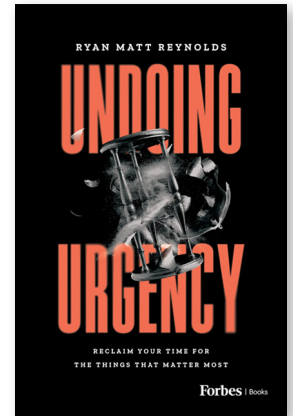


Undoing Urgency

Reclaim Your Time for the Things that Matter Most

by **Ryan Matt Reynolds**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Hemingway wrote using a technique that has come to be known as the iceberg principle, in which characters' words and actions—everything observable to the reader, above the surface—allude to deeper thoughts, feelings, and motivations that the author leaves mostly unsaid. People are much better at concealing the anxieties, stresses, and struggles that lie beneath the surface, at least until those things threaten to pull them under completely.

In *Undoing Urgency: Reclaim Your Time for the Things That Matter Most*, Ryan Matt Reynolds teaches readers how to handle those stresses and fears that bring people down. Many times, people are the ones holding themselves back. With this guide, readers can distinguish what is holding them back and how to fix it. The book helps people discover their core values and how those feed into their priorities. Setting long and short-term goals can be easy with a clear plan and can help everybody reach their potential.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Discover what is holding people back in being successful.
- Create core values to help drive yourself.
- Set long-term and short-term goals to reach your potential.
- Learn about action items and how to create them to maximize your time with minimal effort.

Part 1: Drowning

Undue Urgency

Status is the perception one has of himself or others, which may be founded or unfounded. Value is mostly built when no one is looking.

Urgency is an emotional response to high stakes, a ticking clock, and the fear of losing. Like fight-or-flight, urgency can be a good thing. It can motivate people to take action when action is needed. Without a plan to deal with it, urgency can become all-consuming. Undoing urgency can change how you spend your time and the return on your efforts by letting you focus on what truly matters most.

Don't Prioritize, Deprioritize

Rather than confront the culture of busyness, we've turned it into a status symbol, where the picture of success usually means someone who "has no life." Successful people are often busy people, but busyness does not equal value, even if we think it makes us look important.

THE EISENHOWER MATRIX

Without practice, most people do not automatically distinguish between the urgent stuff that makes us busy and the important stuff that adds value to their lives. The Eisenhower Decision Matrix removes personal whims from the process by helping classify every task on our list. It's a rectangular array of two rows and two columns into which you can sort every item on your to-do list by whether it is urgent or not and whether it is important or not.

The first actionable step for deprioritizing the unnecessary urgency in your life: build an amazing list of tasks. Now, take that list and assign every task to one of the four quadrants in the Eisenhower Matrix.

Eliminate – Not Urgent/Not Important

Delegate – Urgent/Not Important

Efficiency – Urgent/Important

Enjoy – Not Urgent/Important

Make your list. Then, immediately start deprioritizing the unimportant tasks.

Stop Making Excuses

THE REFINING POWER OF VOLUNTARY HARDSHIP

The myth of overnight success is one of the most harmful perceptions in business, health, and personal growth. The

overnight success story is the opposite of the mindset and work that makes progress possible: the voluntary hardship of success. You learn, you train, and you work to get better. Even then, value only follows when you consistently make hard choices. That is the idea behind voluntary hardship.

VOLUNTARY HARDSHIP

Voluntary hardship is the means that justifies the ends. It's the hard work of pursuing your values that gives those values meaning. In this way, voluntary hardship is intrinsically virtuous—part of the collection of core values that add up to a well-lived life.

THE FOUR DERAILEMENTS

1. Fear: There are three types of fear that fuel urgency and make up excuses against voluntary hardship: fear of success or failure, fear of risk, and fear of trust and its expression in micromanaging.
2. Chaos Derails: Chaos is the product of being in survival mode. Chaos derails because it distracts. A chaotic life is overflowed with urgency.
3. Self-Medication and Vices Derail: The reality is that hardship, even voluntary hardship, can be stressful. Vices anesthetize against hardship, not only derailing your goals but also harming your health, family, and relationships.
4. Stubbornness: Stubbornness is a rejection of personal responsibility and authority. The root of the problem is the rejection of personal responsibility for a lack of progress.

Your Calendar is Not the Problem; You Are

CALENDAR AS TRUTH-TELLER

You can use your calendar as a health marker concerning how you use your time. Your calendar is a truth-teller. When it's too full of the wrong kinds of tasks then it's time to examine your habits.

DO A TIME AUDIT

Every kind of audit is tedious, but most will not be as immediately useful as a time audit. The concept is simple: track blocks of time, every fifteen to thirty minutes, every day for one week. You just need a consistent account of every twenty-four hours for seven days. Accurate time auditing will help you in a few different ways. It will show you those minor tasks that should take less than three

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Urgency can be a useful tool, but it is always
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minutes but tend to occupy whole blocks of time. It will also help you take note of when you are distracted or trying to focus on too many things at once. Identifying a central goal or task for a block of time reveals where your time is going much better than hindsight.

FOCUSED WORK: DEALING WITH THE URGENT/IMPORTANT

Focused work comes in many flavors: deep work, flow state, productivity, grit, and generally getting things done. Every type of focused work comes down to habit-building and creating the states most conducive to maximizing your output and the quality of your work. The first thing to learn for focused work is how to eliminate distractions. When it's time to tackle those Urgent/Important tasks, it is necessary to wall yourself off from the outside world. By creating an intentional space, even a temporary one, you learn to signal to yourself that it's time to focus.

Pomodoro Technique: The technique is simple: work for twenty-five undistracted minutes. Take a five-minute break. Repeat as necessary.

Practice Aggressive Deadlines: Aggressive deadlines will compress those tasks down to their actual size rather than letting them linger and take up more of your day than is strictly necessary.

Preplan Your Day: Planning your day means breaking everything down into fifteen- and thirty-minute time blocks and giving each block a job. Tasks that will take you three minutes or fewer always come first. Just get those done, regardless of their relative importance or urgency. Next, prioritize your Urgent/Important tasks for the day and assign those to the earliest blocks.

Build a Consistent Routine or Schedule: Perhaps the best habit you can build is the overall framework of your day through a consistent routine or schedule. The specific schedule is much less important than consistency.

WHEN TO EMBRACE URGENCY

Is urgency ever a good thing? The answer is “yes.” Urgency can be a useful tool, but it is always unsustainable as a primary motivator. What makes urgency work for you—

rather than bury you—is clear priorities, a clear end date, and action items and metrics for completion.

Part 2: Build Your Game Plan

Identifying Your Core Values

Defining core values is the process of calling your shot. It means defining the highest ideals for yourself to act as guidelines for goals, actions, and other decisions.

WHAT ARE CORE VALUES?

When we create core values, we are creating personal standards. These are the rallying points for your long-term goals, actions, and decisions about how to spend your resources, and you are the standard bearer whose job it is to hold those core values high. First, core values require radical self-honesty. Second, don't confuse core values with their respective attributes. Every person may express their core values in different ways. Finally, start at the end. Reputation and legacy make up the lens of this exercise.

CORE VALUES AND VOLUNTARY HARDSHIP

It is important to create these core value statements in an environment of thoughtful reflection. Later, when you are contemplating goals or making important decisions with real-world consequences, you reference these core values and tune your most immediate reactions to them, letting them act as an unwavering guide.

CORE VALUES: REPUTATION AND LEGACY

Core values are a blend of our needs and wants. Taking ownership of your reputation and legacy will keep you within the bounds of realistic core values. This also highlights the imperatives of your core values—the goals that your core values help you accomplish.

STEP ONE: DEFINING YOUR CORE VALUES

The only things you need to define your core values are time and thoughtfulness, both of which require no skill.

STEP TWO: PRIORITIZE

The next step is to put your core values in order from the highest priority to the lowest priority. All core values are important, but some will have a natural priority.

Goals Maketh the Game Plan

The GAME Plan begins with Goals, followed by the Actions and Metrics that turn those Goals into active projects, and then the Execution strategies that bring this system together.

GOAL SETTING: DISCIPLINE, MOTIVATION, AND HABITS

Discipline, motivation, and habits make up a progressive spectrum for what fuels consistent, difficult decision-making. If you are disciplined, you choose hardship because the intrinsic value of that hardship exists apart from the expected outcome—the choice and the work itself are the rewards. If you are motivated, you choose hardship because the perceived benefit of the outcome is greater than the perceived cost of the choice. If you've built great habits, you choose hardship because that choice has become your default response to adversity.

WHAT ARE GOALS?

The strongest Goals weave together core values, aggressive deadlines, ambitious but attainable progressive steps, and objective standards for success. Break down Goals into two categories: long term and short term.

SET YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS

For each of your core values, ask yourself, "How much change is needed?" to more closely align with your core value statements and "How much change is possible?" in the next three to five years. The more that needs to change, the higher the priority. Similarly, the sooner you can positively affect a core value, the higher the priority. Next, for each core value, starting with the highest priority, ask yourself, "What are the one or two things you can do in the next three to five years that will make the biggest impact on that core value?" The answers will make up your long-term Goals.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

Determine each of the major actions, tasks, stages, or accomplishments that add up to the long-term Goal. For this step, you must think systematically. Each short-term Goal should have a deadline and a way to measure progress.

Minimum Effective Dose for Maximum Impact

Before getting into the details of identifying the specific Actions that support the short-term Goals, this is the overriding principle used to select those Actions that will have the most impact and give you the most return on investment (ROI) for your time, energy, and money.

MINIMUM EFFECTIVE DOSE (MED)

Uncertainty is a normal part of chasing goals, and it's easy to fall in love with complex solutions when you are unsure of the next step to take. You can replace trial and error with a MED approach, using a systematic strategy for identifying Actions, allocating resources, and controlling variables. For the GAME Plan, we do not just want to identify the smallest steps to take; our aim is to look for the MED for maximum impact.

MINIMUM EFFECTIVE DOSE: SIMPLE. NOT EASY.

We want to simplify our Goal into Actions that manipulate as few variables as possible while making great progress. MED seeks to trump overly complex and complicated ideas from the get-go. To do this, we identify and control the variables and then work to find the sweet spot for the maximum impact of our actions.

VARIABLES: TIME, ENERGY, MONEY

Most goals in business, health, and life rely on three primary resources: time, energy, and money. These make up our primary variables any time we create or organize Action items.

Time: When allocating time, think of the priorities that will make you a person of action, meaning you should look for big changes that are possible with short time allocations.

Energy: Energy as a resource recognizes the intangible cost associated with certain tasks. You must ask how much effort something takes, how specialized the required skill set, the amount of stress that will result, and other intangibles that affect your ability to sustain the level of investment.

Money: There is always a cost to doing things, but the cost does not always have to be monetary. MED requires that you think more like a CEO, whose primary job is resource allocation between time, energy, and money as they relate to relationships and problem-solving.

MED FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

1. Simplicity over complexity.
2. Economy over excess.
3. Effort over easy.

Finding the sweet spot for maximum impact is not as easy as it sounds.

FINDING THE SWEET SPOT

Finding the sweet spot for maximum impact is not as easy as it sounds. It is an exercise in exploring the possibilities of diminishing marginal returns and growth potential for the investments of your time, energy, and money and possible economies of scale.

MAKING MISTAKES

You can minimize mistakes and their associated costs by starting small and paying attention to the data available as you make changes. But you can never be afraid to make mistakes altogether.

Actions Focus the Game Plan

GAME Plan Actions are where we learn to direct our focus and capture the natural urgency of a deadline, turning it to our use for meaningful, purposeful work.

ACTIONS MAKE UP THE GOALS

Actions are not merely a list of tasks to be done but the component pieces of each Goal, crafted from MED principles, allocating resources with care, and using the process for finding the maximum impact for our resources.

GAME PLAN ACTIONS: CHARACTERISTICS

- Clear and Specific
- Testable
- Meaningful
- Limited in Scope
- Quantifiable/Objective
- Predictive

With these characteristics in mind, start to envision each step that will lead to a GAME Plan Goal and write those steps down as GAME Plan Actions. Each Action must meet the following criteria:

1. Actions should identify what needs to be done, by whom, and when.

2. Actions must be written to track progress and allow you to mark them as completed (or not) at the deadline.

3. Actions must follow MED principles:

- Each Action uses only one resource or adjusts one variable at a time.
- Each Action is designed to make a significant impact with the fewest resources.
- Each Action anticipates improvement in some meaningful measurement.
- Actions are tested and retested to find their maximum impact when necessary.

TAKE ACTION

Now, it's time to list your Action items. For each of your GAME Plan Goals—the short-term Goals you've created to guide your actions over the next three months to a year—you will list three to four Action items that, when completed, will practically guarantee you meet the Goal.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Create three to four Actions that support each Goal.
2. Focus on output: Actions that move the needle the most in the least possible time.
3. Set aggressive deadlines.
4. Use MED prioritization.

Part 3: Executing the Game Plan

Metrics for Measuring Success

Metrics will give you an overarching measure of the health of your GAME Plan or company and are divided into two categories: (1) Targets, which are measured by Targets to Improve (TTIs), and are the objectives that will represent the future successful completion of actions, and (2) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are the metrics that give you a snapshot of the health of a company or GAME Plan in real time.

METRICS AND TTIS: FROM QUALITIES TO QUANTITIES

Creating Targets and assigning Metrics to your GAME Plan accomplishes a few important things. First, it sets the goal-posts steadfast, so you can confidently make and Execute your GAME Plan. Second, Targets connect your daily efforts to your core values. TTIs are an active, not passive, use of Metrics.

METRICS THAT MATTER

Metrics and Core Values: We want to be careful not to get too distracted by Metrics, especially those that do not tie back to core values.

Problem Solving: If a Target does not move or improve, there are two troubleshooting steps. First, assess your effort through a lens of radical self-honesty. Second, if the Actions are being completed with the requisite effort, then determine whether the Action can move the needle of that Metric the way you thought it should.

Execution: Game Plans in Action

GAME PLAN FUNCTION AND FORM

It is easy to get excited about a new way of getting things done; believe me, I know. But without committing to a consistent plan of Execution, you are most likely to get stuck in your everyday routines without experiencing any real change.

“E” IS FOR EXECUTION

GAME Plan Execution is a process for generating a chronological and comprehensive task list for every step of every Action.

Annual: The annual GAME Plan is the least detailed because it hovers high above the daily work down in the trenches, focusing instead on the major Goals and Actions needed to meet long-term GAME Plan Goals.

Monthly: The monthly GAME Plan brings the perspective closer to the daily work.

Weekly: The weekly report is the feet-on-the-ground-level work, highlighting major progress on GAME Plan Actions, noting obstacles that still lie in the way, and planning for focused, efficient work the following week.

Daily: At this level, you review the task list, add new items, and remove completed ones every day.

Putting it All Together

CREATE YOUR CORE VALUES

1. Identify your valued attributes

2. Categorize and define your core values

3. Prioritize your core values

SETTING LONG-TERM AND SHORT-TERM GOALS

1. Set long-term Goals for each high-priority core value

2. Set three to five short-term Goals to support each long-term Goal

ACTION ITEMS

1. Create three to four Actions that support each Goal

2. Focus on output

3. Set aggressive deadlines

4. Use MED prioritization

EXECUTION SCHEDULE

- **Annual.** Create a thirty-thousand-foot GAME Plan for the year with the top three to four Goals and the three to five Actions that make up each Goal.
- **Monthly.** A review of the previous month and updated GAME Plan for the next month.
- **Weekly.** Create a weekly report organized by priority and active Goals.
- **Daily.** Review the task list, add new items, and remove completed ones.

People can choose the easy path every chance they get and still find success and comfort in life. Usually, that will come from some luck, support, or innate talent that can be leveraged with minimal work, but it is possible. What is impossible without hard work is cultivating and carrying the joy of a life well lived.

That is the difference between happiness, which is fleeting, and joy, which lasts. Once you unbind the important work from the urgent and enticing distractions, you can examine your core values—how you want to look back at this life. From there, break down the steps that will get you to that version of yourself.

Identify the major Goals that will mark progress on that path, and start doing the work that will get you there. It is a simple but meticulous process. When done well, there will be value in the work because the work is driven by your values.



Ryan Matt Reynolds is a former professional strongman, gym owner, successful strength coach, podcast host, and the Founder/Owner/CEO of one of the largest online fitness platforms in the industry (Barbell Logic), where the focus is on redefining and reforming the antiquated personal training model and replacing it with white-glove personal, professional online fitness coaching from the best expert coaches in the world. More importantly, Matt has built a home and community in the heart of the Ozarks, Springfield, MO, with his wife of 25 years, Rachel, and two children, Cailin and Kinsley.

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