

THE
i'MPOSSIBLE
PROJECT



HOW TO
LIVE
MENTALLY WELL
AND **CRUSH IT**
IN HIGH SCHOOL

Part of The i'Mpossible Project's
Peer-to-Peer Resource Series

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INTRODUCTION

It's December 2010, the start of a new decade... and I'm back in college at twenty-six—making it happen, taking the bull by the horns, and thinking of other exciting clichés that applied to my life.

More than anything, I was ready for a change. In the previous fifteen months, I had some of the most calamitous fortunes in the history of calamity. My father took his own life, my mother betrayed me over my father's inheritance, my girlfriend of six years left me, I lost out on a big role singing on Broadway, and *Ugly Betty* got canceled by ABC (okay, maybe that last one wasn't so bad). If I could get through all that, what else could go wrong?

Um... everything.

In January of 2011, I started experiencing signs of what I later discovered was depression. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep, and thoughts of suicide swirled around inside my head all day long. And worse—I couldn't shake off the suicidal thoughts, no matter how hard I tried. After nearly making an attempt on my life...

I finally found the courage to reach out for help...

—first from family, then friends, and eventually my school’s counseling center, where I began seeing a therapist who helped keep me alive. I ended up attending school that semester and began to thrive.

Over the next four months I made a conscious decision to make changes in my life. Initially I wasn’t sure what I was doing or how it would all work. But I chronicled it all once a week, writing first to myself and then turning few into blog posts or entries into my first book. Looking back on this writing, there is a clear path I took toward my healing, along with tools for others to use to help them help themselves.

This book is what I learned about recovery, surviving, and even thriving as a student dealing with a mental health condition. You don’t necessarily have to be dealing with depression or anything else. All of this is sensible living, and inside are eight core principles on...

how to live mentally well in high school... and crush it while you’re there.

This short manual is a product of testing, trial and error (falling flat on my face more than a few times), and gathering knowledge from my many mentors. I want to share with you what I’ve learned in order to help you have a successful high school career and beyond. It all starts with protecting, nurturing, and caring for that gray matter between your ears

(no, not that big mole on your face). Why? So you can get a head start on living a mentally healthy and fulfilling life regardless of your midterm grades, relationship status, or the prized internship you did or didn't land. #booyah

This book is a departure from the generic rah-rah inspirational-style material. No magical spirit-guide promises, no flowery find-your-inner-child guarantees; just eight short chapters—each a mixture of philosophy, direct objectives, and my aim for mental health “success.” Some chapters will be directly applicable to you, some will be applicable to a friend or classmate—feel free to share that chapter or the entire book with that person. This book is made to be shared.

How To Read This Book

There are no chapter numbers. Start reading wherever you want your journey to begin. Take your time with each chapter, preferably a week, allowing time for “aha” moments—making space to implement what you've learned, allowing yourself to be inspired and to be an inspiration, and setting yourself up for a day, a week, a year, or a lifetime of sustainable, fulfilling change.

I know it's sexy to claim that I have all the answers—hell, it'll even pump out more books. But I can't in good conscience make that claim. I do know where to find the answers—inside of you. My hope is that this book will be a spark, a catalyst, or even the inspiration you've been searching for and to make mental health a priority and a possibility each and every day.

**Possibilities and opportunity for adventure
abounds.**

#iampossible



PUTTING YOUR SUCCESS ON AUTOPILOT

While emerging from a six-week period of depression and suicidal thinking, I realized I needed to develop new tools to dig myself out of the hole I fell into, and give myself a fighting chance to keep myself out of that hole forever. I had to develop healthy habits. What I discovered after a few months was that creating these habits didn't require much work. Soon, each "habit" became a staple of how I would live the rest of my life.

Eating—I'm no nutritional expert, but I do know that eating a whole extra-sausage large pizza in one sitting is not good for your physical or mental health. Check out a few of these sites for more information on how to help you make good meal choices:

- [Choose My Plate](#): Plan healthy meal and snack choices with this tool, which includes guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- [Health.gov](#): These resources from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services feature health news, interactive tools, and dietary guidelines.

- [It's About Eating Right](#): Tips on a range of issues from weight management and nutrition to food safety and grocery shopping from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.
- [Nutrition for Everyone](#): Helpful guidelines on food groups, water intake, fats and carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables, and other nutrition topics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- [What Specific Foods Do](#): Find out how specific types of foods, as well as vitamins and minerals, play a role in overall health and wellness, and disease prevention. This is part of the Taking Charge of Your Health and Wellbeing series from the University of Minnesota.

Sleeping—Getting on a semi-normal sleep cycle was huge for me. Instead of alternating falling sleep at midnight, the next night at 2:00 a.m., and the next at 6:00 a.m. while waking up every morning at nine o'clock, I had to make sure I got to sleep between 11:30 and 12:30 every night with few exceptions. Adults need seven to eight hours of sleep, and missing that sleep on a regular basis can have a negative effect on your emotions, your creativity, and the quality of your work. Taking all-nighters to cram are rarely useful. It's better to wake up feeling rested and then tackling your work.

Positive People—I used to hang with a mixed bag of people. But while learning to deal with my depression, I realized I could only keep positive people around. Negative people were a drain on my time, energy, and they put me in a bad place mentally. Positive people helped me see new possibilities, the good parts of myself, and inspired me to raise my game as a friend, lover, student, mentor, and entrepreneur.

Exercise—When first navigating my way through depression, I noticed the extra endorphins produced during exercise helped change my brain chemistry for a short period, providing a temporary relief from the hurricane of negativity crashing about inside my brain. Walking is totally fine too if you're working up to getting serious about exercising. Exercise also helps improve memory and reduces stress. It also helped keep off some unwanted pounds due to my metabolism slowing down (damn you, Mother Nature!).

Talking It Out—Prior to my depression, I never talked to anyone about anything I was struggling with, and I rarely asked for help. But I had to change this to be able to go on living. And there's lots of ways to talk and get support. Your school's counseling center is a great place to start. This is one of your last opportunities for free mental health care—take advantage. You don't need a diagnosis to make an appointment. Either as a supplement or as a segue into dipping your toes into talking to someone, identify people in your world who you consider a mentor with whom you can have a heart-to-heart.

Creating Healthy Habits isn't About Making an Ultimatum or a New Year's Resolution.

It's developing systems to create little wins, making it easier for you to make long-term sustainable change.

Two Quick Examples

1. I eat like crap when I get hungry and food isn't readily available. So, I decided to prepare a few meals in advance of the week and blocked out time when I can prepare more easy meals. Calorie count is lower, proteins and health(-ier) fats are higher. My mental health is better because I'm not eating crap. And my pants continue to fit me. #woot
2. I dislike exercising and know I won't do it unless I make it really easy for myself to do it. So, I put running shoes, shorts, and a t-shirt beside my bed at night. When I wake up in the morning, those bad boys are staring me in the face and it's easier for me to slip them on and run out the door. Otherwise, I'd be searching for clothes and give up halfway to getting my socks out of the drawer. And we're back to my mental health being a notch better because the exercise triggers those lovely chemical friends, endorphins.

Create systems only when you feel a little extra motivated and when you can give a small amount of time to the task at hand.

Set Yourself Up for Little Wins That Add Up to Something Big.

Trying to lose thirty pounds in a week or creating that paper on nuclear fission this afternoon with no plan is not going to make your life easier—it will make you give up your goal. Build on the little wins. This will help you to create long-term sustainable change that eventually becomes healthy habits.

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: 1-2 hours

- Identify 1-3 things you know you *should* do but are having trouble doing.
- What would make it easier for you to follow through with these healthy habits?
- Could it be setting up bills on autopay (you can have a friend or therapist help you with this)? Or is it putting a pair of sneakers by your bed so that when you wake up, you can go for a quick run?
- Take time on this, but don't get frustrated if you're having a hard time getting motivated. Reach out to a trusted friend, mentor, or therapist and ask them if they'll help you find tools to create healthy habits.

Don't forget: No matter what you're dealing with...

**You Have Everything Inside You to be
Healthy, Complete, and Whole.**



THE GREATEST GIFT TO GIVE YOURSELF

True growth and achievement only begin in the space where you choose to give more than what's asked or required. Most people who are going after the same or similar goal as you—whether it's school-related, entrepreneurial, or even charitable—probably won't put in the same kind of effort you do. Within the space of “extra” you give yourself an advantage—you now have more chances for trial and error to find the solution that works for you.

Speaking of the “Extra” Mile

I was once brought in by an organization to give an extra few speeches about dealing with depression. This was above and beyond what we already first agreed upon, and it was for a group I had never presented to before—juvenile offenders in lockup. Though giving these extra speeches proved exhausting due to my already tight schedule, I said yes because it felt like a good thing to do.

After finishing up at the juvenile detention center, I found that these kids were grateful for my message and that I talked to them like human beings. Some shook my hand while others shared private wants and wishes for themselves. I made an impact on their lives.

I also made new friends, gained new insight, and was able to book another speaking gig at a later date—all unexpected and a huge return for giving just a little extra of myself.

If you look for those places where you can give a little extra... you'll soon find a huge payoff in a multitude of ways.

How could you give a little extra? One of my favorites is mentorship. Maybe you're saying, "Hold on Rivedal..."

- 1) I don't know everything,
- 2) I come with a lot of baggage,
- 3) I don't have a lot of time, or
- 4) I've been told repeatedly that I don't offer value

Hold On. You're Making It Too Complicated.

- 1) You only need to know *something*.
- 2) Baggage makes you interesting.
- 3) Totally cool, you don't need to have a lot of time.
- 4) You have value. Every person, whether they know it or not, is a teacher.

Being a mentor is as simple as showing a kid how to hit a free throw in basketball, how to tie their shoelaces, or your favorite technique on learning how to be comfortable in your own skin.

Whatever you know—farming, love, money, relationships, proper flossing techniques—give a little of that knowledge away. We’re all in this together.

The mentorship you provide isn’t going to solve all of the world’s problems in one fell swoop. But the abundance you provide to another person will help them pass along their own gifts to another person, providing space and time to find new and innovative ways to help the impoverished and hungry and war-stricken.

All It Takes is One Single Act of Kindness Today...

—finding the time to be a mentor, gifting your time, giving your energy. You will have officially left the world better than when you found it, which is part of the ultimate goal while we’re spinning around on this rock. Giving to others is truly the best you can give yourself.

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: 1-2 hours

- Identify campus or community groups who align with your interests or passions; budget time in your week to get involved by volunteering.

- Identify at least one person in your world who could use your help. Offer to give them a little of your time and energy—whether that be mentorship, painting a fence, or taking the time to listen.

Two Notes on Giving of Yourself

- 1) While it's important to give of oneself, it's equally as important to practice self-care. This means not overextending yourself in the service of others, and making sure your needs are tended to.
- 2) It can be difficult to donate your time to a person or organization who isn't appreciative of your efforts and may even go so far as to mistreat you. Do not allow this. It is an utmost necessity to give of yourself to those who treat their helpers with gratitude and respect.



YOU'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE

On a long trip to Australia for suicide prevention work “schtuff,” I was feeling stuck—like I had been on the same plateau for too long with my wheels turning endlessly in the mud. I had actually felt this way for several months and I couldn’t shake it.

On my day off in Sydney, I decided to do a bush walk at a national park north of the city. I needed some clarity, some space, a new direction—something... or else I was going to lose it.

After a few scorching hot hours and nearly tripping over a giant lizard that looked like it made a cameo in one of the *Jurassic Park* films, I got my epiphany: You’ve been here before—these feelings of “not enough,” “it’s not working,” “what am I going to do,” and so on.

And I worked myself through the thought process, and then through a plan of action.

“This isn’t something unique to my brain or my situation. Yes, you’ve been here before—not this same exact place, but quite similar in many ways—and you’ve done something to get yourself out of it. You’ve moved

on, succeeded big, or failed hard. There was always something internally or externally that changed the situation you were in.”

Creating the Time to Work Through the Feelings of Being “Stuck” Was Incredibly Liberating.

Finding patterns in your study habits (or lack thereof), your work, or in a relationship and then asking the right questions afterward will: 1) get you where you need to go in the shortest amount of time, and/or 2) give you the answer to a difficult question or task with the least amount of pain.

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: 1-2 hours

- 1) Stop for a moment or plan some strategy time. Breathe (as cray-cray as it sounds, the “breathe” part is not to be skipped).
- 2) Look for patterns in your study habits, work, or relationships. Take notes. Know that you may not discover the patterns and sometimes it’s important to sit with a friend, a mentor, consultant, or coach to find a recurring pattern. But when you find one or more, ask:
 - a) What was it about the last time that was similar to this time?
 - b) What worked? Why? How can you use that as a tool this time?

- c) What didn't work? Why? How can you omit that from the toolbox this time?

- d) What course of action can you take to move forward?



I CANNOT FAIL, THEREFORE

At some point—whether it’s a college application essay, a job interview question, or part of some obnoxious board game for overachieving basement dwellers—the question will come up: “If you knew you couldn’t fail, what would you do?”

All sorts of answers come up: “Sail around the world,” “Ask out Taylor Swift,” “Be great at this job/school (very original, thanks).”

The question is probably asked in order to learn about someone’s personality and what makes them tick. But there isn’t much hope in learning about a person’s truest self because they shouldn’t be asked the question in the first place.

The question should be reframed as a statement: “I cannot fail, therefore...” Think about that and take it beyond the college application essay. Take the statement with you everywhere you go.

“I Cannot Fail, Therefore...”

—therefore what?

- The possibilities for you are limitless.
- The hurt from falling on your face is temporary.
- Failure is a lesson.
- You can start learning to play tuba while in school.
- You can ask for a promotion at work.
- You can ask that person you like out for coffee (or peppermint tea, if you have to).

Anything Is Possible... Except Failure

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: 1-2 hours

Look at “failures” from the day prior. What are some things you can learn from those “failures?” How does learning a lesson from a “failure” reframe the experience? How does it change your response in the moment and in the aftermath? Take notes.

Write it on a piece of paper, scribble it on your hand, make it your computer screensaver—whatever it takes so you don’t forget this truth: “I cannot fail.”



COMPARING ONESELF TO ANOTHER'S HIGHLIGHT REEL: THE PRIZES AND PITFALLS

While navigating my way through depression back in school, I had to force myself to learn and do certain things that were contrary to how I was used to living. Otherwise I would have fallen right back on my ass inside the dark, muddy pit I was struggling to climb out of.

I come from the world of professional musical theatre. As an actor, it's difficult not to compare yourself to other people. "He got his first Broadway credit at twenty-one, and I still haven't gotten mine yet." "He can't hit that high note as well as I do." "I would make a much better Tevye than he would." But none of those comparisons help you get where you want to go. They're drugs designed to provide a temporary escape from reality.

As the fog of depression was beginning to lift, I wanted to do something that would help others dealing with depression. I wanted to change the world, but I wasn't getting there fast enough. In a moment of

clarity, I wrote myself a little note on managing my type A personality and the dangers of comparing oneself to others.

Creating Your Own Highlight Reel

So you want to change the world—beginning with this new project. You want to take action and do something. But how to begin? There are thousands of ways—and one of them is as equally helpful as it is dangerous.

Finding someone or many someones in the world who are doing something similar to your goal, idea, or project. Bam. Easy enough.

Why it's helpful: You can find out if there is a demand for what you're about to endeavor, the archetypes for people who might like or need what you're doing, and what might work and what might not in building your goal/idea/project.

Why it's dangerous: There's the trap of comparing yourself to someone else's highlight reel. You want to be the next greatest *fill in the blank*. You take a look at some of the *fill in the blank* folks firmly established all over the U.S. You think to yourself: "Ms. X has her own TV show, is helping millions of people, and has her own line of *fill in the blank* products. I don't know if or how I'll ever attain that level of greatness. Maybe I'm not good enough, maybe I'll never be good enough, maybe I shouldn't even try."

That kind of thinking might seem a bit extreme, but it happens on a certain level quite often.

The other kind of thinking that goes along with the highlight reel comparison is: "Well, it's easier for *fill in the blank* (women, men, Hispanic, old, young etc.) to get on TV with their project and cause. Of

course I'm not doing well." It's the conditional statement of "if I only had X, then Y would happen," which gives a person the opportunity to let themselves off the hook for not trying, not fighting, or not doing their best.

The last piece of danger to be forewarned about the highlight reel comparison business is that it doesn't ever completely go away. You just have to learn how to tame it. But...

Everyone has a different set of circumstances and rules to adhere to in how they grew up, how their brain operates, who they know, and the relationships they have developed. It may look like a person has it easy (at a certain level it's important to make "it" look easy), but they are dealing with factors that you and I know nothing about.

You Can Learn From a Person's Success, but You Can't Replicate it. Take What You Like. Leave the Rest.

Rinse and repeat with other *successful people.

**Successful in whatever area in which you're looking to grow: a friendship, work/life balance, business, or skills as a helper.*

The beginning of any project, idea, or goal is to some extent a necessity, but there has to be joy and love for the craft and the process, what it is, and what it could become.

Be patient, be generous in action and in spirit, and keep at it. Look up once in a while to learn from others, while not allowing yourself to become enamored with the shiny, encrusted jewel that is their success. You'll never be able to have the jewel that they've created for

themselves. You're creating and refining your own jewel, and so far it's shaping up to be a real beauty.

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: 1-2 hours

- Take a look at what it is you're trying to achieve—the focus of this could be a relationship, a class, a job interview, a project, or anything in between.
- Take a look at three people who you may consider your “competitor.” List five things they do well. If this is a business or work competitor, do their strengths outweigh their weaknesses, and is there an opportunity for you to partner up?
- Take a moment to acknowledge that what you're doing is special. List your strengths and what's going well in your world, your projects, your classes, or anything in between.
- Make an effort to take stock daily or weekly of your strengths and what's going well. Find a way to remind yourself of those strengths and good things when in crisis or when things are not going well.



FAITH + ACTION = A RECIPE FOR FIRE

#Realtalk, I don't like to talk about "faith" much because of the religious connotation and how much angst and discord that word can bring. Everybody believes in something and nobody wants to be wrong.

But I'm actually talking about faith in oneself—the hope without strong evidence that at some point, no matter your lot in life, it will get a little or even a lot better.

As an entrepreneur, as an artist, as a caregiver, as a student, and as someone with a history of suicide in my family, I've had to cultivate and create a good deal of faith for myself.

Faith is important but taking action is essential—the need to continuously be searching for glimmers of light in the darkness, finding ways to set myself up for little wins. Why? Because faith without action is meaningless.

I've noticed that in my own world, and in the lives of countless people I respect and admire, the foundation of any personal success—great or

small—is reaching out for temporary support and then long-term sustainable support.

Temporary support can be: asking for directions at a gas station, government assistance, a crisis line, a student loan.

Sustainable support involves: reaching out to friends, family, a therapist, and/or mentors.

Reaching out for support can feel like a little win, but over a period of time the support you receive can result in big gains.

When I was in crisis, temporary support was asking for a day off of work; permanent support was identifying and then reaching out to the positive influences in my life.

As a caregiver for a loved one battling cancer, temporary support is sitting down at the piano for thirty minutes. Permanent support is creating lists of people and then reaching out to them, asking for their support in my caregiving.

In both cases, being in crisis and being a caregiver, the small wins snowballed into huge gains—making both experiences much easier to bear.

Bonus: Two More Little Wins to Help Fuel Your Faith

- Positive self-talk: i.e., your inner coach. No positivity doesn't make it all better, but it sure as hell can be pretty helpful. While I was battling depression, I had to make a conscious effort to stop calling myself nasty names when I screwed up on something. Instead I decided I would chalk up the experience to a lesson learned.

- Self-education. In seeking out and discovering new information, you evolve, and you find out that you're not the only one going through whatever it is you're going through. You learn how to get to the next level. Self-education helps you move a little faster toward what you want—like the cheat codes on the old Nintendo games. (I was a big Konami *Contra* fan: Up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, B, A, start.)
-

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: 1-2 hours

A) Make a list of all temporary support you may need.

i.e., a student loan, a crisis hotline, the bursar's office

- For each, seek out contact information and/or a point of contact.
- Create an easily accessible place to store this list.

**If you need help with this, a school counselor or academic advisor is a good place to start.*

B) Make a list of all long-term support you may need.

i.e. clergy member, parents, good friends

- For each, seek out contact information and/or a point of contact.
- Create an easily accessible place to store this list.

Know Who You Can Lean on and Where You Can Go in Times of Need

Whatever it is you want that you're not currently getting is, at its very essence, important... and so are you. Keep the faith and keep up that hustle.



IS THERE REALLY LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?: PART 1

Everyone is an expert at something. Sharing your knowledge with someone that results in a favorable outcome is a beautiful act. It provides a person with the feeling of being useful, needed, and having a purpose.

Before we talk about expertise and how to identify it, we've gotta talk payment. I'm sure sirens are going off in readers' heads... Slow down, Rivedal—it's impolite to talk about money. #Word. Sometimes it is. But getting payment doesn't always mean the exchange of money.

Mentorship or Charity: Sometimes sharing your knowledge and giving back is payment enough. There is a euphoric feeling you get from passing along your expertise to benefit a charitable organization or the next generation of movers and shakers. Additionally, this kind of work can be a tremendous résumé builder during your job search.

Bartering: Also an effective tool, one that I have used in the past to create a win-win situation. I need X work done. He needs Y but can't afford Y, so he offers to work on X for me so he can afford Y.

Moolah: And of course, there's always getting paid with actual currency. There might be a few slight hurdles to this, like learning some business skills and determining about the people who need what you have to offer (i.e., your "target market")—but Rome wasn't built in a day. The first hurdle is always a small one and that involves some simple research on Google.

You might be saying, "But I'm still in school. I'm not an expert at anything..."

Bullius Shitius.

Yes, you are an expert.

Your expertise doesn't have to intersect with millions of people, but maybe it can impact a few hundred. One quick analogy to illustrate the need for specialty: the rise of specialists within the medical industry versus doctors who are general practitioners.

Don't think you're an expert? Is there something people are constantly running to you for advice about? Computers, fixing skateboards, making gourmet pizza... ?

Recently I've come across patient activists in the health care industry. These particular people have a rare or rarely talked-about health condition. And then they start blogs and discussion groups about their condition. It's always about helping their community. Sometimes they will mentor other

people with their condition one on one. Sometimes the person will write a book and/or create a career out of their knowledge within this niche field.

One more thought on specialty and expertise. I did a Google search for a few random things that popped into my head—things that I thought might require a specialist. Each of the three following examples netted results that did indeed have specialists that had received payment: a) by giving back through charity or mentorship, b) by bartering, or c) as a person developing a part-time or full-time career based on that random niche.

- Navigating the Affordable Care Act in New York State
 - Transgender women training bras
 - Tuning old church pianos
-

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: 1-2 hours

- Go through your mental archives. List a few of the things people have asked you advice for recently or places you've volunteered for in the recent past. Write 'em down.
- Get in touch and offer yourself and your skills up.
- Volunteering and bartering are easier places to start before offering your expertise in exchange for money.

A Note About Money—If money is something you want or need in the near or distant future, see what other folks are charging for the same or similar service. At the start you're probably not going to make what they're making because you're the new kid on the block. But if you test

your pricing (hey, would you be willing to pay X for this?) and someone is willing to pay for it, then your test continues. If someone is willing to pay X, then will they pay for X+Y? The operative thought process here is this: You are providing a solution to a person's problem, which always supersedes your need for money, and informs the price you charge. (Can I charge this, and if so, will it allow maximum impact for the person I'm helping?)

A Note About Age—It's but a number, used unfairly in many cases to quantify a person's ability to be good at what they do ("trust me, I'm a doctor and I'm wearing a white lab coat"). Gain as much experience as you can in your chosen field(s) of expertise. If someone asks your age in a professional setting, learn to deflect with kindness. It's none of their business how old you are, but that doesn't mean you get to be rude about the answer you give. Practice answering age questions with a friend—always deflecting to the work or the matter at hand.

A Note About Making Promises—Always strive to be someone who keeps their promises. If you tell someone you're going to do something, do it. Don't get a reputation for being flaky. As you're getting your sea legs with giving of your expertise, you'll need to become hyperaware of the kinds of promises you're able to keep, when it's okay for you to say "yes," and when you have to say "no." Hint: At some point in the near future, "no" is going to overtake "yes," and that is a good thing.

Oh, and while searching for your expertise if it's not already apparent: Cut yourself some slack. That negative boogie monster in the back of your neck (the amygdala, the friendly but finicky fella who protects us from

danger) might tell you you're not good enough. Thank that boogie monster for doing their job, but let them know that you're in no danger and they can let their guard down. You're a badass mo-fo who has a lot to offer the world. Shake what yo' mama gave ya'—share your expertise.



IS THERE REALLY LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?: PART 2

Applications are finished (or if you're like me back in high school—you put it off till the very last minute #notthegreatestidea) and you've been accepted into your first choice, or maybe your tenth choice.

Soon, you'll be off to college wondering how you'll ever get through that 8 a.m. physics lab. Homework might be piling up and midterms will be around the corner before you know it. Somewhere in the recesses of your mind you may be thinking, *High school is a lot harder than it looks on TV.*

Graduating from high school and going to college is a hell of a transition. But it's doable. One of the biggest keys to success in college is to know where and how to access resources of help. That could involve hiring a tutor, knowing where the counseling office is located, how to find events on campus, or which campus job is the cushiest.

And make sure you give yourself a holistic college experience and not just endless partying or twenty-three hours a day of school work.

And if you find that your vision of success isn't turning out the way you always thought it would be, don't worry. You're not alone. There are billions of people in the world ages eighteen to eighty (maybe even older) who aren't satisfied with their station in life. There are always options: switching majors, changing schools, taking time off, or pairing down from five classes in a semester to three.

Any failure you have while in school is only temporary and a lesson on your way to greater success.

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: Ongoing

- Research resources at your new college and make sure you write them down in your phone, your planner, or wherever you can access them easily. This includes: the Advising Office, the Tutoring Center, the Library Reference Desk, Student Organizations, and Campus Counseling.
- Reach out to people and departments of interest in advance. This could include a call to your new residence hall, or a handwritten note to one of your new professors. You are that early bird, and you will have your worm and eat it too!

- Brush up on your technical skills—learn to type faster, how use Excel Spreadsheets, and even PowerPoint if you have to. Technology can help you maximize your time.
- Brush up on your people skills—take an improv comedy class or enroll in a public speaking class. It's not just the knowledge of your subject matter that will get you a job. The quality of your people skills can get you hella far in life.
- Financial resources: find them, apply for them, and do everything you can to access means and methods to leave college as debt-free as possible. The earlier you handle your debt, the better because interest rates can be crippling.



MAKING TIME YOUR FRIEND

Time is a natural resource more valuable than all the gold, diamonds, and precious metals in existence and coveted by almost every human being who ever lived.

Every single one of us is marching toward inevitability: At some point in the distant future our physical bodies will no longer be functional on this Earth and we want to find things to fill our time, things that intrigue us and make us happy, before our time expires. Ineffective time management can and often does lead to stress and a lack of satisfaction in our everyday lives—and who wants that?

How many people do you know who say things like:

- I've got so much to do and so little time to do it.
- I stayed up all night studying.
- I wish I had a clone.
- I am so overwhelmed with all my work.
- This stack of work on my desk is really piling up.
- I wish I could get more done.

- I want...
- I wish...
- I hope...
- I should...

A Catchall Solution: Creating Time- Management Strategies...

—scheduling your time with such efficiency that you'll be able to work, study, or play as much or as little as you want or need.

Life is too short not to be able to work hard, play hard, and do the things you love—bending time to work in your favor.

ACTION STEPS

Strategy Time: 1-2 hours on a weekly basis

Once a week for an hour or so you should take out your planner, your Google or Mac calendar, or some kind of a spreadsheet—whatever device suits you best—and plan out as much of your week as possible and schedule each task.

Notice that I didn't say pull out your stone tablet and chisel and plot out your week. Your schedule is a living, breathing entity that needs flexibility and room to adjust to the errant curveballs we're all thrown from time to time.

If you don't already practice writing down your schedule, think about how many times you might have forgotten to be at an important

meeting for work or with a professor or maybe you missed a friend's birthday or a romantic anniversary. Writing down your schedule will go a long way in saving you from looking like a flake or an insensitive tool-bag ever again.

The easy part is knowing that you have class at certain times and you should certainly write those hours in but you should also be writing in things like:

Homework—Schedule it, do it, and get it out of the way.

Meal Breaks—Sometimes people like to linger with the time they take for a lunch break. But if you're okay with taking a half hour as opposed to a full hour, you can spend more time writing that paper or out on that hot date—things that may be a better use of your time.

Sleep or Rest—Just because you're a quasi-superhuman high school student dynamo doesn't mean you don't need to schedule in breaks to rest, relax, or sleep.

Batch Similar Tasks—This is one of my all-time faves. Since you've already mastered the "I'm going to write my schedule down," portion, know that when you're scheduling things out, you should schedule all like items together for maximum efficiency.

Put all of your highly creative and problem-solving activities in one chunk of time like:

- Writing a research paper
- Creative writing

- Studying, reading, or preparing for a speech
- Figuring out what women want

Put all of the things together that you can move through quickly, like:

- Emails
- Unimportant phone calls
- Paying your bills
- A five-minute fad workout

If you don't believe me, try writing a research paper while answering emails at five- to ten-minute intervals. You won't be able to focus properly on either task and that research paper you thought would be a five-hour task will turn into an all-day affair. Once you go batch, you won't go back (and face-palm)...

TWO BONUSES

1. **Be the Chief and not the Hungry Hunter**—Schedule your time at least one week in advance. This is assuming you schedule your time at all, which you should. If you wake up on any given day and map out what you want done, it tends to be an exercise in putting out fires of the immediate and the seemingly urgent, rather than a process in keeping one eye in the moment and one eye on the future. Or, in terms of our hunter-gatherer ancestors, it's the difference of waking up and eating what you kill that very day versus planning out how, when, and where you're going to gather food for the tribe for the next week. In the former, you're the

Hungry Hunter constantly chasing, while in the latter you're able to be the Chief in planning for higher-level activities like building a nice shelter, irrigation for the tribe, and erecting grain silos.

2. In Case of Fire, Break Glass. Schedule contingency time.

Example: I know I need to get X, Y, and Z done this week. I loaded up all my work on Monday through Thursday and even scheduled in my downtime. While going through the week, I found that I played too hard on Wednesday (totally cool). I worked too long on X and Y on Thursday because I was in the zone. I even had an unexpected doctor visit on Tuesday.

But in my calendar when planning my week, I gave myself a block of time on Friday from 2–6 p.m., as contingency time—time to work on all my leftovers from the week. So, I'm still able to complete most, if not all, of my tasks for the week. I don't feel guilty for missing out on certain things throughout the week. And I'm able to work, play, and leave time for unexpected events, making for a well-rounded existence.



APPENDIX

HOW AND WHERE TO GET HELP SAMPLE SHEET

RESOURCES ON CAMPUS

High School Counseling Office

Address:

Phone:

Website:

Hours:

Description of Services Provided:

Other Mental Health Resources on Campus

List:

Campus Police

Phone:

Other Emergency Contacts on Campus

Phone:

Student Organizations/Advocacy Groups

List:

RESOURCES IN THE AREA

Community Mental Health Clinics

Address:

Phone:

Website:

Hours:

Description of Services Provided:

Fees:

Insurance Accepted:

Other Mental Health Resources (Low Fee/Sliding Scale)

Address:

Phone:

Website:

Hours:

Description of Services Provided:

Fees:

Insurance Accepted:

Private Clinicians Interested in Working with Students

Address:

Phone:

Website:

Hours:

Description of Services Provided:

Fees:

Insurance Accepted:

Local Hospital

Address:

Phone:

Website:

Hours:

Description of Services Provided:

Fees:

Insurance Accepted:

Crisis Centers/Hotlines

List:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



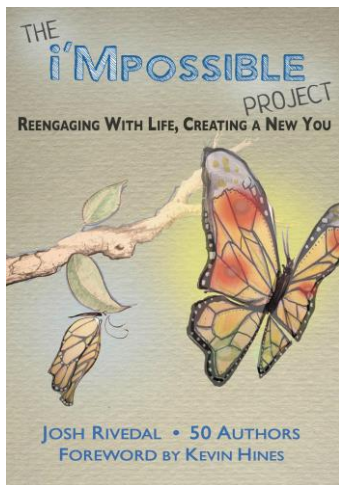
Josh Rivedal is an author, actor, playwright, and international public speaker. He has spoken about suicide prevention, mental health awareness, and diversity across the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia. He is the founder and executive director of The i'Mpossible Project—a non-profit media company designed to entertain, educate, and engage on suicide prevention, mental health, diversity and social change. He wrote and developed the one-man play, *Kicking My Blue Genes in the Butt* (KMBB), which has toured extensively throughout the world. His memoir *The Gospel According to Josh: A 28-Year Gentile Bar Mitzvah*, based on KMBB and published by Skookum Hill, is on The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's recommended reading list. He writes for the *Huffington Post*. He curated the fifty-story inspirational anthology *The i'Mpossible Project: Reengaging with Life Creating a New You* for release by Skookum Hill on January 13, 2016. Find out more at: www.iampossibleproject.com

ALSO BY JOSH RIVEDAL

The i'Mpossible Project: Reengaging with Life, Creating a New You

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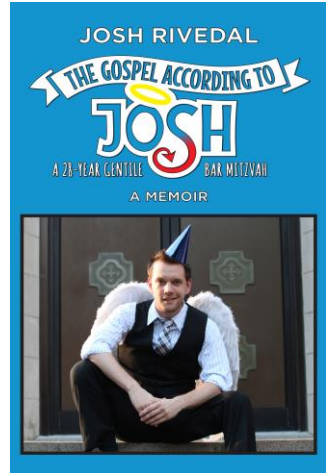
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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOSH: A 28-Year Gentile Bar Mitzvah

By the time Josh Rivedal turned twenty-five, he thought he'd have the perfect life—a few years singing on Broadway, followed by a starring role in his own television show. After which, his getaway home in the Hamptons would be featured in *Better Homes & Gardens*, and his face would grace the cover of the *National Enquirer* as Bigfoot's not-so-secret lover.

Instead, his résumé is filled with an assortment of minor league theatre and an appearance on *The Maury Povich Show*—a career sidetracked by his father's suicide, a lawsuit from his mother over his inheritance, and a breakup with his long-term girlfriend. Tortured by his thoughts, he finds himself on the ledge of a fourth-floor window, contemplating jumping out to inherit his familial legacy. In turn he must reach out to the only person who can help before it's too late.



Available on Amazon, Kindle, at B&N.com and at
www.iampossibleproject.com/the-gospel-according-to-josh

On the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's
Recommended Reading List for survivors of suicide loss

KICKING MY BLUE GENES IN THE BUTT

The one-man show and educational program on youth suicide prevention

A 60-90-minute, 3-component Keynote Program

Part 1) Theatre: A 15 character, 7 song one-man Broadway-style play *Kicking My Blue Genes in the Butt* that ends with Josh's father's tragic suicide—a comedic yet poignant true story and primal piece of live-storytelling that creates an emotional connection between students and the powerful message that suicide is preventable.

Part 2) An educational session where Josh discusses signs and symptoms of depression and suicide, how to help oneself or a friend if depressed or suicidal, how to live mentally well while in high school, and reviews resources of help for students.

Part 3) A question and answer session to help introduce more students to staff counselors.

Perfect for student activities, student orientation, suicide prevention week/month, and mental health week/month.

Watch a Short Video Clip

www.iampossibleproject.com/suicide-prevention

