

# BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



## Be Your Future Self Now

The Science of Intentional Transformation

By Benjamin Hardy

**Dr. Benjamin Hardy** is an organizational psychologist, author, and the world's leading expert on the application of the Future Self science. His books have sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and his blogs have been read by hundreds of millions. He and his wife, Lauren, are the parents of six kids. They live in Orlando, Florida.

## Who Is Your Future Self?

We live in a world of nonstop noise and action. Most people have more responsibilities than they can handle and more priorities than they can prioritize. We live like the proverbial hamster on a hamster wheel. Unfortunately for us, we fare no better than the hamster does in such a state. We grind our wheels and find ourselves no better off after hours and days and years of exertion because all we are ever looking at is what is right in front of us. Our goals are to make it through the day and to try not to drop too many balls in the meantime.

This state of being constantly stuck in the moment with very little insight to the future is a problem that Dr. Benjamin Hardy takes up in his book, *Be Your Future Self Now*. Hardy's main premise is that in order to optimize our time and efforts to maximum benefit, we must stop working for and looking at who we are now and instead focus on who we want to be in the future. He believes that we should believe we are already our future, ideal selves, and this will help us get to that state. He quotes Neville Goddard as saying, "Assume the consciousness of being the one you want to be, and you will be saved from your present state."

Before walking through the steps needed in order to live in this more optimal state, Hardy compares this future looking view to the view that was prevalent in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. He claims that during this time, scientists and psychologists focused on determinism which is a belief that there is no real human agency. Our decisions are based on simple stimulus and response. In other words, our past determines our present and our future. The problem he finds with this view is that it could only possibly go so far as to explain people's problems, not solve them. He then makes the claim that, "Research now shows that a person's past does not drive or dictate their actions and behaviors. Rather, we are pulled forward by our future." It is this prospective, or this belief that everything we do is driven by our future, that he is concerned with.

Hardy goes on to discuss approach and avoidance behaviors. He states that 80% of people allow themselves to avoid while 20% of people are determined to approach. Both of these are motivators and can help us reach goals, but one is fear based whereas the other is not. The example he gives is of a person who works to avoid losing their house compared to a person who works to get a promotion. Both of these are based on a person's vision for the future, but only one is approach-motivated.

Another problem Hardy discusses is that most people are focused on short term goals. These goals can be something like distracting themselves on social media or paying the bills. He wants people to switch their short term goals to longer term, love-based goals. These goals, he believes, are the ones that will lead people to success and happiness.

Hardy believes that the way to make these changes is to focus on the future life a person wants. He states, “The quality of connection you have with your own Future Self determines the quality of your life and behaviors now.” The best way to do this, he says, is to reverse-engineer decisions. A person should look at the end they want and then determine the steps they need to take to get there. Some of the decisions we make now hurt our Future Selves; others help them.

Much of the beginning of Hardy’s book stems from Viktor Frankl and his work with logotherapy. Frankl was a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. He snuck a manuscript of his book into the camp, but it was eventually destroyed. He was determined to live through the camp so that he could rewrite his book. This purpose, he believes, is what helped him stay alive. Frankl believed this is what all people need: a reason to survive. Likewise, Hardy believes we all need something to drive us; we all need to envision our Future Selves and what we want.

## Threats to the Future Self

There are threats to our Future Selves, however. Hardy mentions seven. The first is that without hope in the future, the present loses its meaning. What we do now does not have much meaning unless we connect it to the future. He says, “It is the future that dictates which decisions you opt for.” Unless a person has hope and a clear purpose for their life, they manage to find excuses.

The second thread is holding a reactive narrative about one’s past. He says that “how we handle pain and confusion largely dictates who our Future Self becomes.” He says that people need to switch their mindset from believing that past experiences determine who they are to a mindset that believes that who they are is a product of their own choosing.

The third threat is a person’s current environment. Being unaware of how our environment impacts us can negatively affect our goals. The people we meet, the books we read, and the media we consume all help determine who we will become. To overcome a person’s current environment, they need to use their imagination and think beyond where they are. “Who you align yourself with,” he says, “has massive repercussions.”

Yet another threat is the myopic decisions that can come about when a person is disconnected from their Future Self. Hardy believes that we need to have very vivid pictures of our Future Selves if we are to create that future we desire. We need to have empathy for our Future Self if we want to become that person. Also, we need to see Our Future Self as a different person than who we are now because we will change.

Threats five and six focus on urgent battles and small goals and also not being in the arena at all. When we focus on small goals and only on what is most urgent we will ensure that we stay in the same place. “You get what you’re looking for. You see what you’re currently measuring. All the while, there are insane, life-changing opportunities sitting in front of your face right now.” We need to look beyond the urgent. Likewise, we need to actually put ourselves out there, put ourselves out in the arena. Hardy believes that we will live a life of regret if we stay on the sidelines.

The final threat Hardy mentions is that success can be a catalyst for failure. This can partly be because what a person truly wants can be harder to determine once the massive progress slows down. He believes that people start to focus on lesser goals which keeps us from what we really want. He believes that success is hard to maintain if people lack clarity.

## Truths About the Future Self

Just as Hardy gave seven threats to the Future Self, he gives seven truths about the Future Self.

Hardy gives one of his main premises in his first truth: the future drives the present. Every action we take is for a purpose. He believes that our behavior becomes more intelligent once it is focused intentionally on desired ends. Many actions people take are reactive; the goal is to make them intentional.

His second truth is that a person’s future self is different than they expect. People have a tendency to believe they will not change all that much in the future. Ironically, they believe this even when they recognize how much they have changed in the past. This is called both the end-of-history illusion and a fixed mindset. People need to understand that their current self is not permanent. If they focus on this, they can become more interested in growth for the future than in proving themselves in the present.

Hardy’s third truth is that the Future Self is the Pied Piper. “Paying the piper is a phrase that means suffering the consequences of your own self-indulgent actions.” Hardy explains that people have to pay the consequences for their actions. If a person chooses ease at the moment over their responsibilities, eventually their responsibilities will catch up with them. Hardy wants people to make investments in their future rather than incur costs. Investments, after all, compound over time.

The more vivid a vision a person has of their Future Self, the faster they will progress. This is the fourth truth. This requires measurable goals. He states that “effective progress comes with a combination of measurable metrics, a vivid vision of your Future Self, and clear mile markers.” These will keep people on track. Without clarity, people will falter.

Failure is not a threat to the Future Self. Rather truth five states that “Failing as your Future Self is better than succeeding as your current self.” By this, Hardy means that trying for what our Future Self wants moves us forward. If we fail, we learn from their mistakes. We have put ourselves in the arena. To succeed as our current self is to not move forward at all. It is to stagnate.



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Truth six states that people achieve success by being true to their Future Self. Hardy defines the term, “shadow career” as a career people acquire that is different from their dream. They choose this shadow path because they have given up on themselves. Hardy is insistent that we cannot be successful unless what we achieve is something we actually want to achieve.

Finally, truth seven refers to God. Hardy says that our view of God impacts our Future Self. He mentions locus of control which determines how much a person believes they have control over their life. Someone with an external locus of control believes that most is out of their control. A person with an internal locus of control believes they can influence their outcomes. Our view on God can affect this.

### Steps to Take for Your Future Self

Hardy’s final section of the book gives seven concrete steps a person can take in order to become their Future Self.

1. Step one calls for people to clarify their contextual purpose. Clarifying this purpose involves three steps: Connecting with your Future Self, Clarifying purposes through three priorities, and setting massive year long targets for these priorities. Hardy believes that if people have too many goals and priorities, they will not be able to follow any of them. He does not believe in small goals. He believes it is helpful for people to 10x their goals. By expanding them in such a way, they force themselves to think in new and creative ways.

2. Eliminating lesser goals. Hardy paraphrases author, Neil Gaiman, who said that he imagines his Future Self as a distant mountain. He constantly asks himself if decisions will move him closer or farther away from that mountain. We can often see how committed we are to our goals by looking at our behaviors because our behaviors will truthfully tell us what is most important to us. We must get away from our current habits if we are going to become our Future Selves.

3. “Elevate from Needing to Wanting to Knowing.” Needing is the least optimal state, according to Hardy. Need implies lack. Want, while better than need, still implies lack. Knowing is better than both. It “is the acceptance that you already have what you want.” There is a sense of acceptance with knowing. Gratitude can help because we feel gratitude after we have already received something. Hardy states that “gratitude elevates from wanting to knowing.” All of this helps people act “from the goal rather than toward the goal.”

4. “Ask for exactly what you want.” Hardy believes deeply in the value of asking. He believes that often we won’t ask for what we

want because we are afraid that we will not get it. He believes we should ask God, experts, friends, and anybody. The key is asking.

5. “Automate and systemize your Future Self.” This step will help people get where they want to go faster. Hardy breaks apart the difference between effectiveness which is doing the right things and efficiency which is “doing things right.” There is not much point to being efficient when we are not effective. He believes one way to be effective is to get rid of what we do not need. Anything that is not one of our big three priorities is a distraction.

6. “Schedule your Future Self.” We need to put the important tasks first, even before the urgent ones. A schedule should proactively reflect our priorities and should schedule first things first.

7. “Aggressively complete imperfect work.” Hardy extols the virtue of finishing things. If people are always looking for perfection they will never submit the article or submit the resume. They will stifle themselves waiting for perfection. Rather people will do best by understanding when something is ready to submit and submitting it, even before perfection. We need to learn to accept good enough. He believes in what he calls aggressive completion.

Hardy believes that in order to become the people we want to be, we have to know who those people are. His book lays out struggles we face in this progress, but it also gives clear steps people can take to live their lives from the perspective of their Future Self. Illustrations throughout the book help advance the main points, and the book also provides links for a website with templates people can use. Through the symbiosis of all three elements, Hardy gives his reader a clear blueprint for success.

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