

“

A serious compendium of thoughts, advice, personal stories and complicated rituals that enable a broad group of designers to cope with those moments in careers when a good idea seems illusive. Every designer can relate to the struggles and satisfying solutions that are recounted within this book. Also, it happens to be beautifully designed.

—PAULA SCHER, PARTNER, PENTAGRAM

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- ✓ Crushing creative blocks
- ✓ Focusing under stress
- ✓ Presenting with confidence
- ✓ Interviewing with ease

▶ AND CONQUERING 52 OTHER CHALLENGES!

“

I cannot imagine a more energetic, useful, or rewarding guide to building a creative life than this beautiful book. I just wish I had access to all of these stories and insights a whole lot earlier in my career.”

—BRIAN COLLINS, CO-FOUNDER, COLLINS

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CREATIVE ENDURANCE → MIKE SCHNAIDT

(56 RULES FOR OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS) FOR → YOUR DAY / YOUR PROJECT / YOUR JOB / YOUR LIFE

MIKE SCHNAIDT

# Creative Endurance

56 Rules for Overcoming  
Obstacles and Achieving Your Goals

**MIKE SCHNAIDT**

FOREWORD BY STEPHANIE MEHTA

—

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KAGAN McLEOD AND  
MARCO GORAN ROMANO



**ROCKPORT**

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“You need to figure out what you’re really passionate about, and do it.”

—SAGI HAVIV  
 P.59

“Sometimes the hill is easy; sometimes it’s steep. But when you reach the top, all is forgiven.”

—YUKO SHIMIZU  
 P.33

*This book is dedicated to my students, past, present, and future. You continue to inspire me, and I hope this book inspires you.*

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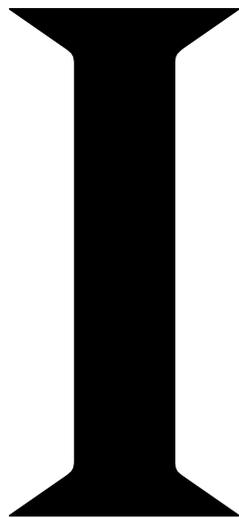
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## Foreword

BY STEPHANIE MEHTA



### IT'S AN EXCITING TIME TO BE A CREATIVE.

Interest in creativity and the creative process has perhaps never been greater. Management consulting firm McKinsey, best known for helping companies maximize profits, has started issuing reports linking creativity value and financial performance. *Fast Company* issues an annual list of the Most Creative People in Business, celebrating artists, inventors, designers, and corporate executives who deploy innovation and unconventional thinking to solve big problems. Start-ups and established brands

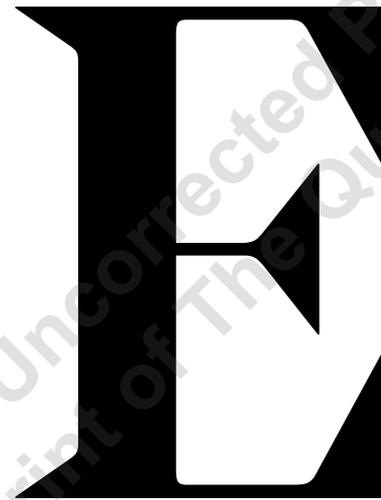
alike are starting to appoint creative directors to burnish their credibility with younger consumers.

Few people advocate for creativity in business like Brian Chesky, the cofounder and CEO of Airbnb. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, Chesky calls Airbnb an “entirely creatively led company,” and he’s urged corporate leaders to consider adding creative folks to their boards of directors. Creativity “should be in the [board]room. It should be in the conversation,” he says.

But even as the business community professes ardor for creativity, most corporate executives don’t actually know how to harness it. Fewer than half of design leaders surveyed by McKinsey say their CEOs fully understand their role, and only one in ten CEOs say their senior designer is involved in strategy. The report concludes that many chief designers are doomed to fail because they lack the authority to make the meaningful creative contributions they were hired to bring to the organization.

And research from ad agency TBWA Worldwide finds creative talent are more likely to feel “burned out or discouraged” than the overall workforce.

.....  
 ▶ **Stephanie Mehta** is the CEO and Chief Content Officer of Mansueto Ventures, the parent company of *Fast Company* and *Inc.*



### ENTER CREATIVE ENDURANCE.

Mike Schnaidt offers practical, digestible tips to help reenergize creatives—and just about anyone else who is feeling a bit blocked. Many of the contributors are professional athletes or creative leaders who previously played competitive sports, and their stories about overcoming adversity and challenges give the book energy and urgency that you won’t find in other books on creativity, which can be a little on the contemplative side.

I met Mike in 2018, when I was recruiting a creative director for *Fast Company*. Because *Fast Company* assertively covers design, I was seeking a partner who would elevate the look and feel of our magazine, website, and events to give us credibility with the creative community—but not push the design so far that we’d alienate more traditional business readers. I came armed with all sorts of questions aimed at teasing out Mike’s point of view and influences. We talked about creative



**THE STORIES  
 ABOUT OVERCOMING  
 ADVERSITY AND  
 CHALLENGES GIVE  
 THIS BOOK ENERGY  
 AND URGENCY  
 THAT YOU WON'T  
 FIND IN OTHER  
 BOOKS ON  
 CREATIVITY.”**

directors we admired, photography, tight budgets, and who *Fast Company*'s readers are. It was only when I left our first meeting that I realized that he’d interviewed me. He got the job and brought that same level of inquiry to his role: He’s known to ask lots of questions to understand the underlying philosophy and themes of the work he’s about to tackle.

Lucky reader, you are the beneficiary of Mike’s insatiable curiosity. The twenty subjects featured in the book represent just a portion of the people he interviewed and consulted for this project.

Imagine Mike’s delight when he realized that researching this book would entail calling up a bunch of people he admires and asking for their insights on creativity, perseverance, and more. And it is a testament to Mike’s big-hearted world view that his subjects truly come from all backgrounds and walks of life. I can’t think of many other books about creativity that include interviews with a nine-year-old and a seventy-six-year-old, a Black woman astronaut and a bank vice president.

I’ve also observed Mike’s own brand of creative endurance up close. He really practices what he preaches in the book, and creatives will glean some smart insights on how to deal with executives who say they want creativity but can’t always articulate their intentions. (Yeah, that would be me.) Noncreatives should read it, too. Not only will you learn what your creative counterparts do all day, you’ll quickly realize they’ve got the creativity—and with Mike’s help, the endurance—to help you solve all manner of challenges.

# Introduction

BY MIKE SCHNAIDT

**IF IT WEREN'T FOR RUNNING,** I wouldn't be as creative as I am today.

It's mile sixteen of the New York City Marathon on a hot November day. As I stride across the Queensboro Bridge, something feels...*off*. I'm sweating profusely. Muscle cramps squeeze my calves, hamstrings, and quadriceps into a vice. My right forearm locks into a forty-five-degree angle. I look like the Tin Man trying to run a potato sack race.

Curse the weather gods for sucker-punching me with this heat. *Did I just sweat all of my electrolytes out?*

The cramps worsen with each step forward. One thing becomes crystal-clear: My personal goal of a time juuust a little bit faster than four hours and twenty-two minutes (my previous marathon time), has been blown to bits—thanks to these muscle cramps. I'm frozen in place.

As the other runners bolt past me, I slow my mind, and let my thoughts simmer.

*This isn't a race against them. This is me against me. If I can overcome this obstacle, I can raise the bar for what I'm capable of.*

This tenet provides my body with just enough of a trickle charge to trundle towards the finish line, clocking in at five hours and thirty-three minutes. Not the time I was aiming for, but a huge mental win for me. This reframing tool is known to psychologists as cognitive reappraisal, and it's the key to my creative endurance.



# C

**COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL IS A** technique used to reframe a negative situation into a positive one. A tool commonly used by therapists to help patients deal with stress and anxiety, it's applicable to your career as a creative.

Whether you're a designer, writer, photographer, or any other type of creative, your career is full of obstacles. Confusing feedback, tough clients, and slashed budgets are as fun as a cramp in your calf, and they sideline you from making something great. But with cognitive reappraisal, you can reframe those obstacles as creative opportunities. For example, if my budget is tight at *Fast Company*, I'll save money by deploying a typographic solution instead of hiring an outside artist.

*Creative Endurance* will teach you how to reframe your problems and make better work as a result. Jot this down: A positive response to a problem will create a positive outcome.

## GLOSSARY

+

### CREATIVE

Individuals who can generate original ideas or solve problems in new ways. They have the ability to draw connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena. Fields include the arts, science, technology, and business.

+

### ENDURANCE

The ability to exert oneself over an extended period of time. Physical examples include a marathoner, cyclist, or swimmer. In mental terms, it can include a painter who can spend hours in their studio or a writer who works on a book for years.

✓

### CREATIVE

### ENDURANCE

The persistence through challenges and obstacles that occur throughout the creative process. Creative endurance involves the development of resilience, optimism, and grit to overcome these challenges. Read about those tools on the next page.

## HERE'S A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

### SECTION 1: YOUR DAY

In this section, you'll learn how to overcome obstacles in your daily routine. You'll build focus, race through distractions, be imaginative in boring meetings, and develop a sustainable creative practice.

### SECTION 2: YOUR PROJECT

Here, you'll hone your creative process through proven techniques for brainstorming, researching, and prototyping. You'll gain skills in selling your ideas to clients and employing their feedback.

### SECTION 3: YOUR JOB

This section will guide you through the creative industry with practical tactics for interviewing, hiring, and \*gulp\* getting fired. You'll also learn about creative budgeting and presentations. Fun!

### SECTION 4: YOUR LIFE

Finally, you enter the big-picture phase of your career. This section will help you discover your creative voice, personal values, and long-term goals for making an impact in your industry.

**EACH SECTION ENDS WITH** actionable takeaways and activities. The book is designed to be easily digestible, with stories no longer than two pages.

Whether you're running a race or tackling a big project at work, overcoming an obstacle will always be rewarding. While your career may feel like a marathon, with the tools and strategies in this book, you won't have to suffer.

# Grit



Ultramarathoner Dean Karnazes ran across the United States over the course of fifty days, but on day nineteen, he hit his wall halfway through a marathon in Arizona. To overcome this obstacle, he focused on the present and broke the race down into a series of smaller steps. Karnazes explains, "It's a Zen-like experience and helps me get

through anything." This strategy helped him through the remainder of the race and can be applied to any big project in your career. By breaking the project down into a series of manageable steps, you avoid feeling overwhelmed and increase your chances of success. Read about Karnazes on page 36.

+

## PACK THESE TOOLS

THREE MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR CREATIVE SUCCESS.

WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT cognitive reappraisal is the driveshaft that turns obstacles into opportunities, it's time to open up your toolbox. You have a trio of tools: resilience, grit, and optimism. Resilience rebounds you from setbacks, grit empowers you to persevere through hardship, and optimism fuels your confidence to achieve your goals. In this book, you'll encounter stories from a diverse range of professionals who've faced their own obstacles, such as self-doubt, failure, and lack of inspiration. Through their experiences, you'll discover inspiration and insight to apply to your career.

Graphic designer Sagi Haviv is the definition of resilience. When he first came to the United States from Israel, he didn't make it into Cooper Union, the prestigious art school. He trained as a method actor for a year to secure his visa and was accepted to Cooper Union on his second shot. Years later, when Haviv applied to Chermayeff & Geismar, they didn't have any openings. He demonstrated

his passion by offering to work for free. Today, he's a partner at Chermayeff & Geismar & Haviv, where he designs brands for some of the biggest companies in the world, including the U.S. Open and Conservation International. His inspiring story of resilience begins on page 58.

# Resilience

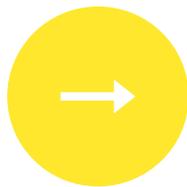


The astronaut Jeanette Epps has dreamed of going to space since she was a child. In 2018, her trip to the International Space Station was put on pause for undisclosed reasons. "Things won't always go as planned," she says. Epps remains optimistic and believes "the journey is the creative part." Epps's story on page 26 will give you a boost of inspiration.

# Optimism

# Who's Who

THE ARTISTS, ATHLETES, AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN THE PAGES OF THIS BOOK.



## RUI ABREU

Portugal-based type designer and founder of R-Typography. Abreu's craft of type design is meticulous and monotonous—and requires a unique type of endurance.

## MASSY ARIAS

Fitness influencer and entrepreneur, featured on the cover of magazines such as *Women's Health* and *Parents Latina*. Single mom, unstoppable work ethic.

## MOLLY BAZ

Chef, author of two cookbooks, and video host. I was curious to learn how she remains cool and confident while on camera.

## DICK BEARDSLEY

Motivational speaker and former

long-distance runner who came in second place to Alberto Salazar in the 1982 Boston Marathon.

## EVE BINDER

Design leader in the tech industry. Résumé includes Chase, Grubhub, AOL, and oh, also happens to be my wife.

## JEANIE CHEEK

Wardrobe stylist and costume designer who's kept her cool while working on high-pressure television shows such as *Lip Sync Battle* and *MTV Movie Awards*.

## DAVID COOPER

The guy who illustrated two children's books for Kevin Hart. What was *that* like?

## DAVID CURCURITO

Founder of Works Well With Others Design Group and former design director of *Esquire*, where he was my boss.

## BILLY DEMONG

Former Nordic combined skier and five-time Olympian. I wanted to learn more about the mental strength necessary to be an Olympic athlete.

## MARION DEUCHARS

Illustrator, graphic designer, and author of twenty books. Utilizes breathing, stretching, and yoga for balance in her workday.

## EVELYN DONG

Professional mountain biker who jumps her bike 15 feet (4 m) in the air.

## MICHELLE DOUGHERTY

Creative director who oversaw the design for the *Stranger Things* title sequence.

## JEANETTE EPPS

NASA astronaut and aerospace engineer. I was curious about the endurance required to be an astronaut.

## KARIN FONG

Director of Imaginary Forces, a motion graphics studio responsible for title sequences on everything from *Thursday Night Football* to *Spider-Man*.

## RUSSELL FRANCIS

A 76-year-old painter and poet who discovered his creativity later in life.

## VINCE FROST

Australian-based graphic designer and founder of Frost\*collective design agency.

## NOAH GALLOWAY

Former US Army soldier who lost his left arm and leg in Iraq. The definition of grit, Galloway perseveres as an extreme athlete.

## CAROLINE GLEICH

Hikes up mountains and skis down them. How does Gleich weather-proof her mind from the imminent danger of avalanches?

## CAMILLE GERKE

Third-grade student. I wanted to experience a child's imagination before it's impeded by the practicality of the workplace.

## ANTHONY GIGLIO

Sommelier, author, and hilarious public speaker. Humor is a powerful tool for overcoming obstacles.

## SAGI HAVIV

Partner at Chermayeff & Geismar & Haviv. I wanted to learn about the struggle with high-profile clients such as the U.S. Open.

## HURLEY HAYWOOD

Former race car driver and five-time winner of the 24 Hours of Daytona. Figured a guy who could stay up and drive for an entire day would have a few things to say about endurance.

## DEAN KARNAZES

Ultramarathoner who once ran for three days without sleep and has written five books.

## JENNIFER KINON

Political campaigns are notoriously tough design sprints, and Kinon was the design director for Hillary Clinton's campaign.

## SARA LIEBERMAN

Quit a full-time job in New York to pursue her dream as a Paris-based travel and food writer.

## VAISHNAVI MAHENDRAN

Culture is creative fuel for this South Asian art director, currently at Apple Worldwide Retail.

## BOBBY C. MARTIN JR.

Creative director at Apple. Scored a dream job working on Cory Booker's political campaign while at Champions Design.

## MICHAEL BRANDON MYERS

Myers is an early adopter of AI, and I wanted to learn more about the tool that frightens many creatives.

## JAY OSGERBY

Industrial designer responsible for the Pacific chair, which was the seat of choice for Apple Park (the corporate headquarters of Apple).

## ALEX PIRANI

Former chef who pivoted in his thirties and went back to school to

become a graphic designer. Career changes like these can fuel your endurance by challenging your creativity.

## ZAKIYA POPE

Senior behavioral designer and vice president at U.S. Bank. Pope was a successful college volleyball player, and I was intrigued how the sport influenced her views on diversity and design.

## JOSHUA RAMUS

Architect who rowed crew while in college. What are the similarities between rowing and architecture?

## ANGELA RIECHERS

Transitioned between three

careers as a writer, art director, and now program director of graphic design at the University of the Arts.

## JASPAL RIYAIT

Once a senior editor at *The New York Times*, now an art director at Apple. Riyait forges her resilience by switching jobs once she's hit peak success.

## LEO RODGERS

Cyclist who lost his left leg in a motorcycle accident. Optimistically believes we all "need to get our one crash out of the way." What can we learn from Rodgers about dealing with our own "crashes"?

## KEIVARAE RUSSELL

American football

cornerback who was once signed by the New Orleans Saints. I wanted to learn how Russell deals with the uncertainty of now being a free agent.

## YUKO SHIMIZU

Japanese illustrator and professor at the School of Visual Arts. Shimizu's artwork is elaborate, her work ethic, persistent.

## NEIL STRAUSS

I wanted to learn interview techniques from this *New York Times* best-selling writer who's interviewed everyone from Chuck Berry to Lady Gaga.

## PETER YANG

What was it like for this celebrity photographer to be on set with Barack Obama?



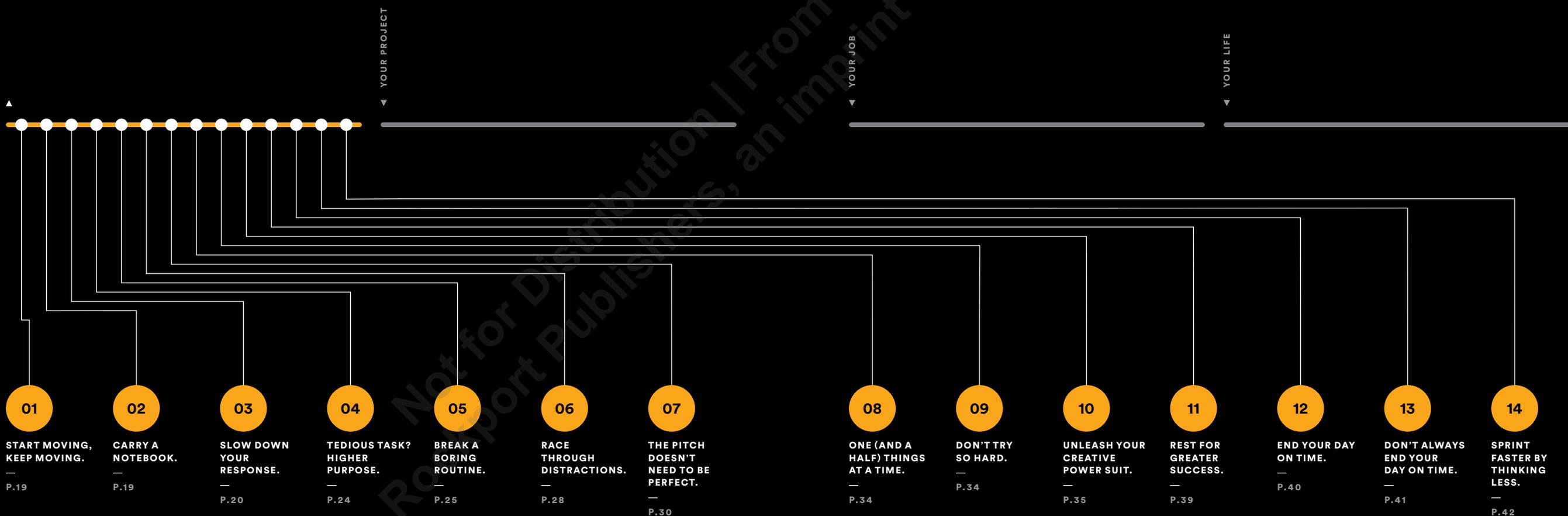
# Your Day

OVERCOME CREATIVE BLOCKS AND BUILD A SUSTAINABLE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE.



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- YUKO SHIMIZU ..... P. 32
- DEAN KARNAZES ..... P. 36
- JAY OSGERBY ..... P. 44





▼  
**Jay Osgerby, on Being Creative**

*"I can't resist the excitement of making things, especially with people who are passionate—that feeling is contagious."*



**IT'S RARE FOR AN** ultramarathoner to be stuck in place, but that's exactly where Dean Karnazes finds himself right now. Hovering over his butcher-block writing table, he struggles with the opening scene of his first screenplay. How can he make a film about ancient Greece feel relevant to a modern audience? The problem nags at Karnazes like a splinter jammed under his fingernail.

This scenario of creative paralysis may sound familiar, whether you're struggling to get out of bed, stewing over a difficult project, or overwhelmed by a deadline. Remain still and your anxiety will continue to climb. The solution is simple: "Motion stirs emotion," says Karnazes.

He puts his personal credo into action and embarks upon a head-clearing run. At the

2,600-foot (792 m) summit of Mount Tamalpais, the idea hits Karnazes like a rock rolling down the hill. The film will open with students griping about their first day of Greek Classics Studies. When the professor instructs them to open their books, the film will cut to a battle scene in Athens.

Karnazes returns to his desk to write the opening scene. "The hardest part is finding the inner discipline and motivation to do something that you're not looking forward to," he says.

In this section, you'll meet other heroes who use movement to overcome obstacles. Race car driver Hurley Haywood swiftly cuts through distractions, astronaut Jeanette Epps deliberately multitasks, and mountain biker Evelyn Dong knows when to stop moving at the end of the day.

**Carry a Notebook.**

As you zip through your day, random ideas will flint like fireflies in your brain. Heed the advice of illustrator Marion Deuchars, and keep a notebook handy to jar those sparks of genius. "It's important to get an idea down on paper before I forget it," she says. The author of *Yoga for Stiff Birds* and nineteen other books has discovered forgotten book concepts in her notebook. Bonus: The notebook off-loads your short-term memory, making room for fresh ideas.

No.

02



**PING! A PARANORMAL** message pops up, late in the day. “Hey, I forgot to ask, can you create one more graphic,” asks your co-worker. *Seriously?*

Astronaut Jeanette Epps deals with her fair share of aggravating messages while working at NASA Mission Control as Capcom. In that role, Epps gathers the thoughts of every console in the room, consults with the flight director, and relays critical information back to space.

“Sit back, and think about it. Don’t be reactive,” she says. “Find out what the real story is.” If Capcom mucks up their communication with an astronaut in distress, that could make matters worse.

Whether you’re Capcom or creative, your initial response will set the tone. Annoyed at your co-worker’s message? Don’t respond when you’re angry. Simple as that. Let your the request sit for a bit, and your perception will change. In the morning, it might not feel that annoying.

Even better: Wait, and your co-worker might realize they don’t actually need that extra graphic.

Look at the situation from the perspective of your co-worker. Do they really need that graphic tonight, or are they just knocking an item off their to-do list? *C’mon, that’s understandable.*

Let’s say the coworker does indeed need that graphic, and these late requests are common. Resolve this situation, but acknowledge the bigger picture:

There might be a workflow issue. Are you discussing all of the graphic needs at the outset of a project? Is there someone else making these requests, and do they need to be part of the communication from the beginning? Spend some additional time collecting your thoughts, then set up a meeting to discuss these issues.

Talk about problems: When Epps and I spoke, NASA just experienced a coolant leak on the Russian Soyuz rocket. “It’s better to laugh than cry in these situa-

tions. So much can go wrong—as long as it’s not the worst-case scenario, then all is good,” she says.

See the bright side like Epps. Last night, the message felt like a crash landing. This morning, it’s a chance for liftoff.

▼  
**Dick Beardsley, on Endurance**  
*“Do whatever it takes, physically or mentally. Keep going, day after day, no matter what obstacles might be in your way.”*

How an astronaut deals with an onslaught of messages.



# Sloooooow

**DOWN YOUR RESPONSE.**



## MY GROWTH PLAN

“I don’t wake up hungry.”

MOLLY BAZ SHARES HER RECIPE FOR DAILY INSPIRATION.

■ **OCCUPATION**  
Cookbook Author,  
Video Host

■ **LOCATION**  
Los Angeles,  
California

# D

**EXERCISE PRIMES** my creative process. I need to feel the urge for food to get really excited to cook. There’s nothing worse than feeling full from a meal you just ate and then stepping into the kitchen to create. Nothing happens.

**THERE ARE TOOLS** I use for inspiration. I’ll cook in an improvisational way. It’s important for my creativity to not always think of the endgame.

**I MADE CHILI RECENTLY.** I sat with my husband, turned on the fireplace, and was like, *We’re going all-in on vibes tonight.* He’s a big sounding board for me. He will say, “This is yummy. I’m enjoying this, but it’s missing a little bit of Molly.” When he says that, I’m like, “Ugh, I knew it.”

**MY IDEAS ARE OFTEN** shaped through

conversation. My inner and outer thoughts are not always the same, and talking to someone else will help me understand what I *actually* mean.

**CHILI IS A GREAT EXAMPLE** of a recipe that comes from being like, *Oh, that’s what I want to eat tonight.* And then, the next day being like, *That was really good. I’m gonna turn that into a recipe.* That chili became Spiced Chili with Many Beans and Some Greens. It’s in my cooking club.

**I USE THE SAME** ingredients in multiple ways in a recipe. It’s an incredible way to keep ingredient lists tight. On my chili, I started by sautéing onions into the base and reserved a quarter of the onion. I thinly sliced it, tossed it with lime juice, and put pickled onions on top.

**WHEN CLARKSON POTTER** reached out to me to write a cookbook, I was shocked. But they wanted me to write it for Basically, a sub-brand of *Bon Appétit*. After I thought about it, my first book isn’t going to be Molly for someone else. It’s going to be Molly for Molly.

**I WAS ASKED TO WRITE** a list of one hundred recipe titles as part of my proposal. I started throwing titles on paper, like Pastrami Roast Chicken with Schmaltzy Onions and Dill. Smooshed and Crispy Potatoes with Salt and Vinegar Sour Cream. Things that sounded good to me.

**NAMING IS IMPORTANT.** You have five to six words to explain everything about a dish, from ingredients to technique. You have to be choosy.

**ONCE THE PROPOSAL WAS** approved, I stepped into the kitchen to tackle those recipes, and the inspiration wasn’t there.



## TAKEAWAYS

# 1

Set your ideal environment to be creative. Exercise whets this chef’s appetite to write recipes.

# 2

Don’t worry about the end result. Enjoy the process and you’ll get there.

# 3

The act of creating is an evolution. First make it good, then make it great.

**MY COOKBOOK RECIPES** evolved from the original ideas. Even the kinds of ingredients that I was fixated on changed over time. Every month, there was a new thing I was obsessed with. They find their way into the recipes. Right now, I’m in my sesame seed phase.

**A RECIPE STARTS WITH A VISUAL** in my head—what will the finished dish look like? Taste is important, too, obviously. The two need to intersect to make a recipe great.

**I MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION** to spend my own money on hiring an outside firm to design the second cookbook. I specifically chose people who are not cookbook designers—I didn’t want them to take a traditional approach.

**GRAPHIC DESIGN** and recipes are similar. On the final dish, ingredients need to be balanced. You can’t have too much of one thing—it’ll overpower the dish.

**I WAS A LINE COOK.** If you get an order in, you have seven minutes to get it out. It’s all about efficiency. That eliminates mental chaos.

**WHEN IT CAME** to the techniques in the book, I decided to hold my reader’s hand in a way that’s not the common convention for recipe writing. I organized the ingredients by the department where you find them in the grocery store. It’s annoying when there are herbs on four different parts of the list. You end up running circles around the grocery store.

**I’M DOING THE THING** I’m meant to be doing—teaching people how to cook and having fun while doing it.