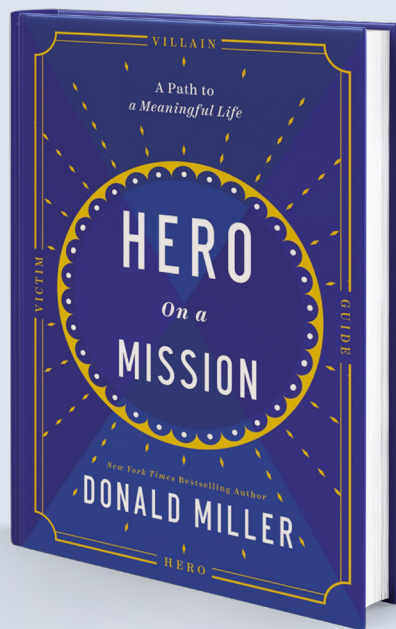


BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



Hero On a Mission

By Donald Miller

Donald Miller is the CEO of Business Made Simple (BusinessMadeSimple.com), an online platform that teaches business professionals everything they need to know to grow a business and enhance their personal value on the open market. He is the host of the Business Made Simple Podcast and is the author of several books including the bestseller *Building a StoryBrand*.

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The Power Of Finding Your Role In Life

Donald Miller is the CEO of Business Made Simple, an online platform that teaches business professionals how to grow and enhance their personal value on the open market. However, he wasn't always happily successful in business and life. He had to put himself into action in order to create meaning.

Before a life of meaning, Miller describes his life as apathetic, sleeping on the floor of an apartment he shared with friends. As an overweight man who spent his time pondering the crumbs in the carpet on the floor, his friends decided to hold an intervention. While this wasn't the magic moment for Miller to choose a life with meaning, it was a key point in time he would reflect back on while on the search for meaning. Not just in the one moment, but in every moment he has lived so far, all the way to the legacy he will pass on to his daughter.

How to Create a Life of Meaning

As a person lives out their life, they are actually living out their story. It's that person's decision to live in a mindset that makes their story meaningful. As you write your own story, you can either choose to be a victim, villain, hero, or guide. Each one of us has a little bit of all these characters within us. However, the only character that gives us the option to find meaning is the hero. A victim leaves everything to fate, believing they are helpless and need to be rescued. A villain expelled negative energy to those around them. When Miller was sleeping on the apartment floor, he was living somewhere between both of these characters. He was waiting for someone to rescue him from the void he was in while also passive-aggressively leaving dirty dishes in his roommates' beds.

A hero experiences the same pain, but reacts to it as a challenge to learn from. As Miller says, "A hero wants something in life and is willing to accept challenges in order to transform into the person capable of getting what they want." Of course, it's not just about deciding which character you want to live as. It's also about curiosity and desire. The more Miller contemplated the elements that make a good story and how they apply to life, the more curiosity he had about who he could become. Identity is a key component in creating meaning.



What Miller found is that meaning isn't a one time thing. Every hero's story journey has several subplots to keep the storyteller in constant motion and action. Action starts transformation. And the heroic transformation is where the creation of meaning takes place.

During a bike ride across the United States, Miller experienced the transformation from victim to hero. He decided to ask the question "Can I ride my bicycle across America?" and face the challenge by putting himself into action. The group of fifteen started in Los Angeles and cycled all Summer to end up in Delaware. Though a grueling physical activity, Miller and his co-cyclists found they felt a great amount of achievement after facing every challenge from dehydration to mountain trails. The greatest celebration was hitting the shores and realizing that every single person was able to face and overcome the challenge they set for themselves in the beginning.

Before the plane ride back, Miller stopped into a bookstore hoping for something to kill the time on the way back. What he found was a text that would set his tone for finding meaning in every subplot he chose to write for his life from then on out. His choice of reading? Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*.

This is when Miller learned Frankl's theory as to why so many people find themselves in an existential vacuum, floating through life and essentially contemplating their belly button lint. "Man did not have a will to pleasure, but a will to meaning. And when man couldn't find meaning, he distracted himself with pleasure."

Enter Frankl's formula to experiencing the meaning of life. The three part formula is quoted in verbatim below:

- Take action creating a work or performing a deed.
- Experience something or encounter someone that you find captivating and that pulls you out of yourself.
- Have an optimistic attitude toward the inevitable challenges and suffering you will experience in life.

All three pieces are needed in order to experience meaning. If any one of them is missing, you're likely to end up back in the existential vacuum, picking at your belly button lint. And not surprisingly, we've all stumbled across this formula, it's success, and the fall back into the vacuum.

Since Miller says meaning "feels as though my life is a story that is interesting to myself and also good for the world", the only way to have meaning is to make it. Action always comes first. It's the decision to do something - writing a book, creating a team, going on a bike ride across the United States. By deciding to challenge yourself through an action, you actually decide to make meaning.

By taking that experience and placing it outside of yourself (into the community around you, the community you create, or nature itself) you're able to keep yourself in hero mode.

And because challenges aren't a guaranteed easy street, you, as a hero, will experience struggle and possibly pain. It's your

choice as to how you react to that pain. An optimistic attitude will allow you to learn from it and grow, keeping you as the hero of your story.

Whether it was writing his first book or his third, becoming a father to his daughter, or building a community on his property, Miller has taken Frankl's formula and created a strategy for anyone to live their life like a hero on a mission.

Create Your Life Plan

In order to use Miller's Hero on a Mission Daily Planner, which he makes easily accessible via QR code, you must create a life plan. This will act like a guide to set goals, prioritize them, and take action.

Step one is to think of your life the same way many writers think of their stories: starting with the end. Most people don't love to think about the end because the end means death. But Miller says, "Because we know that our stories will end, we are gifted with a sense of urgency." In a way, our death gives us a stopwatch. And knowing that one day it will hit zero can make you want to take action sooner rather than later.

So Miller suggests step one of his strategy is to start by writing your eulogy. Think about the kind of impact you want to have on the people around you. Think about the accomplishments you want to be known for. Think about the community you want to build and the legacy you want to leave. All of this equates to the role you aim to play in your own story.

Notice he doesn't limit this to the career role you play. This is the role of life, who you want to be for your family, community, the planet, and so forth. This is who and what you, as a hero, love. It's about how you experience your life outside of yourself, just as Viktor Frankl included in his formula.

Miller points out his belief that Frankl tells us "to find something in life we love - something that strikes a sense of awe inside us - and then make it a daily habit to engage whatever that is." Again, this is in finding something that lights up our excitement outside of ourselves.

A hero's story is never completely about the hero themselves. It's also about the other characters who are affected. As we share our lives, stories, and challenges with others, it becomes less about individual needs and more about a group of protagonists who are seeking meaning together.

Sometimes, that means joining a community of people who share similar interests. Sometimes that means creating a community that doesn't yet exist. Miller gives examples of this, opening his home to a political panel discussion, camping in the wilderness with a group of friends, or inviting neighbors over to a dinner at a large farmhouse style table. A hero on a mission attracts other heroes on missions.

Writing an eulogy is the first step that will allow you to reverse engineer your life goals. It creates a vision for the legacy you



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want to leave behind, which will help you break down long term ten-year goals, a five-year plan, and a daily to-do list that will create impact over time.

In the start of *Hero on a Mission*, Miller references his wife, Betsy, and the child they are expecting. Becoming a father is one of his journeys. When his daughter is born, he realizes his mission isn't about him anymore. It's about what he leaves behind as a legacy. His love, his education, his will to provide an example for his daughter. It becomes very clear to Miller how his hero journey isn't forever. At some point, he will grow older and become a guide. He'll use his experience to help others, like his daughter, on their own journeys. And one day, he'll leave behind his legacy.

This part of Miller's story is reflected in his dog, Lucy, as well. As a puppy, Lucy had taught him the same thing Frankl did: to find joy in things outside of himself. Take a nap. Go for a run. Break from what you're doing and enjoy the outdoors every day. But as Lucy ages, Miller knows he will eventually bury her on Goose Hill, their retreat property, and enjoy the legacy she leaves behind.

This circle happens for all of us. And in Miller's opinion, this is the motivation for all of us to write our eulogy and create a life plan to fulfill what we write down on paper. This creates a vision, which then creates hope and belief in your own agency to accomplish that vision. But of course, you can't actually accomplish that vision without a plan in place. This is where the *Hero on a Mission* Planner comes into play. Heroes need to start their journey somewhere, and as Miller states, “once a storyteller knows where they want their story to go, they plan the moments that will drive their character closer and closer to the climactic scene.”

So if step one is writing a eulogy (plot), then step two is writing the elements that make up your life's chapters. After all, if you're going to go through a transformation, you might as well plot it out to do so in the right direction.

Miller's ten-year, five-year, and one-year vision exercises are a direct roadmap in the correct direction. “The more care you take to determine the direction of your growth, the more likely your life will look the way you want by the time your story is over.” The ten-year, five-year, and one-year plans have all the same sections to fill out. The idea is to continue to reverse engineer a plan, starting with the ten-year worksheet and working your way back. Each one gets closer to the short term goals that are more possible to do now. And once you get to the one-year exercises, it becomes apparent that in order to live out your life plan, you need to start now.

A Hero Transforms by Taking Action

The *Hero on a Mission* life plan and journal are a tactical reverse engineering strategy to create purpose and meaning in life. You can't rely on fate to provide it for you, because waiting for fate means waiting to be saved as a victim. And while Miller makes a point to say there are real victims in this world who are forced into their situations and really do need saving, those of us who aren't in that situation should not choose to identify as a victim. We can save ourselves.

However, the only way to save ourselves from the existential vacuum is to take action. Find what brings us joy outside of ourselves. Find the community that will join your journey with you. Create a vision for the legacy you want to live. Then, work your way from a ten-year plan to a daily ritual in order to prioritize your goals and accomplish the vision of who you want to be.

Wash. Rinse. Repeat.

Our lives are a continuous story and once one subplot finishes, it's easy to drift back into the vacuum, staring at the living room carpet and wondering where the crumbs came from. This *Hero on a Mission* plan enables you to take agency and keep yourself from drifting too far back there. As long as your actions are simple to execute, repeatable, and foundation, you'll be able to follow the roadmap straight to where you want to end up: With a legacy that reads just as profound as the eulogy you create to trigger the plan in the first place.

Miller talks about his success with the *Hero on a Mission* plan, “If I get up early and write every day, my entire life settles into a healthy rhythm.” He didn't want to become a writer. He wanted to become a person who loves to write.

That's his encouragement to his readers: don't work to become the thing you love. Make a plan to become the person who loves to do the action you decide to take. Meaning only happens when you experience transformation. Transformation only happens when you take action. You have to put aside any tendencies that don't align you with hero energy in order to take the first step.

Be your own hero. Save your own self. Decide on transformative action and experience your purpose in life.