

DON'T DIE A FAILURE

It's Never Too Late

Tom Monson

Foreward

Where are you right now?

Do you have something to look forward to when you wake up tomorrow — something that actually excites you?

If not... you're not alone.

When the doctor told me I had cancer, I wasn't afraid. I'd already buried a son and survived a shattered marriage. Lying in that bed, unable to move, I told myself, "If this is my time, I'm okay with it." I had produced dozens of television shows that made a real difference in the lives of thousands of people.

But something shifted.

I had spent years studying men like Sam Houston, Teddy Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant. These were giants who accomplished far more than I have, yet some of them died believing they were failures.

That hit me hard.

That's when I made a decision: *"I refuse to die a failure."*

This book isn't really about me. It's about you.

If you'll stay with me to the end, I give you my promise: I will show you a simple and easy daily practice that will help you live the rest of your life with purpose, gratitude, and the quiet confidence that you will never die a failure.

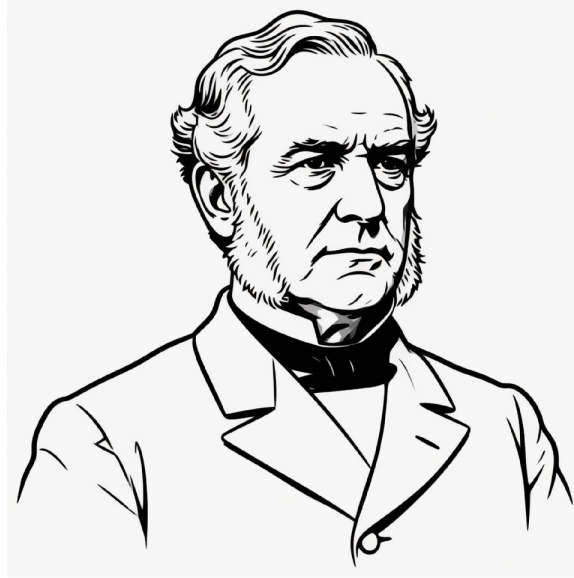
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ISBN: 9798195594107
Tom Monson Productions
tommonsonproductions.com

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Introduction

Most people don't actually die from old age.

They die from the slow, quiet decision to stop living long before their heart stops beating.

They wake up with nothing to look forward to. No plan for the day. No reason to get out of bed. No dream pulling them into tomorrow. They just drift, until one day they simply stop trying.

That's the real killer.

For fifty years, the story of Sam Houston has haunted me. He won Texas its independence, served as president of the Republic, and later as governor. Yet when he died in 1863, he died believing he was a failure.

Right across from him in history stands Ulysses S. Grant. He was dying of throat cancer, broke, and in terrible pain. But Grant made up his mind he wasn't going to die a failure. With his last strength, he raced to finish his memoirs so his family would be taken care of. He finished the book just days before he died. That one book paid off all his debts and left his family secure.

Two great men. Two very different endings.

One died full of regret. The other died with peace.

This book is for every person who still has breath in their body but feels like their best years are behind them. It's written for those who wake up wondering, "Is this all there is?"

In the pages ahead, you'll discover the two things that made the difference between Houston and Grant: having something meaningful to wake up for, and learning to practice gratitude for what you've already done.

Stay with me through this book, and I will show you a simple daily practice that will give you something to look forward to every single day, so you can live the rest of your life with purpose, gratitude, and the quiet confidence that you will never die a failure.

The Pain of Dying a Failure

On July 26, 1863, in a small white house called the Steamboat House in Huntsville, Texas, Sam Houston lay on his deathbed.

His wife Margaret sat beside him, reading from the Bible. The great man was seventy years old, worn out, and slipping away. In his final moments, he whispered just a few words: "Texas... Margaret... Texas."

Those were his last words.

Think about that for a second. Here was a man who had done more for Texas than almost anyone in history, and yet, as he took his final breath, his mind was still troubled. He died believing he had failed the very state he loved so much.

How is that even possible?

Sam Houston's life reads like an adventure novel. He had already been governor of Tennessee before he ever set foot in Texas. He lived with the Cherokee Indians, learned their language, and was adopted into the tribe. He fought in wars. He studied law. He served in Congress.

Then he came to Texas.

When the fight for independence broke out, the settlers chose him to lead their small, ragged army. Everyone told him to attack the Mexican forces right away, but Houston refused. He made his men march and train while Santa Anna's much larger army chased them across Texas. People called him a coward.

Then, on April 21, 1836, Houston picked his spot near the San Jacinto River. In an eighteen-minute battle, his outnumbered men destroyed Santa Anna's army. They captured Santa Anna himself the next day. Texas had won its freedom.

Houston became the first president of the Republic of Texas. Later, after Texas joined the United States, he served as a U.S. senator and was elected governor of Texas, the only man in American history to be governor of two different states.

He was a living legend.

Yet when the Civil War came, Houston begged that Texas not to leave the Union. He warned that secession would bring disaster. The people of Texas disagreed. They voted to join the Confederacy, and removed Houston as governor.

That broke him.

As he lay dying in 1863, the war was going badly for the South, just as he had predicted. But instead of feeling proud of everything he had built, Houston could only see what he had lost. He died believing he had failed Texas.

One of the greatest men in American history, a general, a president, a founder of a nation, died thinking his life had been a failure.

That's the pain this book is about.

And that is exactly what I want to help you avoid.

That's the real tragedy of Sam Houston's story.

He didn't fail.

He won, and won big. He helped create an entire nation. He defeated a much larger army. He served his people in the highest offices. By any honest measure, Sam Houston was a massive success.

But he couldn't see it.

In his final days, the only thing he could feel was failure. All his victories had somehow disappeared from his mind. The pain wasn't that he had lost. The pain was that he died convinced he had lost, even though he had actually won.

That is the worst kind of failure there is.

Not losing.

Not being defeated.

Not making mistakes.

The worst failure is dying while believing your life didn't matter, when the truth is, it actually did.

And the heartbreaking part is this: Houston isn't alone. Thousands of people every year die carrying that same heavy feeling, even though, if they could only see their life from the outside, they would realize they did far more than they ever gave themselves credit for.

That's why this book exists.

I don't want you to make the same mistake Sam Houston made.

How many of us, especially later in life, lie awake at night doing the exact same thing?

We don't think about all the good we've done. Instead, we lie there replaying everything we didn't do. The business we never started. The trip we never took. The apology we never gave. The relationship we let fall apart. The book we never wrote. The dream we quietly gave up on.

We count our regrets instead of counting our blessings. We focus on the roads not taken instead of all the roads we actually walked. And slowly, that weight starts to feel heavier than everything we ever accomplished.

That same pain Sam Houston felt on his deathbed is exactly what this book is here to stop.

You see, it doesn't matter how much you've already done in your life. If you wake up every morning with nothing to look forward to, your mind will always drift back to what you didn't finish. That's a dangerous trap.

I'm 78 years old now, and I've had plenty of nights like that myself. I've laid awake thinking about things I should have done differently. But I've also learned something important: you don't have to stay stuck in that place.

This book is written for people just like us, people who still have some years left, but who sometimes wonder if their best days are behind them. It's for anyone who's ever thought, "I've already done most of what I'm going to do in this life."

The truth is, you're not done yet.

You still have time to change how your story ends. You still have time to wake up with something to look forward to. You still have time to make sure that when your final day comes, you don't leave this world feeling like Sam Houston did.

That's exactly what I want to help you do.

So here's the question I want you to sit with:

What if the only real failure in life is giving up before your story is truly over?

Sam Houston didn't fail because he lost a battle or made mistakes. He failed in his own mind because he stopped believing his life still had meaning. He stopped looking forward. He let regret become the final chapter of his story.

But what if that doesn't have to be the way your story ends?

What if your last years could be some of the most meaningful years of your entire life?

What if, instead of waking up with nothing to look forward to, you woke up every single day with a reason to get out of bed? A goal. A purpose. Something that says, "I'm not done yet."

The truth is, your story isn't over until you decide it is.

You still have time to write a better ending.

You still have time to set new goals.

You still have time to fix what's broken.

You still have time to create something that outlives you.

You still have time to become the person you always wanted to be.

The only way you can truly fail is to quit while you're still breathing.

Sam Houston's story is a warning. But it doesn't have to be your story.

This book is about making sure it isn't.

In the next chapters, we're going to look at other people who gave up too soon, and others who refused to quit, no matter how late in life they started.

But it all starts with this one question:

Are you willing to stop giving up before your story is truly over?

Because if you are... then your best chapter might still be ahead of you.

The Trap of Drifting

When tomorrow has no plan, today loses its purpose.

That's when people quietly give up.

It doesn't happen with a big dramatic moment. There's no announcement. You don't wake up one day and say "I quit." It happens slowly, quietly, almost without you noticing.

One day you simply stop making plans. You stop looking ahead. You stop asking yourself, "What am I going to do next week? Next month? Next year?" When those questions disappear, something inside you starts to shut down.

Without a goal, even a small one, the days all start to feel the same. You wake up, do the same things you did yesterday, go to bed, and repeat. There's nothing pulling you forward. Nothing to get excited about. Nothing that says, "Get up. Today matters."

That's the trap.

Sam Houston felt this toward the end of his life. After he was removed as governor, he no longer had a clear purpose or role. The fight was over. With no new goal in front of him, regret moved in and took over his thoughts.

I've seen it in my own life too. The times when I didn't have a clear goal were the times I felt the most lost. The days felt heavy. Getting out of bed felt pointless.

The truth is simple: Goals aren't really about achieving big things. They're about giving yourself a reason to keep living. They're about having something, anything, that makes you want to see tomorrow.

As long as you have a goal, you're still in the game.

The moment you stop setting goals is the moment you start dying, even if your body keeps breathing for many more years.

That is the trap this chapter is about.

And that is the trap this book is here to help you avoid.

Here's the simple truth: No goals equals no forward motion.

When you don't have something pulling you ahead, even a small goal, your life stops moving forward. You're no longer walking toward anything. You're just standing still.

And when you stand still for too long, something dangerous happens inside your mind.

Without a goal to focus on, your mind doesn't just sit quietly. It starts drifting backward. It begins rehearsing failure. It replays old mistakes, old regrets, and old disappointments on a constant loop.

Instead of thinking, "What can I do next?" your mind starts asking, "What did I mess up? What should I have done differently? Why didn't I do more?"

That's a terrible place to live.

Your brain is designed to solve problems and move toward something. When it has no positive direction to go, it will always default to chewing on the past. It will focus on what you didn't do, what you lost, and what you can never get back.

This is exactly what happened to Sam Houston in his final years. Once he no longer had a clear purpose or goal in front of him, his mind turned against him. All the great things he had accomplished disappeared from his thoughts. All he could see was what he believed he had failed to do.

The same thing can happen to any of us.

Without even one small goal to look forward to, we slowly lose our sense of purpose. The days feel empty. Our minds become filled with regret instead of hope.

This is the connection that matters most:

No goals = no forward motion.

No forward motion = a mind that rehearses failure.

And once your mind starts rehearsing failure every day, giving up becomes almost inevitable.

Let me show you the difference a single goal can make.

Look at Sam Houston in his final days. Once he had no clear purpose or goal left, his mind turned inward. All he could think about was what he believed he had failed to do. With nothing to look forward to, regret took over completely.

Now look at Ulysses S. Grant just a few years later.

Grant was dying of throat cancer. He was in terrible pain. He could barely speak. Doctors told him he only had a few months left to live. His family was completely broke, he had lost all his money in a bad investment.

Most men in that situation would have simply given up.

But Grant made one clear decision: He was not going to die a failure. He set one single goal, to finish writing his personal memoirs before he died. He believed the book could sell well enough to pay off his debts and take care of his wife and children after he was gone.

So every single day, despite horrible pain, Grant sat up in bed and wrote. Some days he could only manage a few sentences. Other days the pain was so bad he could hardly hold the pen. But he kept going. That one goal became his reason to keep living.

He finished the manuscript just four days before he died.

That single goal, finish the book, gave him forward motion until his very last breath. Because he had something clear to work toward, his mind stayed focused on doing something meaningful instead of drowning in regret.

Two great men. Two very different endings.

The only real difference between them was this:

Sam Houston had nothing left to look forward to.

Ulysses S. Grant had one clear goal.

That's how powerful having even one goal can be.

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Goals aren't about being busy. They're not about filling up your calendar or making yourself look productive.

Goals are about staying alive on the inside.

When you have a goal, even a small one, something inside you stays awake. You have a reason to open your eyes in the morning. You have a reason to get out of bed. You have a reason to keep going.

It doesn't have to be a huge goal. It can be as simple as "I'm going to walk around the block every day," or "I'm going to call my old friend this week," or "I'm going to write one page of that story I've been thinking about."

The size of the goal doesn't matter. What matters is that you have something pulling you forward.

The moment you stop setting goals, even small ones, something inside you begins to shut down. You stop looking ahead. Your mind stops dreaming. You slowly start rehearsing failure instead of reaching for the next day. That's when the quiet giving up begins.

Sam Houston didn't die the day his heart stopped in 1863. In many ways, he started dying years earlier, the day he no longer had a clear purpose or goal in front of him.

Ulysses S. Grant, on the other hand, was physically dying, yet he stayed fully alive on the inside because he had one clear goal to fight for.

This is the choice we all face, no matter our age:

We can either keep setting small goals that give us a reason to wake up tomorrow...

or we can slowly drift until our body is still breathing, but we're already gone on the inside.

The day you stop setting goals is the day you start dying, even if your body keeps breathing for many more years.

That is the trap.

And now that you see it clearly, the rest of this book is about making sure you never fall into it.

They Died Believing They Failed

Some of the most talented people in history died believing they were complete failures.

That's a brutal truth, but it's real.

They didn't die because they lacked talent. They didn't die because they didn't work hard. They died because, at the end of their lives, they truly believed they had failed.

They looked back on their years and all they could see were the things that didn't work out. The dreams that fell short. The work that went unnoticed. The success that never came.

This chapter is about those people.

You're going to meet three individuals whose stories still hurt to read, because they had so much to give, yet they left this world convinced they had given nothing of value.

First, there's Herman Melville.

He wrote one of the greatest novels ever written, *Moby-Dick*. But during his lifetime, it was a complete flop. It sold fewer than 3,000 copies. Critics hated it. Readers ignored it. Melville spent the last thirty years of his life working as a customs inspector in New York, largely forgotten. When he died in 1891 at the age of 72, his obituary barely even mentioned his books. He went to his grave convinced that the work he had poured his heart into had meant nothing.

Then there's Vincent van Gogh.

He painted over 2,000 paintings and drawings in just ten years. He poured his soul onto every canvas. Yet he sold only one painting in his entire lifetime. He lived in poverty, struggled with deep depression, and at the age of 37. He took his own life believing he was a failure as both a man and an artist.

And finally, Georges Bizet.

He wrote what many consider one of the greatest operas of all time, *Carmen*. When it premiered in Paris, the audience hated it. It was booed

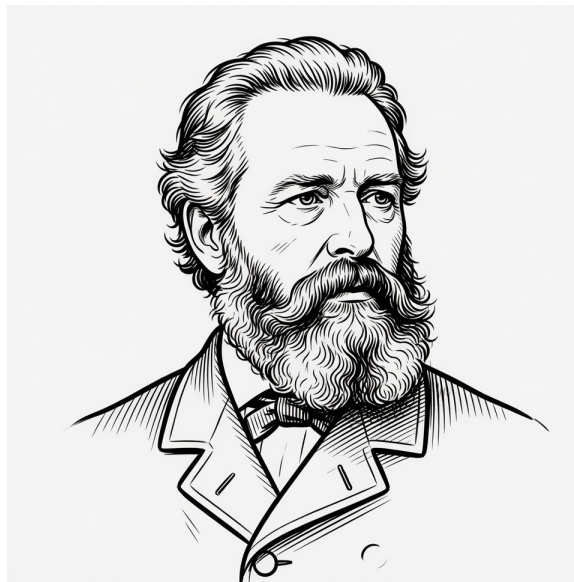
and ridiculed. Just three months later, he died heartbroken, certain that his greatest work had been a total failure.

Three brilliant men. Three very different lives.

But all three died carrying the same heavy belief, that they had failed.

This is how dangerous it is to lose hope. This is what can happen when you let the darkest moment of your life become your final story.

Herman Melville



Herman Melville wrote one of the greatest novels in American literature, *Moby-Dick*.

But almost nobody knew it while he was alive.

The book was published in 1851. It was a complete commercial failure. In the first year, it sold fewer than 3,000 copies. Critics attacked it. Readers were confused by it. The book basically disappeared.

Melville never recovered from that blow.

He had been a successful writer early in his career with books like *Typee* and *Omoo*, but after *Moby-Dick* flopped, his reputation collapsed. He kept writing, but nothing brought back his earlier success. By the 1870s, he had faded into complete obscurity.

For the last thirty years of his life, Herman Melville worked as a customs inspector on the docks of New York City. He spent his days checking cargo and stamping paperwork, a far cry from the adventurous life he had once lived at sea.

He continued writing in private, mostly poetry, but hardly anyone read it. He lived quietly, almost anonymously. Most people in New York had no idea that the quiet customs inspector had once been a celebrated author.

When Melville died on September 28, 1891, at the age of 72, his death barely made the news. His obituary in *The New York Times* was short and mentioned almost none of his books. It certainly didn't call him a great writer.

He died believing his entire literary career had been a failure.

He went to his grave convinced that the work he had poured his heart and soul into had meant nothing.

Think about that.

One of the greatest writers America has ever produced died thinking he was a nobody, because the world wasn't ready for his masterpiece until long after he was gone.

Vincent van Gogh



Vincent van Gogh painted like a man on fire.

In just ten short years, he created more than 2,000 paintings and drawings. He worked with a passion most people never know. He painted sunflowers, starry nights, wheat fields, and ordinary people with colors so alive they seemed to glow. He painted quickly, sometimes finishing a painting in a single day, driven by a force he could barely control.

But the world didn't want what he was offering.

During his entire lifetime, van Gogh sold only one painting. One. It was called *The Red Vineyard*, and it sold for a very small amount just a few months before he died. All the rest of his work, hundreds and hundreds of pieces, sat unsold. He lived in terrible poverty, often eating only bread and drinking coffee to stay alive. He depended on money sent by his brother Theo just to survive.

He struggled badly with his mental health. He felt lonely, misunderstood, and deeply frustrated. He knew he had something important to say with his art, but no one seemed to hear him.

On July 27, 1890, at the age of just 37, Vincent van Gogh shot himself in a wheat field near Paris. He died two days later. In his final letter to his brother, he expressed deep sadness about his failure as an artist. He died convinced that his life and his work had been worthless.

He believed he had failed completely.

He never knew that his paintings would one day hang in the most famous museums in the world. He never knew that people would stand in long lines just to see his work. He never knew that one day a single painting of his would sell for hundreds of millions of dollars.

Vincent van Gogh died broke, broken, and absolutely sure that he was a failure as both a man and an artist.

His story hurts to read because he gave everything he had, and still went to his grave believing it meant nothing.

Georges Bizet

Georges Bizet poured his entire heart and soul into one opera, *Carmen*.

He believed it was the best work he had ever done. For years he had dreamed of writing something truly great, and he was convinced *Carmen*

was it. He worked on it with passion and care, determined to create something that would last.

The night it premiered in Paris, March 3, 1875, Bizet sat in the audience full of hope.

Instead, he heard booing.

The audience hated it. They found the story too rough, the music too bold, and the main character too shocking. Critics tore the opera apart in the newspapers the next morning. Bizet was devastated. He had given everything he had to this work, and it had been rejected in the cruelest way.

Just three months later, on June 3, 1875, Georges Bizet died at the age of only 36.

He died a broken man.

Friends who were with him in his final days said he was depressed and convinced that his greatest work had been a total failure. He believed *Carmen* proved he was not the composer he had hoped to be. He went to his grave thinking his biggest dream had died with him.

What Bizet didn't know, and could never know, was that *Carmen* would go on to become one of the most famous and most performed operas in the entire world.

Today, *Carmen* is staged constantly across every major opera house on the planet. Its music is instantly recognizable. Songs like "Habanera" and "Toreador Song" are known by millions of people who have never even seen an opera. It is considered a masterpiece.

But Georges Bizet never lived to see any of that.

He died at 36, heartbroken, believing his life's greatest work was worthless.

His story is one of the saddest in musical history, a man who gave everything to his art, only to die convinced that it had all been for nothing.

The Man Who Refused to Die a Failure

In 1884, Ulysses S. Grant was given a death sentence.

Doctors told him he had terminal throat cancer and only a few months left to live. At 62 years old, the man who had led the Union Army to victory in the Civil War and served two terms as President of the United States was now facing the end.

The pain in his throat was constant and brutal. He could barely swallow. Speaking became harder every day.

But what made his situation even worse was this: Grant was completely broke.

He had lost every penny he owned in a bad investment. When he died, his wife Julia and the rest of his family would be left with almost nothing.

Most men in that situation would have quietly accepted their fate.

Grant did not.

Even as his body was shutting down, he made one clear, stubborn decision.

He was not going to die a failure.

In the summer of 1884, Ulysses S. Grant received the worst news a man can hear.

Doctors told him he had terminal throat cancer. They said he had only a few months left to live.

At 62 years old, the man who had once led the Union Army to victory in the Civil War and served two terms as President of the United States was now facing the end of his life. The pain in his throat was constant and brutal. He could barely swallow. Speaking became harder every day. He knew death was coming for him, and it was coming fast.

But what made it even worse was this: Grant was completely broke.

A few years earlier, he had lost every penny he had in a bad business investment. His family had almost no money left. When he died, his wife Julia and the rest of his family would be left with almost nothing.

Most men in that situation would have quietly given up. They would have accepted their fate and waited to die.

Not Ulysses S. Grant.

Even as his body was shutting down, something fierce rose up inside him. He looked at his situation and made a clear, stubborn decision:

He was not going to die a failure.

He refused to leave his wife and family in poverty. He refused to go to his grave knowing he had not taken care of them. So Grant did something extraordinary.

He gave himself one final mission.

Even though he was dying, even though every word hurt, he decided he was going to write his personal memoirs, and he was going to finish them before he took his last breath.

That decision changed everything.

The pain was relentless.

Grant's throat cancer had become so severe that swallowing even a few drops of water felt like swallowing broken glass. Speaking was agony. At times he could barely whisper. The doctors gave him morphine for the pain, but it made him groggy and clouded his mind.

Yet every single day, Ulysses S. Grant sat down to write.

Some mornings he was so weak he had to be helped into his chair. Other days the pain was so intense that tears ran down his face as he tried to form words. He would write a few sentences, then stop to rest, his body shaking from the effort. Then he would pick up the pen again.

He was in a desperate race against time, and he knew it.

The cancer was spreading fast. Grant could feel his strength slipping away week by week. He understood that if he didn't finish the book soon, his family would be left with nothing. That single thought kept him going when his body begged him to stop.

The task was enormous. He wasn't just writing a few pages, he was writing the entire story of his military campaigns and his presidency.

Hundreds of pages. Thousands of details. All of it had to be clear and accurate.

That's when Mark Twain stepped in.

The famous author recognized how important this book could be. He convinced Grant to let his publishing company handle the memoirs and offered Grant a much better royalty deal than anyone else had. Twain's belief in the project gave Grant new energy.

Even with help, the physical act of writing remained brutal. Grant dictated when he could no longer hold a pen. He worked through fevers, through sleepless nights, and through pain so bad that most men would have quit.

But Grant kept going.

He wrote with death literally sitting at his shoulder. Every page was a victory against time.

The Payoff

On July 19, 1885, Ulysses S. Grant wrote the final words of his book.

Just four days later, on July 23, 1885, he died.

He had crossed the finish line with almost nothing left in the tank.

The manuscript was completed.

What happened next was nothing short of remarkable.

Grant's memoirs were published later that year. The two-volume set, simply titled *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, became an immediate sensation. Americans couldn't buy the book fast enough. It sold out in bookstores across the country.

In the first year alone, the book earned more than \$450,000, an enormous amount of money in 1885. That would be worth well over **12 million dollars** in today's money.

Every single penny of that money went to Julia Grant and their children.

The book completely wiped out all the family's debts. It paid off every creditor. It bought them a comfortable home. For the first time in years,

Julia Grant was financially secure. She lived the rest of her life in comfort, thanks to the book her husband had fought so hard to finish.

The success of the memoirs didn't stop there. Grant's book was widely praised for its honesty and clear writing. Many historians still consider it one of the best military memoirs ever written. It has remained in print for over 140 years.

Grant never lived to see any of this success.

He died just days after writing the last sentence, never knowing that his final struggle would not only save his family, but would also become one of the most successful books of the 19th century.

In his final months, Grant had only one goal, to take care of his family before he died.

And in the end, he succeeded.

He did not die a failure.

This is what refusing to die a failure looks like.

Even when his body was completely falling apart, Ulysses S. Grant refused to quit. He was in terrible pain, dying of cancer, and still he kept going, because he had one clear goal that mattered more than his suffering.

That's the power of having something to live for.

Grant didn't just survive a little longer. He didn't just hang on for a few extra weeks. He used the last strength he had to finish something meaningful. He turned his final months into a mission. And because of that single goal, he died knowing he had taken care of his family.

He died a success.

Now think about your own life for a moment.

You may not be dying of cancer. You may not be in physical pain like Grant was. But many of us, especially as we get older, start to feel like our time is running out. We start thinking, "I've already done most of what I'm going to do."

That kind of thinking is dangerous.

The truth is, as long as you're still breathing, you still have the power to decide how your story ends. You still have the ability to set one clear goal that gives your days purpose.

It doesn't have to be as dramatic as writing a book that saves your family. It can be much simpler, finishing something you started years ago, mending a broken relationship, learning a new skill, or leaving something behind that your children or grandchildren will cherish.

What matters is that you have something to wake up for.

Grant's story shows us that it's never too late to refuse to give up. Even when your body is weak, your mind and your will can still be strong.

The question is: Are you willing to do what Grant did?

Are you willing to give yourself one clear goal, no matter how small, and refuse to die until you've finished it?

Because that is exactly what refusing to die a failure looks like.

It's Never Too Late

Age is just a number — and your future is not decided by your birth certificate.

No matter how old you are, you can still begin again.

In this chapter, you're going to meet three ordinary people who refused to accept that their best days were behind them.

The first was a 65-year-old man who had just lost everything — his business, his savings, and his reputation. With nothing left but an old car and a secret recipe, he set out on a desperate journey across America, facing rejection after rejection.

The second was a 76-year-old woman whose hands were so crippled with arthritis she could no longer do the one thing she loved. Instead of giving up, she picked up a tool she had never used before and began creating something completely new.

The third was an 89-year-old man who had just lost the love of his life after nearly 70 years of marriage. Overwhelmed by grief, he made a decision that everyone around him thought was crazy.

These three people started over in their sixties, seventies, and eighties — long past the age when most people believe it's too late.

Their stories are dramatic, inspiring, and sometimes heartbreaking.

But most importantly, they prove one powerful truth:

It's never too late to begin again — unless you decide it is.

Harland Sanders



At the age of 65, Harland Sanders lost everything.

He had spent most of his life running a small restaurant and gas station in Corbin, Kentucky. His fried chicken had become locally famous. People would drive out of their way just to eat there.

Then the state built a new interstate highway, and it bypassed his town completely.

Overnight, his business dried up. Customers stopped coming. At 65 years old, Sanders was broke. His restaurant closed. He was left with nothing but a small Social Security check and a secret recipe for fried chicken.

Most men his age would have accepted that their working days were over.

Not Harland Sanders.

He took what little money he had, climbed into his old car, and began driving across America. His goal was simple but bold, to sell his chicken recipe to restaurant owners. He carried nothing but his pressure cooker, his recipe written on a piece of paper, and an unshakable belief that someone, somewhere, would see its value.

The rejection was brutal.

He was told “no” over and over again. Restaurant after restaurant turned him down. He slept in his car many nights. He heard every excuse in the book. By the time it was all said and done, Harland Sanders had been rejected more than 1,000 times.

But he refused to quit.

Finally, in 1952, a restaurant in Salt Lake City, Utah agreed to try his recipe. People loved it. Word began to spread. Kentucky Fried Chicken was born.

Colonel Sanders didn't become an overnight success. He became a living example that it's never too late to start over, even at 65, even when you have nothing left but an idea and the courage to keep going.

Anna Mary Moses



At 76 years old, Anna Mary Robertson Moses, known to the world as Grandma Moses, faced a painful reality.

Her hands had become badly crippled with arthritis. The embroidery work she had loved and done beautifully for decades had become too difficult. Her fingers could no longer handle the fine stitching.

Most people at that age would have simply stopped creating and accepted that their creative days were over.

But Grandma Moses wasn't most people.

Instead of quitting, she made a simple decision: If she couldn't use a needle anymore, she would use a paintbrush. At 76 years old, she picked up a paintbrush for the very first time in her life.

She began painting scenes from her childhood, simple, colorful pictures of farm life, country roads, and the changing seasons in upstate New York. She painted on whatever she could find: old boards, pieces of tin, and scraps of canvas.

She had no formal art training. She had never taken a single lesson. She simply painted from memory and from the heart.

What happened next surprised everyone, including her.

Her paintings began to attract attention. People loved her simple, honest style. By the time she was in her 80s, Grandma Moses had become one of the most famous and beloved folk artists in America. Her work was shown in major galleries, reproduced on Christmas cards, and collected by museums.

She continued painting with joy and energy until she was 101 years old.

Grandma Moses didn't just start painting late in life, she started an entirely new chapter of her life at an age when most people have already given up.

Her story is powerful proof that it's never too late to begin something new.

Fauja Singh



After his wife died, Fauja Singh was lost.

He had been married for nearly 70 years. When she passed away, he lost his best friend and the center of his world. Overwhelmed by grief, he moved from India to London to live with his son.

At 89 years old, most people would have accepted that their active life was over. But Fauja wasn't ready to slow down.

One day, while watching television, he saw images of people running a marathon. Something stirred inside him. He made a decision that seemed crazy to everyone around him, at almost 90 years old, he was going to start running.

He began slowly, just walking at first, then jogging short distances. His family thought he had lost his mind. But Fauja kept showing up, day after day, quietly training.

In 2003, at the age of 89, Fauja Singh completed his very first marathon, the London Marathon. He crossed the finish line in just under six hours. The crowd cheered wildly for the old man with the long white beard.

But he didn't stop there.

Fauja kept running. He completed multiple marathons, including the famous Toronto Waterfront Marathon at age 100. He set multiple world records in his age group, including becoming the oldest person to ever finish a full marathon.

What makes Fauja Singh's story so powerful is that he didn't start running for fame or money. He started running because it gave him a reason to get up every morning. It gave him purpose after losing the love of his life.

He ran well past the age of 100, becoming an inspiration to millions of people around the world.

Final thoughts:

Fauja Singh proved that age truly is just a number, if you still have the will to move forward.

If these people could restart their lives in their 60s, 70s, and 80s, what excuse do any of us have?

Colonel Sanders was flat broke at 65, lost his restaurant, and still went on to build Kentucky Fried Chicken. Grandma Moses picked up a paintbrush for the first time at 76 and became one of America's most beloved artists. Fauja Singh lost his wife and didn't start running until he was 89, then kept running past 100.

These aren't stories about superhumans. They're stories about regular people who simply refused to quit.

So let me ask you honestly: What's your excuse?

If you're in your 60s, 70s, or 80s right now and you've been telling yourself "I'm too old," these stories just proved that wrong. If you've been thinking "It's too late for me," these three people just showed you it's not.

The truth is, most of us don't lack time. We lack courage.

We're afraid to start something new because we might look foolish. We're afraid to fail. We're afraid people will laugh at us. So we stay comfortable. We stay stuck. We stay silent.

But Colonel Sanders didn't care if people laughed at an old man trying to sell a chicken recipe. Grandma Moses didn't care that she had no training. Fauja Singh didn't care that running at 89 looked ridiculous.

They simply started.

And that's all you have to do.

You don't have to start something huge. You don't have to change the world. You just have to start something that gives you a reason to wake up tomorrow.

Because if a 65-year-old broke man can build an empire, if a 76-year-old woman with arthritis can become a famous artist, and if an 89-year-old widower can run marathons... then what excuse do any of us really have?

Your age is not the problem.

Your excuse is.

The Goals That Keep You Alive

Goals aren't about achieving big things.

They're about giving yourself a reason to wake up tomorrow.

At this stage of life, most of us don't need another complicated system, a fancy planner, or another app on our phone. We don't need to set massive goals that feel overwhelming or unrealistic. What we need are simple, meaningful goals that we can actually control — goals that give us purpose even on the days when our bodies don't want to cooperate.

The truth is, the older we get, the more important it becomes to be intentional about how we spend our days. Without something to look forward to, it's easy to drift. The days start blending together. We wake up, do the same things we did yesterday, and go to bed wondering if this is all there is.

That's why having the right kind of goals matters so much.

There are three types of goals that are especially powerful at this stage of life. Each one serves a different purpose, but together they create a balanced life that keeps us moving forward with meaning and hope.

Daily Goals are the small things you can do today. These are simple actions you can complete in a single day — taking a walk around the block, calling an old friend you haven't spoken to in months, writing one page in your journal, or spending fifteen minutes tidying up a drawer. Daily goals are the heartbeat of a purposeful life. They give you a win every single day, no matter how small. When you go to bed knowing you did one meaningful thing that day, your mind rests easier.

Legacy Goals are the things you want to leave behind after you're gone. These are the projects that will outlive you. They might include finally finishing that book you started years ago, repairing a broken relationship with a child or sibling, writing down your life stories for your grandchildren, or teaching a grandchild a special skill. Legacy goals give your life deeper meaning because you know your efforts will bless someone long after you're gone.

Personal Goals are the things you do just for yourself. These aren't about pleasing anyone else or leaving something behind. They're about keeping

your spirit alive and growing. They might include learning to play the harmonica, visiting one new place you've always wanted to see, getting a little stronger this year, planting a small garden, or learning how to use your smartphone better. Personal goals are purely for your own joy and satisfaction.

Each of these three types of goals plays an important role. Daily goals keep you moving every single day. Legacy goals give your life lasting significance. Personal goals keep you feeling young at heart.

The secret isn't to have dozens of goals at once. The secret is to have just a few that truly matter to you — and then to actually do them.

In the pages ahead, I'm going to show you how to choose the right goals for where you are right now, and how to stick with them even when life gets difficult. I'll also share some of my own stories about how setting clear goals kept me going through cancer, financial setbacks, and difficult seasons.

But it all starts with one simple action.

By the time you finish this chapter, I want you to pick just one goal — no matter how small — and write it down. The moment you do that, you've already taken the first real step toward refusing to die a failure.

Daily Goals

These are the small things you can do today. They're simple, immediate, and completely within your control.

Daily goals are the heartbeat of a purposeful life. They're the reason you get out of bed in the morning. They're the little wins that give you a sense of accomplishment every single day.

Examples of good daily goals are: take a walk around the block, call an old friend you haven't spoken to in months, write one page in your journal, read ten pages of a book, or spend fifteen minutes tidying up a drawer. These goals are small on purpose. The smaller they are, the harder they are to avoid, and the better you'll feel when you complete them.

The beauty of a daily goal is that you can almost always do it, even on your worst days. When you go to bed at night knowing you did at least one meaningful thing that day, your mind rests easier.

Legacy Goals

These are the things you want to leave behind after you're gone.

Legacy goals are about making sure your life leaves a mark. They're the bigger projects that outlive you. They give you a reason to keep going because you know someone else will benefit from them long after you're gone.

Good examples of legacy goals include: finally finishing that book you've been thinking about for years, repairing a broken relationship with a child or sibling, writing down your life stories for your grandchildren, teaching a grandchild a special skill, or restoring an old family photo album so future generations can know their history.

These goals give your life deeper meaning. They turn "I wish I had..." into "I'm glad I did..."

Personal Goals

These are the goals you set just for yourself.

Personal goals aren't about pleasing anyone else. They're not about leaving something behind. They're about keeping yourself alive and growing on the inside.

These might include learning to play the harmonica, visiting one new place you've always wanted to see, getting a little stronger this year, planting a small garden, taking up photography, or learning how to use your smartphone better. These goals are purely for your own joy and satisfaction.

All three types of goals are important. Daily goals keep you moving every day. Legacy goals give your life lasting meaning. Personal goals keep your spirit young.

The secret isn't to have dozens of goals. The secret is to have just a few that truly matter to you, and then actually do them.

In the next few pages, I'll show you exactly how to choose the right goals for your life right now.

My Personal Story

I know how powerful having a clear goal can be, because I've lived it.

At 65 years old, I was diagnosed with eye cancer. I had just gone through major surgery and could barely get out of bed. The doctors told me recovery would be slow and difficult. There were many days I felt like giving up.

But I had one goal that kept me fighting: I was determined to finish my movie, *Bigfoot Chronicles*.

Even when I was too weak to sit up for very long, I would lay in bed thinking about the film — planning scenes, working out details, and making notes whenever I had the strength. That single goal gave me something to fight for. It pulled me through the hardest days of my recovery. As soon as I was able to stand up and move around, I got back to work.

A few years later, we finally completed the movie.

What followed was a long, difficult journey. The distributor went bankrupt, my contact ended up in prison, and I lost the master copy of the film. For years I didn't know if the movie would ever see the light of day.

During that difficult season, I turned to writing books to help people with their finances. I also produced another short film about the dangers of the drug K2-Spice. Then, five years after the bankruptcy, I got the rights back. Since the original master was gone, I went back to the original footage, updated it, and created an entirely new version called *We Found Bigfoot*, which I released in the fall of 2024.

After twelve long years of fighting, it was finally done.

Today, at 78 years old, I'm still setting new goals. I'm working to finish this book and several others. I also have two new movies in development — *Saving Charity Nash* and another story I'm still trying to find the right title for.

These goals keep me moving forward every single day.

The Challenge

Now it's your turn.

I've shared a lot with you in this book — stories of people who died full of regret, and others who refused to quit no matter how late in life they started. But none of it matters if you don't do something with it.

So here's my challenge to you:

Starting tomorrow morning, I want you to begin a simple daily practice that will change the rest of your life.

Every single morning, take out a piece of paper or a notebook and write down two things.

First, write down **one goal** for that day. It doesn't have to be big. It can be as simple as taking a ten-minute walk, calling an old friend, writing one page, or fixing something around the house. The important thing is that it's something you can do today — something that gives you a reason to get out of bed.

Second, write down **three things** you're grateful for. These can be big or small — the fact that you woke up breathing, the love of your family, a skill you've learned over the years, or a memory that still makes you smile. The goal is to train your mind to focus on what you *have* done, not just what you haven't.

That's it. One goal. Three gratitudes.

Do this every single day.

Some days it will feel easy. Other days you'll have to force yourself to do it. But if you stay consistent, something powerful will begin to happen. You'll stop drifting. You'll stop waking up with that empty feeling. Your mind will slowly shift from regret to purpose.

This simple practice is how you make sure you never die a failure.

You don't have to achieve every goal perfectly. You don't have to change the world. You just have to refuse to quit while you're still breathing. Every time you write down that one goal, you're telling yourself: "I'm not done yet."

Look at your life right now. Be honest with yourself.

Are you waking up with something meaningful to do? Or are you slowly drifting, letting your days slip away?

The choice is yours.

You can either keep living like Sam Houston — full of regret over what you didn't do — or you can live like Ulysses S. Grant, Colonel Sanders, Grandma Moses, and Fauja Singh — people who decided, no matter their age or circumstances, that their story wasn't over yet.

Tomorrow morning, before you do anything else, pick up that pen.

Write your one goal.

Write your three things you're grateful for.

When you do that, you won't just be writing on a piece of paper.

You'll be writing a better ending to your life.

Don't Die a Failure

The only way to truly fail in life is to give up while you're still breathing.

Sam Houston died believing he was a failure, even though history proved he was anything but. Don't let that be your story.

Throughout this book we've seen two powerful truths: Without goals, you drift. Without gratitude, even your successes feel empty. Goals keep you moving forward. Gratitude helps you see the value in what you've already done.

Gratitude isn't about pretending everything was perfect. It's about refusing to let your mistakes or regrets be the last word. It rewires your brain. It turns "I failed" into "I built something real."

I'm 78 years old now, still writing books, still pushing forward, and still refusing to die a failure. I've had my share of hard times, but gratitude keeps me focused on what I've accomplished instead of what I haven't.

So here's my final challenge to you:

Every single morning, write down one goal, no matter how small, and three things you're grateful for. Do this every day.

You don't have to move mountains. You just have to refuse to quit.

Because the only way to die a failure is to die while you're still giving up.

Don't let that be you.

Let's go back for a moment to where this book began.

Sam Houston lay in that small white house in Huntsville, Texas, on July 26, 1863. The man who had won Texas its independence, served as its president, and governed both Tennessee and Texas was taking his last breaths.

And what did he whisper with his final words?

"Texas... Margaret... Texas."

Even in his dying moments, his heart was heavy with regret. He died believing he had failed the very state he loved more than anything.

Think about how heartbreaking that is.

Here was one of the most accomplished men in American history, a legend, a warrior, a founder of a nation, and he went to his grave convinced his life had been a failure. History would later prove him wrong, but Sam Houston never got to see that. He never got to feel the pride of what he had actually accomplished.

He died with his eyes fixed on what he thought he hadn't done, instead of everything he had done.

That is the pain this book started with.

And that is the pain I never want you to feel.

I don't want you lying in bed one day, looking back on your life, and only seeing the things you didn't finish. The dreams you gave up on. The goals you let slip away. The chances you didn't take.

I don't want regret to be the last voice you hear before you leave this earth.

You have accomplished things. You have made a difference. You have fought battles that mattered, even if they don't always feel that way right now.

Don't let Sam Houston's story become your story.

You still have time to change the ending.

You still have time to look back on your life with peace instead of regret.

That's why the final piece of this book matters so much.

Because goals alone aren't enough.

You also need gratitude.

The Two Big Ideas

This entire book really comes down to two simple truths.

Without goals, you drift.

Without gratitude, even your successes feel empty.

These two ideas work together like a perfect pair. One without the other is never enough.

If you have goals but no gratitude, you can still feel like a failure. You'll always be looking at what you haven't done yet instead of appreciating what you've already accomplished. You'll push yourself harder and harder, but never feel satisfied.

On the other hand, if you have gratitude but no goals, you'll feel peaceful for a while, but you'll slowly start drifting. The days will begin to feel the same. You'll lose that sense of purpose and forward motion. Eventually, you'll wake up with nothing meaningful to look forward to.

That's exactly what happened to Sam Houston. He had accomplished so much, but in his final years he had no clear goals left. With nothing pulling him forward, his mind turned to regret. All his great achievements disappeared from his thoughts. Gratitude alone would have helped him see what he had done, but without goals, he had nothing to keep him moving.

The two ideas must work together.

Goals give your life direction and purpose. They give you a reason to get out of bed each morning. Gratitude gives your life meaning and peace. It allows you to look back and feel proud of what you've already done.

You need both.

You need goals to keep you alive on the inside.

You need gratitude to keep your heart at peace.

When you have both working together, something powerful happens, you can face the end of your life with confidence instead of regret. You can know, deep down, that you did not die a failure.

That's what the final chapter of this book is all about.

The Power of Gratitude

Gratitude isn't about pretending everything in your life was perfect. It's not about ignoring your mistakes or pretending you have no regrets.

It's about refusing to let your failures and disappointments have the final word.

When you take time every day to be thankful for what you've already done, something powerful happens in your mind. Your brain starts to rewire itself. Instead of focusing on everything you didn't do, it begins to notice everything you *did* do.

You start remembering the good you brought into the world. The people you helped. The obstacles you overcame. The hard times you survived. The difference you made, even in small ways.

That shift is everything.

Regret loses its power when gratitude shows up. The weight that's been sitting on your chest starts to lift. The voice that keeps whispering "You didn't do enough" gets quieter and quieter.

Sam Houston died bitter because he couldn't see past his failures. But what if, in those final days, he had written down everything he was grateful for? Texas itself. The people who followed him. The battles he won. The mistakes that taught him how to lead. The family that stood by him.

If he had done that, his last days might have felt very different.

You don't have to wait until your final days to make this change. You can start right now.

Every morning, write down three things you're thankful for from your own life, big or small. The job you held for thirty years. The children you raised. The marriage you fought for. The times you showed up when someone needed you. The times you were kind when you didn't have to be.

Do this for thirty days and watch how the weight of regret starts to lift.

The goal isn't to ignore your pain.

The goal is to stop letting it define your ending.

Don't die with your eyes fixed on everything you didn't do.

Die with your heart full of what you did.

That's how you leave this earth a winner.

About me

At 78 years old, I can honestly say that in the grand scheme of things, I've been very successful.

I've made a lot of money in my life. I've produced television shows that helped a lot of people. My educational work has made communities safer and changed lives for the better. I've got plenty to be proud of.

But you know what?

I'm still not done.

I'm still writing books. I'm still setting new goals. I'm still pushing forward every single day. And I've made a firm decision, I'm not going to die a failure.

That's why this final chapter matters so much to me.

I refuse to end up like Sam Houston, lying in bed haunted by what I didn't do. I want to leave this earth with a clear heart and a full mind, knowing I gave it everything I had until the very end.

That's what I want for you too.

So here's my final challenge to you.

Starting tomorrow morning, I want you to do one simple thing every single day for the rest of your life.

Each morning, take out a piece of paper or a notebook and write down two things:

First, write down **one goal** for that day, no matter how small. It could be "take a ten-minute walk," "call my sister," or "write one paragraph in my book." Just one thing you're going to do today.

Second, write down **three things** you're grateful for from your life. They can be big or small, your health, your children, a good marriage, a skill you've learned, or simply that you woke up breathing this morning.

That's it. One goal. Three gratitudes.

Do this every single day.

It takes less than two minutes, but those two minutes will change how you live and how you die. This simple daily practice will keep you moving forward and keep regret from taking over your heart.

If you do this consistently, I can make you one promise:

You will not die a failure.

You'll wake up every day with purpose. You'll go to bed every night with gratitude. And when your time finally comes, you'll be able to close your eyes in peace, knowing you lived fully and finished well.

This is how you win the last chapter of your life.

You don't have to move mountains. You don't have to become famous. You just have to refuse to quit while you're still breathing.

So tomorrow morning, before you do anything else, pick up that pen.

Write your one goal.

Write your three gratitudes.

And when you do, you'll have officially joined the fight.

You will have chosen to live like your story isn't over yet.

And that, my friend, is how you make sure you never die a failure.

Goal Ideas & Inspiration

Daily Goals (Simple things you can do today)

- Take a 10-minute walk
- Call or text an old friend
- Write one page in a journal
- Read 10 pages of a book
- Clean out one drawer or shelf
- Tell someone you appreciate them
- Pray or meditate for 10 minutes
- Cook yourself a good meal
- Practice a skill for 15 minutes

Legacy Goals (Things that will outlive you)

- Write your life stories for your grandchildren
- Repair a broken relationship
- Finish that project you started years ago
- Organize and label old family photos
- Create a family recipe book
- Record video messages for your family
- Teach a skill to a grandchild

Personal Goals (Just for you)

- Learn to play one song on an instrument
- Visit a place you've always wanted to see
- Get a little stronger this year
- Learn how to use your smartphone better
- Plant a garden or grow herbs
- Start a new hobby you've been curious about

Ways to Give Back

- Visit patients at a hospital or nursing home
- Volunteer at a food bank or soup kitchen
- Mentor young people
- Help at your local library
- Drive seniors to appointments
- Read to children at a school or library

Print this page or bookmark it. When you're stuck for a goal, come back here.

Sample Daily Routine

Here's a simple daily routine you can follow or adapt to fit your own life. The goal isn't perfection — it's consistency.

Morning

- Wake up and drink a glass of water
- Spend 5–10 minutes writing in your journal:
 - One goal for today
 - Three things you're grateful for
- Move your body (walk, stretch, or light exercise)
- Eat a good breakfast

During the Day

- Do your one daily goal (even if it's small)
- Reach out to someone — send a text, make a call, or write a note
- Take time to enjoy at least one meal without rushing
- Do something that brings you joy (read, listen to music, work in the garden, etc.)

Evening

- Review your day — Did you complete your one goal?
- Write down three new things you're grateful for from today
- Prepare for tomorrow by laying out your clothes or making a short to-do list
- Go to bed at a reasonable time

Remember:

This is not a strict schedule. It's simply a framework to help you create rhythm and purpose in your days. Some days you'll follow it closely. Other days you won't. That's okay.

The most important thing is that you start each day with intention — one goal and three gratitudes.

Start small. Stay consistent. Watch your life change.

30-Day Daily Practice Tracker

Use this tracker to build the habit of writing your One Goal and Three Gratitudes every day. Simply check the box each day after you complete it.

My Daily Practice: One Goal + Three Gratitudes

Day	Date	One Goal Completed?	Three Gratuities Written?	Notes
1		☐	☐	
2		☐	☐	
3		☐	☐	
4		☐	☐	
5		☐	☐	
6		☐	☐	
7		☐	☐	
8		☐	☐	
9		☐	☐	
10		☐	☐	
11		☐	☐	
12		☐	☐	
13		☐	☐	
14		☐	☐	
15		☐	☐	
16		☐	☐	
17		☐	☐	
18		☐	☐	
19		☐	☐	
20		☐	☐	
21		☐	☐	

Don't Die a Failure

Day	Date	One Goal Completed?	Three Gratitudes Written?	Notes
22		☐	☐	
23		☐	☐	
24		☐	☐	
25		☐	☐	
26		☐	☐	
27		☐	☐	
28		☐	☐	
29		☐	☐	
30		☐	☐	

After 30 Days: What did you notice? How do you feel compared to when you started?

Write your thoughts here:

[illegible]

[illegible]

Don't Die a Failure

[illegible]

My Daily Journal

Use these pages to write your daily goals and gratitudes. The simple act of writing them down every day is what creates the change.

Day: _____ Date: _____

My One Goal for Today:

Three Things I'm Grateful For Today:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How I Feel Tonight:

My Daily Journal

Use these pages to write your daily goals and gratitudes. The simple act of writing them down every day is what creates the change.

Day: _____ Date: _____

My One Goal for Today:

Three Things I'm Grateful For Today:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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