

**DON'T SAVE FOR RETIREMENT**



A Millennial's  
Guide to  
Financial Freedom

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FOR  
RETIREMENT**

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**DANIEL AMEDURI**

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DON'T SAVE FOR RETIREMENT

*A Millennial's Guide to Financial Freedom*

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*This book is dedicated to those who seek freedom. Break the chains, own your time, live your passion, and never accept another's perception of life as your reality.*

*All proceeds from this book will be donated to The Whale Sanctuary Project. For more information about this organization dedicated to creating seaside sanctuaries for orcas and beluga whales, visit [whalesanctuaryproject.org](http://whalesanctuaryproject.org).*



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# DISCLAIMER

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# INTRODUCTION

I was twenty-seven when my wife, Jewel, and I sat in a lawyer's office to discuss our bankruptcy options. By that point, I had amassed a small fortune working in the Southern California real estate market since I was eighteen. Our high-end Newport Beach property had recently been featured on *Flip That House*. This property was our biggest investment to date. It was also the investment that was now tanking us.

My wife cried as the lawyer spoke. His mouth was moving, but all I could hear echoing in my ears were her protests from only an hour earlier in the car. She didn't want to file bankruptcy. Our Tennessee duplex, nice and neat and paid off, would be gone if we filed. The duplex was her last hope, and so it was mine, too.

We didn't file for bankruptcy that day, nor did we ever

consider it again. We regrouped and looked forward, as we always do.

## **WHAT MILLENNIALS WERE TAUGHT**

I've been interested in entrepreneurship my whole life, dating back to when I was a child. Ask my mom to tell you a story from my childhood, and she'll describe the morning she woke up to find countless cars driving slowly past our house, as the passengers checked out our family's belongings, which I had removed from the garage and neatly arranged in our driveway. I sat there with my cash box, the sole proprietor of this makeshift garage sale at seven years old.

Or maybe my mom would tell you about the time my uncle, who worked for Nabisco, gave us a bunch of cookies. I proceeded to throw them into my red Radio Flyer and hawked them door to door. In fifth grade, I out-bargained my teacher, who was selling pencils to my classmates for ten cents apiece. I asked my mom for pencils and sold them for nine cents.

I've always been fascinated with money, but I've never been materialistic. My parents couldn't afford name-brand clothes or expensive jewelry, so these things never became a priority for me. I've never cared about having the biggest house or the fanciest car. I bought a Sea-Doo

when I was eighteen, and that still stands out as my biggest spending mistake. I am fortunate that I was never sidetracked by the materialistic needs that drive so many.

At thirteen, I started reading personal finance books. I came across a book by financial guru Robert T. Kiyosaki entitled *If You Want to Be Rich & Happy Don't Go to School: Ensuring Lifetime Security for Yourself and Your Children*. As a teenager sitting in the finance section of Barnes & Noble, a self-help book written by an expert telling me *not* to go to school was not only mesmerizing, it was life-changing.

When you know you want to learn how to make money at a young age, but everyone tells you that you first need things you don't have the money to get—like a college degree—the world can feel pretty overwhelming. It's like applying for your first credit card: you need good credit to get approved, but you can't establish that credit without a credit card.

Thirteen was a big year for me. I began studying martial arts at a local studio. My instructor was a wealthy man, who taught me about so much more than the ins and outs of karate. We talked about the stock market, different company trends, and the value of buying during those periods when everyone else is scared. We talked about how important it is to purchase rental properties instead

of a single-family house so that you can live in one of the units and rent out the others for income. Of course, I would have to grow up, try his tactics, and make my own mistakes before I *really* learned what it took to be wealthy.

I was sixteen when I became a partial owner of the martial arts studio along with that instructor, who went on to become my mentor both in martial arts and in life. Legally, my father was the owner of my 25 percent share of the studio, but I acted as the owner and manager on a daily basis. I registered students and closed sales contracts, all while learning about business and money.

When I was working at the studio, I felt motivated and encouraged. School just didn't cut it for me. I enrolled in a home economics class, simply because I was one of only two guys among thirty students. You can't beat those odds anywhere. Despite my ulterior motives, I did manage to pay attention to a few things in that home ec class. For example, one day the teacher showed us a graph demonstrating the difference in income between a high school graduate and the average college graduate. At that time, in the mid-1990s, a high school graduate made \$25,000 a year. Not too impressive, even then. But what was truly underwhelming was that college graduates made only \$10,000 more. *Ten thousand*. I couldn't believe it. As the teacher proudly displayed these numbers, thinking she was showing us the importance of a

college degree, I sat in my chair, staring at the screen. *Either way, I'm so screwed*, I thought. I needed a different path.

It was at this point I knew I was never going to college. The problem was that everyone in my life expected me to go—my father, my mother, my school counselors, even my future in-laws. In fact, I was the first person in my family to graduate from high school.

My parents accepted whatever path I chose, but for my future (now current) in-laws, college is as important as religion, and I didn't want to upset them. I decided to tell my in-laws that I was attending East Los Angeles College, and I kept up this charade for a year. What I was actually doing was going to Barnes & Noble, roaming up and down the business, finance, and self-help aisles, and reading about economics, investments, personal finance, and real estate. I read every one of the yellow books for dummies in finance, and every Tony Robbins book about personal development.

If you're searching for your life's purpose, go to a bookstore and notice the section where you could sit down and pull books from the shelves all day long. That's where you want to be.

It wasn't long before I tried to purchase a rental property.

This isn't an easy feat for an eighteen-year-old to pull off, but I didn't know that. I was turned down by four or five different loan officers and passed over by the same number of realtors before I met Virginia. Virginia was an eighty-year-old real estate broker who was willing to help a kid out. She was the kind of person who wanted to give everyone a shot. This applied even to people who were trying to do something unconventional and seemingly impossible. Everyone should look out for the Virginias in their life.

At eighteen, I bought my first condo and rented it to a family of four. The couple was in their forties or fifties, with two teenagers who were only three years younger than me. I was so intimidated that I told them I was the landlord's nephew. That way, I could talk about my scary uncle who liked the rent on time without feeling like I lacked authority.

I purchased a second condo six months later, in what became my first creative real estate financing deal. After proving myself to Virginia, I worked with her again, this time borrowing her commission of \$10,000 up front and taking a lien on my first condo to buy the second.

I was officially up and running in the real estate market in the 2000s, cashing in on the largest bubble in US real estate history.



It was easy to confuse the luck I was experiencing with know-how. Don't get me wrong, I was doing the right thing by learning all I could and getting involved in real estate early. But when you're nineteen and making \$10,000 a month in equity on real estate appreciation, it's easy to forget all the luck you've encountered. You think you're smart and that everything you touch will turn to gold. It took seven years of riding high for me to crash hard when I tried to sneak in a few more big flips and real estate purchases before the bubble burst.

## **THE CRASH**

It was frustrating. I could see the trends happening in markets all over the country, but especially in Southern California, where Jewel and I had lived our entire lives. I even started a YouTube channel based on my market predictions, but, at the time, I thought my last big purchases would allow us to cash up for the downturn. I didn't fully understand the magnitude of the situation. Whereas we'd never used credit cards to pay for anything, we were now paying all our mortgages and investment properties' monthly expenses on credit. Once I sold, cashed out most of my early sales, then reinvested all the money back in the real estate market in 2007, almost everything foreclosed or was in a short sale. I lost almost everything I ever made. My luck ran out, and whatever destiny I once thought I had in building wealth was erased.

For the first time in my life, I wasn't investing or actively involved in any business. I wasn't even thinking about real estate. The foreclosures kept rolling in. If you've ever foreclosed on a home, you know the stress and pressure it causes. Now multiply that by eight. We were foreclosing on eight homes and defaulting on five different credit cards, all at the same time. The phone calls and visits from debt collectors were overwhelming. I gave up. But I didn't go bankrupt.

## **STARTING OVER**

I didn't know how to make money in a down market. While Jewel went to work as a teacher during the day, I stayed home and slept. There was no way around it; I was depressed. I jumped at any opportunity to make money outside of investments, just so I could feel like I was the partner my wife deserved. I spent sixty days earning a Class A license in truck driving school, even though I'd never so much as driven a stick shift in my life. Then I started stocking shelves for twelve dollars an hour at the local grocery store at night. At least it was something.

For all the mistakes I made, I did some things right. We immediately stopped using our credit cards and implemented a cash system, dividing up our cash for the week into envelopes labeled for specific expenses, like "groceries" or "gas." We sold our house in Upland and rented a

home in the desert. We raised goats and chickens in an effort to live a more sustainable lifestyle, and we even gave our special needs dogs to a warm and loving dachshund rescue. Our entire mindset had shifted. We didn't want to be rich anymore—we just didn't want to be poor.

I began to look at money and wealth differently. I was no longer focused on the paper wealth that makes you feel good for a while. Instead, I began to value the type of wealth that comes from having peace of mind.

When our son was born in 2009, Jewel wanted to stay home with him. She wanted to have the time to raise him and enjoy his childhood instead of giving all her attention to other people's kids in the classroom. I wanted to be the kind of dad who didn't have to sacrifice sleep just to spend a little time with my son. I also didn't want to pay a sitter so I could get some sleep during the hours while my wife worked.

## **A MODEL FOR THRIVING IN THE NEW ECONOMY**

Jewel and I used to enjoy dinners out with a nice bottle of wine, but that didn't matter anymore. We became even more aggressive about cutting our expenses, and set our sights on achieving a level of financial independence that would allow my wife to stay home. This meant facing my fears and diving back into the financial world. At Jewel's

urging, I started Vision Victory, my first YouTube channel focused on financial trends. I had only a twenty-dollar Logitech webcam at my disposal, but it did the job. Within six months, Google took over YouTube and I was making money. My hobby had become my profession.

I found my way out of dire financial straits thanks to a mindset shift about two things: wealth and reprioritizing those things that were most important in my life. I noticed that principles that always interested me—like entrepreneurship and making my own way—were gaining traction in the world, especially among millennials. I loved the idea of being a freelancer rather than an employee. I also loved the notion that financial independence can be achieved younger than ever before through basic lifestyle changes and adjusting antiquated notions of wealth. All this became the foundation of my eventual newsletter, *Future Money Trends*, and the inspiration for this book. This is now my multi-million-dollar business.

I wanted the newsletter (and, later, my business) to focus on the new economy. It was clear to me that the portfolio and personal finance model was broken, even for baby boomers. I wanted to show people in my generation how to navigate the new economic environment. The 2008 crisis was hard on a lot of people, including me. I found a way out, and a way to rebuild, and I had to share it. This book is yet another step in sharing this informa-

tion. Information that can change how you look at work, money, and life.

This isn't a get-rich-quick book. I've read enough of those in my lifetime to know that I have no interest in showing you how to afford a private jet or live a yacht-vacation lifestyle. Penny stocks aren't my thing, and I'm no expert in starting a business. I do know that our economy has changed and will change again. Our problem is that we fail at adjusting our lifestyles and expectations to these changes.

Whether you make \$35,000 or \$100,000, the time is right to start working toward financial freedom. This means a life in which you call the shots, no matter what. Maybe you'll use this knowledge to become a millionaire in five to ten years. Or maybe you'll embrace a new lifestyle so *you* are in charge of your future, your security, and your happiness. Either way, by applying the strategies in this book, you'll understand what wealth means to you.

Throughout this book, you'll discover spending pitfalls, why retirement is an outdated experiment that ultimately failed, and how multiple streams of revenue create passive income and a sustainable life. We will discuss the freelance economy, risk assessment, and cryptocurrency investment. I've tested every suggestion and recommendation I will make to you. You can rest assured that I've

made every single mistake I will point out to you and grappled with and overcome every fear you might be facing.

The discoveries I've made have transformed my life. I'm confident that they will do the same for you.

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## CHAPTER ONE

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# THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH

*In the end, money should serve something greater than just money. It should serve you, your family, the people you want to touch.*

—TONY ROBBINS

From the moment we have even a small understanding of money, most of us believe that being wealthy means being financially successful. In practice, wealth means something different to each of us, and we each must undergo a personal journey to reach that understanding. I'm not someone who believes that wealth has nothing to do with money or that money cannot make us happy. Money can buy peace of mind when we eliminate debt from our lives, and that inner peace makes us healthier and happier. Someone with no debt can wake up happy

in a mobile home; likewise, someone with a six-figure salary, hefty mortgage, and countless car payments can find themselves tossing and turning at night, living in fear of the future.

## **WHAT IS REAL WEALTH?**

In my early twenties, I figured I would be wealthy when I made all the money I wanted. My thoughts were focused on finance and real estate. Between time spent with my real estate business and teaching at the martial arts studio, I worked roughly sixteen hours every day. I sold my waking hours for money, subscribing to the illusion that the money I made would lead to “wealth.” What I did not realize, however, is that I would eventually lose all the money that once made me a millionaire. I would lose it all, only to get it back again. That’s how money works. But that’s not how time works, unfortunately. I was not able to gain back my time—time with my wife, time with my parents, even time with friends.

Now, I’m constantly reflecting and recentering. Our lives are filled with distractions, from deadlines and doctor’s appointments, to bills and meetings. It’s easy to lose focus on the good stuff—the important stuff. Just as we refresh and update our technology, we have to do the same for ourselves and our mindsets. How are we using our time? Are we happy?



I learned what wealth means to me when I realized that I felt complete disdain for every second I spent stocking shelves at the grocery store. I was in a dead-end job, trying to make the most of the situation but feeling like I was falling short every day. I hated that I had to work at night and that someone else was in control of my time. I hated that I had to travel around to different grocery stores for every shift and I was told where to go and when to be there. I had no control of my destiny, and I was miserable.

One of the happiest days of my life was the day when I made enough money with my YouTube channel, doing what I loved, to finally quit my job at the grocery store. I realized what it meant to be poor, and that it was not just about money. Sure, my wife and I did not have a lot of it because we were rebuilding, but that wasn't what bothered me. What bothered me was that I was giving someone else complete control of my happiness every day. The majority of my time was not mine, all for a price slightly above minimum wage. This is why Jewel and I never set our sights on having the biggest house on the water, or the fanciest car in the lot. Our ultimate goal was to be free and in control of our own lives.

## **A FINANCIAL TOOL AND ICON**

Whether you are rich or poor, when you hit a point in life where financial wealth becomes important, it is impera-

tive to acknowledge—and accept—what money is. Money is a financial tool that we have created as a culture. We can hold it in our hand and the government tells us we can make it and spend it as a medium of exchange, but in reality, money is significant because of the value we assign to it in our minds. Just like we all stop at a red light, we all value that piece of paper that signifies a dollar bill, or the digital values that represent our bank account.

Don't get me wrong—money is an important tool. In fact, it is probably the most important tool we can learn to leverage and strive to master in our lives. Accepting the importance and value of money as a tool means realizing that we do not need twenty different screwdrivers in our garage. Likewise, we do not need millions of dollars. What we do need, however, is the freedom to live the life we want. Money helps in the pursuit of that goal—but it is not the end goal.

## **KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES**

Who leads a wealthier life? A fisherman or an attorney? The fisherman goes out early in the morning and finishes his workday around lunchtime, at which point he can return home to spend the remainder of the day with his family. The attorney wakes up at six o'clock in the morning and spends all day at his office or at the courthouse. He comes home at seven o'clock and fits in a quick dinner

before he begins reviewing documents for court the following day. This high-powered attorney may bring in \$2 million annually while the fisherman makes \$50,000, but who is ultimately wealthier? I think the fisherman lives a wealthier life—a life in which he has time with his loved ones.

There is a caveat to this, however. While our time on Earth is finite and we have to prioritize, some people gain great satisfaction from their work, and enjoy working long hours. If that is where their passion lies, they should follow it. Maybe our attorney is a prosecutor who focuses on pedophiles, and he is fulfilled by fighting for the safety and welfare of children twelve hours a day. For most of us, though, it's easy to get caught up in the vicious cycle of wanting more, and thinking we *need* more, when the answer to happiness is not the acquisition of things, but of time.

If you are in a higher income bracket, this realization can be more difficult to come to. I see it all the time at [FutureMoneyTrends.com](http://FutureMoneyTrends.com); people email me about their financial troubles when they make \$200,000 a year. It's difficult to imagine that anyone who brings in that kind of money struggles financially, but when their debt is double their annual income (as it often is), life can start to feel like a burden. Doctors, lawyers, and anyone else with a high-profile career are expected to live the life-

style of a high-profile person. Society thinks they should drive fancy cars and live in expensive houses. Before long, the higher-income earners start to agree, despite what their own common sense tells them. This is why higher-income earners typically have a more difficult time gaining financial independence than those who make \$50,000 a year.

We are a culture of overspenders, no matter our income bracket. Everyone must overcome society's expectations, and everyone faces peer pressure. When I achieved millionaire status in 2013, I was driving a 2003 Nissan Altima with a few hundred thousand miles on it. I had to swallow my pride, but I loved that car and I was proud of it. It was a symbol of good decision-making and of fighting the good fight to get my life in order.

We are in a tough situation as a society. As the economy inflated, our expectations inflated, as well. The fact that we make an annual salary of \$50,000 does not mean we should drive a car of that value. In reality, if we make \$50,000 a year, we *should* drive a vehicle that costs no more than \$5,000. I've always found it funny that we congratulate people when they buy a new car. Why do we celebrate debt? I feel that condolences are more in order—condolences for the years they lost working to pay for that car, and for the time they will never get back.

When Jewel and I moved to the desert, most people thought we had gone off the deep end. Our family and friends assumed we had either lost everything financially—which was true—or that we were taking the self-sustainable lifestyle too far—which was also true. The most important reason we moved to the desert, however, was because our mindset had changed. We were done with the peer pressure we felt to spend beyond our actual means, and we wanted something more from life than the never-ending bills and overfinanced mortgages of our friends. Most of all, we wanted to reclaim our lives and our time. While our friends moved into homes with \$600,000 mortgages, we moved into a house that cost us \$95,000. Sure, their homes were beautiful and their cars were luxurious; but I can't remember the last time I thought about someone's fancy new car after the first time they showed it to me. When it comes down to it, no one *really* cares about the cars that we drive or the clothes that we wear.

It's difficult to overcome peer pressure when we are young, and it is just as hard when we are older. We never learned how to manage our money in school, and we were conditioned into a certain lifestyle by our parents, based on how they were raised. When we look and act poor but we're not, we have to be confident—confident that the road less traveled truly is the most fruitful road in the end. We may look like a failure, but we know real wealth is within our reach when we change our mindset.

## WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

Some of the most successful entrepreneurs of all time—people like Steve Jobs and Walt Disney—did not care about making a dime. They cared about building a dream. Dreams don't have to be business empires, either. To me, dreams are about whatever makes us feel happy and fulfilled. I want to be home with my three kids and be able to travel with them when we want. It's simple, but that's what makes me happy.

From time to time, my son asks me if I want to become a billionaire. When you are a family who is transparent about finances, it's easy for young minds to focus on riches. My goal has never been to become a billionaire, but I'm not against it—I don't think anybody is. Most billionaires, however, get there by accident. Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder and CEO, did not start Amazon with the idea that it would make him rich. Instead, he wanted to create an online bookstore that sold books at discounted prices, and the money followed. Most millionaires and billionaires do not sit around counting their stacks of money. They follow their dreams and use the resultant money as a financial tool to achieve their lifestyle. When we discuss personal finance at Future-MoneyTrends.com, we focus on how we can keep the same career—if that's what makes us happy—but live the life we want to live.

My wife and I have traveled side-by-side in this journey of amassing great fortune, losing everything, and finding ourselves—and our priorities—again. You'll get the chance to hear her side of the story throughout the book in Jewel's Corner.

### **JEWEL'S CORNER: REAL WEALTH**

*Real wealth is being financially independent and happy. Some people have a lot of money but suffer in their relationships with their spouse and children. I think your immediate family and your relationships are the most precious things you can have. Don't neglect your spouse or kids—they are the biggest blessings. Money comes and goes, but the investment you make into your relationships will become your cornerstone.*

We should constantly reflect on our lives and figure out what makes us happy. What do we want to achieve? All the money in the world will not buy happiness, so we must work on adjusting our mindset for the day when we do have money; that way, we can use it as the tool it is meant to be.

Goal-setting should never include reaching a certain dollar amount. A goal of \$50,000 quickly turns into \$100,000, then \$500,000 and \$1 million. One of the biggest problems with making money is that once we have it, we want more. Life becomes a never-ending chase rather than a fulfilling journey. No amount of money is enough unless we have clearly defined priorities and lifestyle goals.

How do you want to wake up in the morning? This is a simple question, but your answer determines a lot. Once I figured out how I want to spend my days, I worked toward making that happen, rather than toward a financial goal.

### **WHO MAKES YOU HAPPY?**

Think of the people who are important to you. Maybe it's a spouse, a child, a parent, or even a friend. Whom do you want to spend your precious time with? Time, after all, is a commodity. Knowing why we choose certain people over others is helpful in overcoming peer pressure. This kind of prioritization has always helped me know why I make certain sacrifices. I would much rather drive that 2003 Altima into the ground than pick up a huge car payment when I know that I get to take my kids to the park whenever I want. Maybe this decision allows me to plan a visit to Walt Disney World with my family, and that means more to me than the kind of car I drive. It is important to think not only about whom you want to spend your time with, but why.

Before I take on a new project or pursue a business idea with a friend, I measure my decision based on the time it will take rather than the money I will make. Some people think they have eighteen years with their kids, but I look at that time differently. I see twelve precious years during which my kids will live with us *and* want to spend time



with the family. Once our kids reach their teenage years, it's hard to pry them from friends and the activities they enjoy. The days of holding their hand while crossing the street and going for spontaneous ice cream trips decrease in frequency. Sure, my kids love our kayak trips now, but how will they feel in five or ten years when all they can think about is the game they missed or the girlfriend they left behind? Is the money I'll make really worth the time I'm spending away from my kids?

### **TIME IS OUR GREATEST RETURN**

Our time is finite. It is also the ultimate equalizer. Whether it's the checkout clerk at your local supermarket or Bill Gates, we all have the same twenty-four hours in a day. What if our daily schedule includes a two-hour commute, followed by a nine-hour workday, followed by two or three hours at home catching up on tasks for the next day? This routine is the reality for many of us five days a week. For some—those who love their job—it's a great reality. They find wealth in the happiness that their work brings them.

If our job does not bring us overwhelming happiness, it's time we look at our *time*. How are we spending it? How are we managing it? My definition of wealth is the ability to use my time the way I want to use it. Nothing on Earth is eternal. I want to spend my time with the people I love, doing what I love.

Everyone prefers to spend their time differently, so our definitions of wealth will vary drastically. If you love running your business and you wake up excited to take on the next challenge, a full, wealthy life most likely means spending your time at work. Perhaps happiness for you, however, is enjoying your cup of coffee every morning until ten o'clock. What decisions do you need to make to provide yourself with this kind of freedom? Ultimately, it all comes down to figuring out how we reclaim our time.

Controlling our time is our key to freedom. However, we must buy this key because it is not free. This is where the money part comes in.

Rejecting conventional finance and choosing our own clear path toward financial independence can be difficult. What are you gaining, though, when you make your own decisions that are not influenced by conventional standards and practices? I experienced a gratifying return on my time when I analyzed my spending and made sacrifices up front.

One of my biggest regrets is how I invested my time before I learned a difficult lesson. My dad moved in with us in Texas not long after he retired. He loved the little 1950s-themed diner in our city, and we discussed establishing a standing date at that diner every Friday morning for breakfast. Unfortunately, I waited. I wanted the kids

to be older before I started this new weekly routine so that the two hours I spent with him on Fridays would not eat into my work time, and eventually into my time with the kids. I figured that when our youngest turned five, the whole family could go to breakfast and enjoy our time together in this new family tradition.

In theory, my plan was not a bad one. Sadly, however, my dad passed away eighteen months after moving in with us. Our tradition never got off the ground, simply because I thought I didn't have the time. I had the time; I just had to prioritize. It might be uncomfortable to take a three-year-old to breakfast, and work *is* important; but, had I realized time's fleeting nature, I would gladly have given my dad those two hours every week.

When we delay important things, "later" is not guaranteed. No other event in my life has made me so keenly aware of the value of time.

## **FIND YOUR PURPOSE...AND YOUR WEALTH**

The best way to find your life's purpose is to think about the three things you want the important people in your life to say at your funeral. While this may sound morbid, it is the clearest way to see your life's purpose. What do you want your spouse to say, or your kids? Perhaps what your coworkers might say about your achievements comes to mind.

Despite who it is or what they say, it's important to write these three things down. Most wealthy people who provide advice—think Tony Robbins or Napoleon Hill—encourage followers to write, and to write frequently. Write down your objectives, your priorities, your goals, your ideas, and organize those thoughts. Making your subconscious both conscious and tangible is a great step toward finding happiness, fulfillment, and real wealth. Saying these thoughts aloud is also beneficial.

Simple activities like writing what you want people to say about you and visiting your local bookstore to see the aisles where you want to spend your day are helpful in finding your life's purpose. I know that I could spend hours in the finance and investing section of Barnes & Noble. In fact, that's how I spent my post-high-school days—it was clearly my calling. Now, I wake up every day and read about finance and economics for hours. This makes me happy, and I am able to make money and a successful career from following my passion.

Also, think about the work you would do for no payment, or about how you prefer to spend your Saturdays and Sundays. This is a way to qualify your time so that you can quantify it by making money. Many of us throw away what we enjoy doing because we think we have to choose a job based on money alone. We all need money,

but why not enjoy making it? After all, we make more money when we enjoy *how* we make it.

## **PLAN AND PRIORITIZE**

Just like a diet, you have to follow a plan to achieve real wealth. It's about making behavioral changes *and* shifting your mindset. Start by asking yourself how you want to spend your time, and whom you want to spend it with? Who and what do you value most in life? Your plan can be as simple as writing down your answers to these three questions. Check in with yourself every six months by revisiting your answers to ensure that your priorities are in line with the life you want. We all need an occasional reminder of the goals we've set and the reasons we've chosen our path.

Our idea of wealth may change throughout our life, and our plan should reflect those changes. To this day, when I think about wealth, I no longer think about money and financial wealth. It doesn't matter to me if I have \$1 million or \$10 million. What matters is if we have enough income to sustain our lifestyle. Our family's net worth and our monthly passive income statements do not excite or scare me. Instead, I ask myself, "Are we living the life we want to live?" As long as I can answer that we are, I'm happy.

