and free write on the following topic: What obstacles have held me back from success in the past? Am I willing to take ownership of those failures? How will I choose to respond differently in the future to ensure that I don’t make the same mistakes moving forward?

This isn’t an opportunity to dump all over yourself! If you move through this exercise correctly, it should be liberating and energizing. It is an opportunity to get real and say, “Hey, I’ve screwed up before. Who hasn’t? Let’s see what I have to do to make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

If this exercise scares you, know this, it scares me too. But we’ve got to have the courage to ask ourselves this question, “What do I want more, my dreams or my excuses?”

DAY 5—Name your fears.

You’ve got to name your fears in order to tame them. What scares you? Make a list. Free write for at least 15-20 minutes (set your timer and don’t stop writing until the timer goes off). You might be surprised at what comes out. This exercise is important, because as we see what frightens us, not only do we see what’s holding us back, but also, and perhaps more importantly, we discover the things that matter most to us in our lives. Our fears show us the things that, at the core of who we are, have the potential to be the greatest motivating forces in our lives.

For example, when Natalie first did this exercise, she realized how afraid she was of not being a good mother. Of everything she was afraid of, this was at the very top of her list. Defining and understanding this fear allowed her to explore it more deeply, and as she did, she learned that in order for her to feel the very most successful and fulfilled, she had to ensure that every goal she set, every decision she made was broad enough to include a concern for the wellbeing of our children. Understanding this fear has been liberating for Natalie. Now, rather than being subconsciously held back by a fear she didn’t even
know she had, she is able to actively combat the fear by always checking her goals and aspirations against her most important motivating force: her desire to be a great mom. Since making this realization and actively working to overcome it in a healthy way (a way that’s completely aligned with the well-being of everyone involved) Natalie has been more successful and more fulfilled in her business and life than ever before.

**DAY 6—Gratitude list.**

Gratitude can be one of the most empowering traits there is. When we truly see all we have to be thankful for, we find we are capable of much more than we had ever dreamed. Gratitude proceeds hope, hope leads to greater energy and passion, and greater energy and passion lead to greater fulfillment and success.

The following exercise is especially important for people who have been frustrated by failure in the past, or who feel bound by circumstance which is outside their realm of control, or for people who perhaps find themselves experiencing feelings of self-pity as they reflect on the things they have wanted to accomplish but have not yet achieved. This exercise is also helpful for people who find themselves experiencing jealousy over the success of others. Remember, the goal during this phase of The Challenge is mental clarity—we can’t truly get clear without letting go of all the negative emotions (or thought patterns) that hold us back.

Simply make a list of things you are grateful for. Free write for at least 15-20 minutes (set your timer and don’t stop writing until the timer goes off). For some people, it is extremely hard to get started. For others, the list seems to grow longer by the second with no signs of ever slowing down. Either way, it’s ok. Part of the goal here is to remind ourselves to adjust our focus to all that we have rather than all that we lack.

A friend of mine was once in a group discussion about gratitude. They performed an activity where they made their way around the circle over and over again as each person in the circle stated something that they were grateful for. One woman was really struggling with the activity. She couldn’t think of a single thing she was thankful for. Her life had been a series of injustices and failures. She was angry, and the activity seemed to discourage her greatly. After much persuasion from another member of the group, she finally looked up and said, “I’m grateful for my left thumb.” Laughter broke out among the group as the woman’s eyes welled with joyful tears. “I really am grateful for my thumb!” From there the list continued on and on, this woman had no shortage of things for which she was grateful. Once you got her started, she couldn’t seem to stop. I wish I could have been there to experience that immense power of gratitude first hand. I’m told it was a deeply moving experience for everyone present.

**DAY 7—Weaknesses list.**

First things first, I’m not one to dwell on weaknesses. Overall, I believe in identifying and then playing to your strengths. However, it is important to identify areas where we may lack so that we can be aware moving forward and thus fortify ourselves effectively. This activity shouldn’t be discouraging! We are all strong in some areas and less strong in
others. No one is good at everything. By identifying our weaknesses, we can fortify ourselves against them. We can do this by seeking out collaborative working relationships with people who compliment us well. For example, if I tend to have a high tolerance for risk, identifying and understanding that potential weakness would encourage me to surround myself with partners or associates or mentors who I trust to give me effective feedback along the way, and so on and so forth.

Also, when we acknowledge our weaknesses, we enter a new level of self-awareness. Not only are we able to safeguard ourselves more effectively, through acknowledging the areas where we may be weak, but we are able to work mindfully to turn these weaknesses into strengths.

Free write for at least 15-20 minutes (set your timer and don’t stop writing until the timer goes off) about areas where you could use improvement and how you intend to improve or get the help you need to fortify yourself as necessary.

**DAY 8—Strengths list.**

In order to achieve the greatest level of success possible, you have to get in touch with just how very capable you are. This can be really hard for some people, if that is the case for you, you may need to solicit outside help from someone you trust. The goal of this activity is to free write for at least 15-20 minutes (set your timer and don’t stop writing until the timer goes off) about your greatest strengths. You can make a simple list (bullet points) or you can expound on why each of these characteristics is a blessing in your life—how it sets you up for success. I recommend keeping this list to refer back to.

Throughout the process of The Challenge (and business and life in general) it’s inevitable that there will be roadblocks to overcome. When we can stay focused on our strengths, we will find we have greater optimism and confidence, and thus a greater ability to overcome and continue on despite hardship.

**DAY 9—Aspiring adjectives.**

For this next writing exercise, you will again free write for at least 15-20 minutes (set your timer and don’t stop writing until the timer goes off). The goal here is to make a list of adjectives (descriptive words) that describe the “ideal you.” This is a list of qualities you want to embody in business and life.

I recommend you write this list in the present tense, for example:

I AM BRAVE.
I AM GENEROUS.
I AM WISE.

Etc.
However, there are no solid rules to these writing exercises, so feel free to simply make a bulleted list of words if you prefer.

Next, take this list and post it somewhere where you will see it every day. This could be next to your computer screen, next to your mirror in the bathroom, on the refrigerator. It doesn’t matter. Simply display the list in a place that will bring it consistently to your consciousness. As you are constantly aware of these traits, you will find that opportunities will arise that allow you to develop them more fully. You will find a great sense of self and a high level of satisfaction as you work to improve your character. And nothing has the power to increase your propensity for sustainable success like deep-seated character.

**DAY 10—Reflection.**

This is a day of reflection. Spend some quiet time thinking about the shift you’ve achieved in your emotional environment. You can use the following questions as prompts, or you can simply free write about the experience as a whole.

- Do you feel a greater sense of clarity?
- Do you feel sharpened and ready (and perhaps even anxious) to get to work?
- How has your attitude shifted throughout the process?
- Have you seen a shift in your sense of confidence/competence?

For all these questions, it may be good to follow up with “why or why not” as part of your reflection. If you struggled, fine, own that and work through it as best as you’re able.

The goal is to give yourself a day to sink into this new state of mental clarity and to commit yourself to working hard to stay there. It’s not going to be easy to stay in this space. You have other responsibilities, environments you can’t always control, input from others that may cloud your thinking, but remember, you can return to these writing exercises any time to help get your head clear and get you back on track. Remember, this is about YOU—getting your tool (yourself) ready for the work ahead.

**DAY 11—Take the Bezos Test (Chapter 4).**

Take time to read through chapter 4 and to complete the Bezos Test (pgs. 54-58). Your end in mind is to determine which of these ideas you will be focusing on as your first project—your focus for the 76-Day Challenge. Whatever project you decide on will be your “overarching goal” throughout the remainder of The Challenge.

If necessary, do this exercise more than once. You can go through the exercise as many times as it takes for you to get clear on how you want to spend your time and energy. If you need time to think it over, take that time. There’s no rush here. The most important thing is that you pick a goal that sincerely resonates with you, something that you’ll be willing to stick with even when things get hard.
DAY 12—Define your goal as the New Smart.

Read pages 22-25 of *The Power of Starting Something Stupid*. Take 15-20 minutes to free write about some or all of the following:

- In what ways is your overarching goal an example of stupid as the New Smart?
- Why is this idea in your best interest to pursue?
- How does following through with this idea have the potential to bless your life and/or the lives of others?
- How would you feel if someone else beat you to it? If someone else pursued your idea before you got the courage to act?

DAY 13—Commit to tune out so you can tune in.

Some of us have the rare ability to simply tune out the negativity of others. I'll be honest. I am not “some of us.” I am affected by other people’s opinions more than I’d like to admit, and I think the reality here is that the vast majority of us are the same way. If you know yourself to be affected by the opinions of others, this exercise will be invaluable to you and will help you stay on track despite unsolicited external input along the way.

Take 15-20 minutes to free write about some or all of the following questions:

- Name specific people in your life who may not be supportive of your goal.
- In what ways, and for what reasons, won’t these people support your project? Is there a chance that their lack of support actually comes from a genuine concern for your wellbeing (they actually think they are being helpful)? If so, in what ways?
- What can you do to combat these situations should they arise?
- In yesterday’s exercise, you defined ways that your project actually falls into the category of the New Smart. If you truly believe that to be true, how can that help you turn down the volume on the opinions of others?
- What if you start to experience feelings of doubt yourself? How will you combat those and make sure you give your goal the shot it deserves?
- Do you care more about your goal than you do about the opinions of others? Why or why not?
- Make a list of specific people who you know to be supportive and encouraging. How can you involve them in the project to help you stay on track?
It is inevitable that there will be (either now or at some future time) less than ideal circumstances that will stand in your way. It is important that you decide NOW how you will combat them when they arise. Take 15-20 minutes to free write about some or all of the following questions:

- What circumstances currently limit your ability to pursue your goal?
- How can you overcome these circumstances?
- What excuses have you used in the past to keep yourself from pursuing your goals?
- Do you want your excuses more than you want to achieve your overarching goal? Why or why not?
- What unique gifts and talents do you have that you can use to overcome the obstacles you face (how can you be resourceful in the face of these obstacles)?
- As other obstacles arise in the future, how will you combat them? What can you commit to do in order to keep yourself on the path toward your goal, no matter what?
PHASE TWO: WORK SMART DAYS 15-45
DAY 15—Set yourself up for success.

It’s time to hold yourself publicly accountable to your goal! This can be scary, but it’s also a HUGE leap toward achieving the success you seek.

Here are some options to help you set up an effective accountability network:

• If you find power and motivation in the amount of gravity a large and very public accountability group provides, engage social media networks in your quest. Tweet, Facebook, Instagram, blog, (whatever media you prefer) a little about your new start. You don’t necessarily have to tell people what your idea is yet, just let world know you’re starting something new and that you’re excited about it! Be sure to use the hashtag #powerofstupid, so we can follow your journey and offer support along the way!

• Some people are more encouraged and motivated to stay on track by a simple commitment to a trusted friend or group of friends. The trick is to find people to whom you feel accountable—as opposed to finding someone who will hold you accountable. It’s infinitely more effective to select a person or group that you’d feel deep regret facing after breaking a commitment than it is to find someone who is simply willing to crack the whip in your behalf.

• Please tell me about your new start on Twitter (@RichieNorton), Facebook, Instagram (@richie_norton), or make a comment on my blog at www.RichieNorton.com/blog. Excited for you!

DAY 16—Create a performance plan: Part I.

It’s time to create an actionable performance plan!

As we discuss in The Power of Starting Something Stupid:

“Dreams don’t get done until they’re due. It is easy to find time to do everything else, except follow our dreams. This is because other important things in our lives have due dates—bills are due, assignments are due, even babies are due. If your dreams are never due, they’ll never get done.”

For today and tomorrow’s objectives, I recommend using a timer to keep you on track. If you find that you work better over longer, focused stretches of time, set your timer for 45 minutes to 1 hour at a time. If you find that you work better in short spurts with breaks in between try sessions of 20 minutes each. Simply do what works best for you. The only hard fast rule here is that while the timer is ticking, you stay on task. Time dedicated to Dream Work should be treated as sacred time. Do not let anything distract you. If a man in a gorilla suit should come falling through your roof, you would be so focused that you wouldn’t hear him crashing through your ceiling beams, nor would you feel the debris as it smacked down upon your head. You wouldn’t even look up to notice this gorilla intruder frantically dancing Gangham Style right atop your workspace. Got it? Sacred time.
But in all sincerity, I implore you to remain focused. Even and especially when you come up against a bump in the road. There may be pieces of the puzzle that don’t seem to fit, you may find yourself doubting your qualification to take on such a project as you have chosen, or maybe you’ll simply feel stuck and frustrated with the process itself. At this point, you will likely be tempted to take a break and come back later, and you will more than likely feel justified in doing so. Don’t. *Stay with the process.*

Stay with the work until the timer sets you free. Then, if you need to take a break, take one. However, keep in mind that throughout this exercise breaks should be no more than 5-10 minutes each. Walk outside and clear your head. Go to the bathroom, get a drink of water, practice some mindful breathing, but come back to your work within no more than 5-10 minutes. Then set your timer for the next focus session and keep your head down, no matter what.

It is so important to keep your head in the kind of mind space you’re working to achieve as you do this important Dream Work. Part of the process over the net 76 days involves overcoming procrastination and learning to follow tasks through to completion promptly, and no matter what—even and especially when they require a great level of mental or emotional exertion. This exercise will help you begin to make this process a habit, and that habit will bless you in countless ways for years to come.

For the following exercises, decide on an amount of focus time you’re prepared to commit to for each step, then set the timer and get to work. Only you know the system that will work best for you.

- **Step one:** clearly define the end in mind. *Don’t just think it, ink it.* Write the overarching goal down, big, bold, brave, at the top of your sheet of paper. (At this point, you need to be sure to condense your overarching goal into one sentence that will serve as your project’s purpose statement moving forward.)

Congratulations, this is you, owning your dream! That’s something to be extremely proud of. Tragically, many people never make it this far.

- **Step two:** make a running list of everything that needs to happen in order to move your project through from where you are now to your ultimate end in mind—and I mean, EVERYTHING. Just dump it all out there. No rules. You don’t even need to get specific at this point. Just dump all those thoughts and tasks and running to do lists out of your head and on to the paper before you. The tasks don’t even need to be listed in chronological order. The goal is simply to get them down on paper.

**NOTE:** This list may overwhelm you. If it does, that’s O.K. Remember the adage “How do you eat an elephant? . . . “One bite at a time.” (From legal: do not attempt to eat an elephant. We will not be held liable for the eating of any elephants, for any reason, at any time.) The idea is this, the list you see before you will be approached systematically: one, tiny, manageable step at a time. There’s no reason to get worked up over it.
NOTE: Some of you may have found this process to be absolutely liberating! Finally, you have all of these thoughts out of your head and down on paper! This may bring you a tremendous amount of excitement and even relief, as you are able to let these thoughts go for a moment, knowing they’re safe on the paper before you.

Now, step away from The Challenge for the rest of the day. Recharge. Your goal is written out, you have a rough idea of what it’s going to take to accomplish it. Come back tomorrow, refreshed, clear headed and ready to make a specific plan of action for forward momentum.

DAY 17—Create a performance plan: Part II.

Before beginning today’s exercise, please familiarize (or re-familiarize) yourself with the following:

Refer to pg. 165 in The Power of Starting Something Stupid:

“Break your [tasks] into smaller, more manageable ones. These smaller goals are what management gurus refer to as ‘S.M.A.R.T.’

- **SPECIFIC**: Goals must clearly express the expectations required for successful completion.
- **MEASURABLE**: There should be a system in place to effectively measure progress.
- **ATTAINABLE**: Goals must be realistic.
- **RELEVANT**: Goals should be a significant step toward your ultimate end in mind.
- **TIME-BOUND**: Goals must be assigned a deadline.”

Also make sure you have read The Power of Starting Something Stupid chapter 12: The 5 Actions of the New Smart, starting on pg. 193. The information provided in this chapter will be invaluable to you as you move forward on today’s exercise and on through the remainder of The Challenge.

- Take the task list you compiled yesterday, and break those more general tasks into small, manageable, actionable “to do’s.” During this exercise, you’ll be rewriting your original task list, but this time, you’ll write tasks in chronological order and break them down into smaller actions.

For example:

If my overarching goal is to play the guitar for Leonardo DiCaprio as he rides the space shuttle to the moon, one of my more general goals would likely be: Meet Leonardo DiCaprio.
I might break that task down into smaller pieces as follows:

* Get in touch with college friend B— via Facebook.
* Find out if B— is still in touch with DiCaprio’s publicist.
* Ask for an introduction to DiCaprio’s publicist.
* And so on and so forth.

**NOTE:** the above account is fictional in every sense—however Mr. DiCaprio is apparently headed into space, yes, in real life.

*Keep in mind the principles you read about “S.M.A.R.T.” goals as well as the 5 actions of the New Smart: Serve, Thank, Ask, Receive and Trust. Remember, as you incorporate these principles into your actionable goals, you’ll increase your propensity to quickly build momentum, exponentially.*

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**DAY 18—Calendar.**

- **Step one:** Today you will take the list of practical tasks you have created and start to calendar it out. What will you accomplish and when? You should calendar out approximately 31 days of tasks: one task to be completed each day. Keep this simple, so it’s realistic to stay on track.
- **Step two:** Schedule a specific time each day to work on your Dream Work. Every day, there will be something to accomplish. Don’t leave those tasks to be completed “when you get around to them.” Tell yourself, “every day, from 9-10am, I will work on my Dream Work.” You may find that you are able to complete more than one task on certain days, and you may find that you are very quickly getting ahead of schedule. That’s fantastic. If you find that your daily goals are taking longer to complete than the time you have allotted for Dream Work each day, consider breaking down those daily projects into even smaller steps. It’s not about how fast or slow you are moving, it’s THAT you are moving. You are building momentum every day! *Remember, schedule your dreams, otherwise, they will never get done!*

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**DAY 19—Check in with your accountability team.**

Today, in addition to whatever you have calendared for yourself as your Dream Work task of the day, you need to get in touch with your accountability team (partner) and give them an update on your progress. Specifically, let them know about the time-bound tasks you have scheduled and ask them to check in with you to keep you on track. If your accountability group is more broad, aka you are engaging social media, it’s time to get a little more specific in your announcements to them. “My goal this week is to ________. Hold me accountable! #powerofstupid”

**TIP:** Find ways to keep yourself on track by using the steps to overcoming procrastination found on pgs. 166-168 of The Power of Starting Something Stupid. Specifically read Step 5: Make the Process Pleasurable and Step 6: Make the Process Painful. This will help you ensure you get the most out of the accountability system you have in place.
Over the next 30 days, your objective is to get things done—at least one Dream Work task per day. Here are some tips to keep in mind along the way:

- Stick to your schedule! Remember, the time you schedule to work on your dreams is sacred time. Treat it as such. If after a few days, the time you’ve chosen doesn’t seem to be working for you, make a shift in the designated time as necessary. But whatever you do, DO NOT leave it to chance. Never say, “Oh, I’ll get around to it sometime today.” Get yourself into the habit of dedicating approximately 1 hour each day from ______ to ______ o’clock. If you feel like you don’t have anything solid to do that day, make something up! Go back and repeat one of the journaling activities from earlier in The Challenge, brainstorm, re-evaluate your progress plan etc.

- Find ways to incorporate the power of START into your daily agenda: Serve, Thank, Ask, Receive and Trust. Those principles will absolutely accelerate your progress, not to mention, make the process more meaningful and purpose driven as well!

- Do your best to shake off feelings of overwhelm and discouragement. This part of the journey is meant to be fun! Change the psychology, think of it as an experiment! Do your very best to stay focused and optimistic.

- If you do face challenges or roadblocks, get resourceful. Refer back to your list of strengths often. Remind yourself that you are capable and that you have what it takes to get creative and work through whatever trouble you’re facing.

- Every night before bed, take a look at the scheduled task(s) you’ll be working on the next day. Mentally prepare for what you have to get done.

- Re-evaluate your calendar of tasks often to ensure that you’re still headed in the right direction. As you move through these tasks, new tasks may present themselves. Reorganize things as necessary as you move along.

- Be humbly aware of your weaknesses and work to make them strengths. Don’t be afraid to ask for feedback from trusted friends and colleagues about how you can overcome specific weaknesses that you are noticing may be holding you back along the way. That said, don’t get down on yourself! Weaknesses keep us willing to ask for help from others, this allows us opportunity to collaborate, match missions and do more than we could EVER do on our own!

- Journal daily. Even if it’s just a quick report of what you completed that day, how you’re feeling etc. This is another way to hold yourself accountable. It’s also a wonderful way to track your ongoing progress. If you’re struggling with something specific, set a timer for 15-20 minutes and write it out. You’ll be amazed at how much you can work out for yourself if you simply schedule uninterrupted time to dialog on paper. And NO, thinking about it for 15-20 minutes is NOT the same as writing. There is power in putting pen to paper. I dare you to give it a try. There’s magic there.

Following these tips will intensify your efforts to get your Dream Work done.
FILL IN THE BLANK. CHECK IT OFF WHEN YOU’RE DONE.

Day 20: Today I will __________________________.

Day 21: Today I will __________________________.

Day 22: Today I will __________________________.

Day 23: Today I will __________________________.

Day 24: Today I will __________________________.

Day 25: Today I will __________________________.

Day 26: Today I will __________________________.

Day 27: Today I will __________________________.

Day 28: Today I will __________________________.

Day 29: Today I will __________________________.

Day 30: Today I will __________________________.

Day 31: Today I will __________________________.

Day 32: Today I will __________________________.

Day 33: Today I will __________________________.

Day 34: Today I will __________________________.

Day 35: Today I will __________________________.

Day 36: Today I will __________________________.

Day 37: Today I will __________________________.

Day 38: Today I will __________________________.

Day 39: Today I will __________________________.

Day 40: Today I will __________________________.

Day 41: Today I will __________________________.

Day 42: Today I will __________________________.

Day 43: Today I will __________________________.

Day 44: Today I will __________________________.

Day 45: Today I will __________________________.
PHASE THREE: FINISHING STRONG DAYS 46-76
DAY 46—Take time today to review the past 45 days.

Answer these questions:

- What worked?
- What didn’t work?
- What will you do differently moving forward?
- What will you commit to continue doing moving forward?
- Were any new habits created?
- Write down at least five things you’ll do moving forward to help you reach your overarching goal.

DAYS 47-67—Step it up and get it done!

This is a menu of things to do. Some of the things are intentionally repetitive. You don’t need to do them in order. Your goal is to do what’s right for you, at the right time and with the right resources. Your objective is to check off each of these challenges, one day at a time, until you’ve completed the challenge and to read the page in the book associated with the task. If you’re disciplined, working on your goals like this will become a habit. A daily habit of working on your goals is an achievement in and of itself that will provide dividends of success in your personal and professional life.

Onward!

DAY 47: Tackle one fear related to your goal(s), today (pg. 119).

DAY 48: Put aside a prideful thought, today (pg. 135).

DAY 49: Do one thing you’ve been procrastinating, today (pg. 153).

DAY 50: Be authentic, truly, in your interactions, today (pg. 171).

DAY 51: Serve someone, today (pg. 200).

DAY 52: Thank someone, today (pg. 208).

DAY 53: Ask for help with your goal(s), today (pg. 214).

DAY 54: Receive help graciously on your goal(s), today (pg. 225).

DAY 55: Trust fully, today (pg. 234).

DAY 56: Do homework on who you want to work with, today (pg. 221).

DAY 57: Mission Match, today (pg. 220).
DAY 58: What have you learned during the process? Write it (pg. 11).

DAY 59: What are you innately passionate about? Write it (pg. 12).

DAY 60: What things are you’re excuses? Write it (pg. 13).

DAY 61: Look through the “stupid filter.” What do you see (pg. 25)?

DAY 62: Put the “creative puzzle” together, today (pg. 30).

DAY 63: Don’t allow life to pass you by because you are afraid of stupid (pg. 33).

DAY 64: Destroy the waiting place (pg. 34)!

DAY 65: Are you stuck in the “activity trap” (pg. 37)? Get over it.

DAY 66: What do you really want (pg. 43)? Write it out.

DAY 67: Why not you (pg. 61)? Do some introspective evaluating.

DAY 68—Measure progress and prepare to finish strong.

Answer these questions:

- List your “small wins” thus far. How does it feel to achieve success?
- Name your failures. What did you learn from them?
- What needs to happen for you to reach your goal(s) over the next eight days?
- How can you leverage existing resources to make those things happen?
- What will you do next? Write down one thing you will do each day for the next eight days and stick to it.
- Be sure to check in with your accountability team on where you are at and be humble enough to ask for help where needed.
- Remember to use the principle of “mission matching” (pgs. 220-221) when asking for help.

DAYS 69-75—Achieve the overarching goal—make your stupid idea your new smart reality!

The next seven days are yours. They are meant for you to hustle and do whatever it takes to make your dream happen. Here is a question for you to consider each day to help you achieve your overarching goal.

DAY 69: Are there any pressing thoughts (stupid ideas) on your mind? What will you do about them today / this week?
DAY 70: How are you feeling? Take a second to monitor your energy. Get yourself centered and on track. What’s the next step today?

DAY 71: Are there any mini-projects you need to initiate to reach your goal?

DAY 72: Who can you reach out to today to help you achieve your goal? Can your accountability team help?


DAY 74: What is left for you to do to feel like this challenge has been a success? Do it (and/or set goals to get them done moving forward).

DAY 75: How will make this day a day with no regrets? Finish it up!

DAY 76—Celebrate!

Congrats! Congrats! Congrats! Go treat yourself for digging deep and achieving (and/or making substantial progress) on your goals.

I want you to notice what happened here. Over these 76 days, you have done some critical things:

1) IDENTIFIED YOUR STUPID IDEA
2) CLAIMED YOUR DREAMS
3) CALLED OUT YOUR FEARS
4) CAME UP WITH A BUNCH OF WAYS TO PUSH THROUGH BARRIERS AND
5) MADE YOUR STUPID IDEA HAPPEN!

You’ve begun the painstaking process of becoming more authentic, engaged and alive so you can live without regret.

If you’ve gotten this far, you’ve made more progress than many people make in years, even decades, on inspired ideas. Many people sit on their goals because they can’t get past the initial inertia of how they will ever get around the barriers they imagine they’ll face. With this simple challenge, you’ve jumped over the wall, just for a moment, saw what it looks like on the other side and taken your project (your dreams) to the next level. Be proud.

My sweet baby Gavin lived for 76 days and I deeply appreciate that (in his honor) you have now taken your life to the next level during this same time period. I give you my deepest respect.
THANK YOU!!!
YOU’RE AWESOME!
...
KEEP GOING.

DEEP RESPECT, RICHIE
SPECIAL AND IMPORTANT NOTE TO YOU: I care about your progress on the 76-Day Challenge (regardless of if you’re just starting, in the middle, finished, or didn’t do it at all). I’d love, love, love to hear from you! Will you please take this quick survey here? Thanks! It will help me understand where you’re coming from and what you’re up against.

Click here to take the survey.

Want more strategies and tactics to help you maximize your life and business?

- Sign up for my email newsletter (if you haven’t already) here.
- Sign up for my blog here.
- Get The Power of Starting Something Stupid here.
CONTACT INFO:
Don’t hesitate to contact me.

Richie Norton is the bestselling author of The Power of Starting Something Stupid and Résumés Are Dead and What to Do About It. He is a strategic advisor to small businesses, organizations and individuals, an international speaker, and CEO and Founder of Global Consulting Circle.

Richie has been featured in Forbes, Businessweek, Young Entrepreneur, Huffington Post and other national publications both in print and online. The 2013 San Francisco Book Festival named The Power of Starting Something Stupid the winner of the business category and the grand prize winner of all book categories in its annual competition. In 2010, Pacific Business News recognized Richie as one of the Top Forty Under 40 “best and brightest young businessmen” in Hawaii.

Richie received his MBA from the world’s #1 ranked international business school, Thunderbird School of Global Management. Richie is happily married to Natalie and has four boys.