



## **This Is Your Life Podcast**

Season 5, Episode 8

Published: September 30, 2015

Michael Hyatt

**Stu McLaren:** Welcome to *This Is Your Life* with Michael Hyatt, where our goal is to help you win at work and succeed at life. My name is Stu McLaren, your host for season 5 of the show, and I'm in studio with Michael Hyatt. Welcome, Michael.

**Michael Hyatt:** Thanks, Stu. Good to see you, buddy.

**Stu:** Good to see you too. Now before we got started, we were talking about one of your all-time favorite movies. I want to share a quote from that movie, because it's going to set up the show for today. This movie is one that I think our viewers are going to be familiar with. It is *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*.

**Michael:** One of the best movies of all time.

**Stu:** One of the best movies of all time. In particular, I'm going to reference a famous scene between Yoda and Luke Skywalker. Yoda asks Luke to retrieve his disabled spaceship out of a bog, where it has sunk, using only his mind.

**Michael:** That would be no challenge for you, but for Luke it was tough.

**Stu:** Thank you. Luke reluctantly agrees to give it a try, to which Yoda famously responds, "No. Try not. Do or do not. There is no try." Now how has that scene impacted you and shaped your outlook on trying?

**Michael:** Well, like a lot of people, I have said through my life when I was attempting to do something, "I'll give that a try" or "I'll try to do this." Or I've had people who have worked for me, and I've said, "Can you do this?" and they said, "Well, I'll give it my best shot. I'll try." Well, I was at a Tony Robbins conference, and I saw him do this demonstration that is really amazing. In fact, I have a film clip in the show notes of this same demonstration. Fair warning: the language is a little rough.

What he does is he has this woman in the audience. She's saying that she has tried everything in her marriage. He says, "Really? You've tried?" She says, "Oh yeah, I've tried. I've tried all kinds of things." He says, "Okay, see that chair sitting beside you? I want you to try to pick it up." So she grabs it and picks it up.

He says, "No, no, no. I said *try* to pick it up. You picked it up. Put it back down." She kind of looks confused. She doesn't know what to do, so she just stands there. He says, "Now you're *not* picking it up. I asked you to *try* to pick it up." She's kind of confused. She's looking around at the crowd. Everybody is kind of confused.

She grabs the chair and picks it up, and he says, "You picked it up. I asked you to *try* to pick it up. Put it back down." So she stares at it for a while, and he goes back through the same thing. "Now you're *not* picking it up." He makes a distinction that you either pick it up or you don't pick it up. There's no such thing as trying. It's exactly like Yoda.

People do this all the time. For example, people say this all the time, what they're trying to improve. For example, they might say, "Are you trying to get in shape, or are you getting in shape?" It's one or the other. Or "Are you trying to improve your marriage, or are you improving your marriage?" Or "Are you trying to make more sales calls, or are you actually making more sales calls?"

There's a distinction between trying and doing, and as someone once said, trying is basically failure with honor. You're kind of doomed if you say, "Well, I'm just going to try that." I listen for that now. People I'm coaching, people I'm consulting... If they say they're going to try to do something, that's a pretty safe bet it isn't going to happen, because they're not fully committed.

**Stu:** It's fascinating how our language shapes our behavior and our whole mental approach to whatever it is we're doing. As you said, if *trying* is part of our vocabulary, it's almost as though we're giving ourselves an out if it doesn't work out.

**Michael:** That's right. That's why I said it's like failure with honor. If you fail and you don't actually accomplish it, then you can say, "Well, I tried." I mean, who could fault you for that? You tried. No, you either do it or you don't do it.

**Stu:** So in this episode what I want to talk about is...*How do we go from "trying" to achieving?* You have established three parameters to help us escape the trying trap. I want to talk about those here today, starting with the first parameter.

**Michael:** It's simple, and you said it before. That is, to notice our language. Our language is critically important. There's a sense in which our language can program us to perform certain things. If we use the wrong language, if we're not careful about our language, it can create an outcome we don't intend. Whenever we achieve anything, whenever we create any outcome in the world, it first begins as a thought. Then it gets expression through our words, and then finally there's an action.

When the word comes out of our mouth, it's like the first indication of what we've been thinking. Our thoughts create our reality, and our words create our reality. So to eliminate the word *try* from our vocabulary is the first step. Whenever I catch myself saying that, I back up, because it's a worthless word. It accomplishes nothing. As you said, it leaves us a back door or an excuse for not achieving something.

**Stu:** Let's say when your kids were growing up, if they came to you and said, "Well, I tried to do something," how would you provide feedback for them on that?

**Michael:** Well, first of all, I wouldn't just chastise them right there, but I'd probably want to know more about what they experienced, what they did. One very good question to ask when a kid says, "I've tried everything" is "Really? Everything? Did you try this? Did you try that?" You can run through a litany of things to try to figure out what they tried and what they didn't try.

I think to teach them the importance of words is critically important, because sometimes, actually *most* times, the very thing that enables us to accomplish something significant is our commitment to it. We take a stand for something, and we're committed fully to that thing, and when we're committed fully to that thing, amazingly the outcome catches up with the commitment we've made.

This is one of the problems I have with people who don't commit to marriage. I'm not talking about the morality of it, but I'm just saying people who live together, oftentimes those relationships don't work out because there's not that fundamental commitment to a long-term relationship.

**Stu:** It's almost like you're kind of going to do it, but not really, and you're safeguarding so that you have a backup plan.

**Michael:** Yeah. "We're going to try this." Let me tell you something. Relationships are hard, especially relationships with somebody you're intimate with. The commitment is the very thing that will carry you through. I've been married for 37 years, and I'm happily married. I

love my wife dearly, and I'm more in love with her today than I was on the day I walked down the aisle. We just had our anniversary, so this is very fresh in my mind.

But I can tell you there were difficult times. Our marriage has not been all strawberries and cream. There have been times when we had very difficult days, arguments, fights, just not getting along, but it was that commitment, that standing for the marriage, realizing that for us divorce was not an option, and that was the very thing that carried us through. So I think that commitment in every area of life is critically important. It's often the difference maker, the game changer, that carries you through so you can actually do it.

**Stu:** When I think about it too... As you know, I like to try to do extreme adventures and things of that nature. You really can't try to skydive. You're either skydiving or you're not skydiving. There's no trying with that. I always think of the extreme examples of that. The key thing here is to eliminate *try* from your vocabulary.

**Michael:** That's right.

**Stu:** Got it.

**Michael:** Again, I just want to say this. Our words have an impact, not only in the people around us, but on ourselves. Even in the context of marriage with my wife, it wouldn't go over very well if I said to Gail, "I'm going to try to love you." What she wants to hear is, "I love you. I'm committed to loving you." That's more than words. That has to be actions. I have to back that up with my actions. Trying doesn't work there, and it doesn't work in most areas.

**Stu:** Well, this is great. That's the first parameter for us to really escape the trying trap. In a minute, we're going to come back with the final two parameters we can use to escape that trying trap. We'll get to those in just a minute.

*If you're like most members of my audience, you're committed to winning at work and succeeding in life, but the truth is you struggle with finding enough time to do it all. That's exactly why I wrote my new e-book, *Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek: 4 Proven Strategies for Creating More Margin for the Things That Matter Most*. You can't buy *Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek*, but you can get it for free by subscribing to my free email newsletter.*

*My email newsletter notifies you whenever I've posted fresh content to my blog, so you don't always have to visit my blog to stay up to date. To get your free copy of the *Shave 10 Hours Off Your Workweek* e-book, visit [michaelhyatt.com](http://michaelhyatt.com) and enter your name and email address*

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**Stu:** Welcome back. In this episode, we're talking about why it's time for you to stop trying. Michael, you've been outlining some parameters for us to be able to escape the trying trap so we're actually doing less trying and more doing. The first parameter was to eliminate the word *try* from our vocabulary. Let's move on to the second parameter.

**Michael:** Well, this is where we really take Yoda's advice, and we decide either to do or to not do. Look, I don't care. I don't care if you do it or you don't do it, but just decide, because how you decide is going to determine the outcome. If you don't want a better marriage, fine, say so. Don't just say you're going to try to appease your spouse or your in-laws or anybody else. Do it because you want to do it or don't do it, but there's no middle ground there.

**Stu:** It's like you're drawing a line right in the sand, and you're either on one side or the other.

**Michael:** It's all about commitment. I think every great thing in life, everything we accomplish that's important, begins with a commitment. Now sometimes we think the commitment is the result of some other things. We kind of slip into it, and then we'll finally commit. If it works, we'll commit. That's not how it works. The big things, the important things in life we commit to first. Like you didn't say when you had Marla, "Hey, let's try this parenting thing." Right? I mean, you pretty much committed.

**Stu:** Yeah, you're in at that point.

**Michael:** And when you adopted Sam, same thing. You didn't say, "Well, let's try this adoption thing, and if it doesn't work out we'll send him back." No, you're fully committed.

**Stu:** Totally. It's interesting, because I remember... It's challenging having kids, especially young kids. When we adopted Sam, he was just over a year old at the time. So we had our daughter Marla who was 4 and our son Sam who was 1. If any parents listening have more than one child, they know the dynamic changes instantly.

You go from being able to double-team parent to now you're a man-to-man defense, and then beyond two kids, as our friend Chris would say, then you're in a zone defense at that point. It was challenging. I remember when Sam was not sleeping well at night, and both Amy and I

were tired, more so Amy to give her credit, because she was getting up with him in the middle of the night. I remember she said, “I can’t take this anymore.”

At that point, I was like, “Well, what do we do? We’re committed. We’re in this.” Of course, she was totally committed, but there are times when it can be really taxing. It’s that commitment that pulls you through and helps you get through those challenging times. Parenting, marriage, business endeavors... It all comes down to that commitment.

**Michael:** Yeah, you don’t really have a back door. You’re not allowing yourself any method of retreat. It’s kind of back to that story... I don’t know if it’s true or not. You know, Cortes’ soldiers go into Mexico, and he sends back some guys to burn the boats so they know they’re fully committed. They’re in Mexico for life. The only way is forward. They have to conquer. I think that’s where it comes down to a lot in life.

I remember sitting in a business review meeting one time asking one of our sales managers did he think he was going to get his numbers for the month. Now again, I do care whether he says yes or no, and I’m hoping he gives me the right answer, but he said, “I’m going to try,” which meant he wasn’t committed. It was sort of like, “I’m going to kind of participate, and if it happens, great; I’ll take credit for it. But if it doesn’t, I’ll blame something else.” He wasn’t committed to making it happen.

**Stu:** You guys are really great at this. When I say “you guys” I’m referring to you and your daughter Megan. I remember one of the first experiences when working with you guys. You love to establish goals.

**Michael:** I do?

**Stu:** Yes, you guys are *the* goal people. It’s a good job you have a good course on it too with *Best Year Ever*. One of the things I found challenging was establishing those stretch goals, because one of the things I love to do when I’m working with somebody is to under-promise and over-deliver. I remember distinctly you were asking for a good goal, a better goal, and the best goal. My thought was, “Well, I’ll give them my better goal as my best goal so when I think we’ll exceed that I’ll be over-delivering.” You guys have kind of caught on to my act.

**Michael:** Yes, we have.

**Stu:** Now you really push me to commit to that higher goal right from the onset. What I’ve learned through that experience is through that commitment, it creates confidence from others. It’s like we’re standing for this. We’re going to do whatever we absolutely can to make that

happen. Whereas, if we were just *trying* to reach that goal, there's not the real sense that we're going to do whatever we can to make it happen.

**Michael:** Yeah, and it really doesn't bring out the best work in others. It's not inspiring when somebody says, "Well, let's try to do this." I mean, that same guy who told me in the sales meeting he was going to try to get his numbers for that month, if he went back to his team and said, "Hey guys, I have some great news; we're going to try to achieve our sales numbers," well, okay, so what? It's not inspiring.

But if he paints a picture of a bigger, better future, and he says, "Here's why this is important, and we're absolutely going for it, we're going to do it; here are the reasons why," that suddenly becomes compelling, especially if he connects it to *their* future, their bonus or something they want to achieve. Then all of a sudden it becomes compelling.

So as a leader, there's nothing compelling about trying. You have to commit. This is what makes the great leaders from the not-so-great leaders. The great leaders are willing to commit. Even in the face of uncertainty, even when they feel fear themselves, when they're not sure they have what it takes, they're willing to put a stake in the ground and say, "This is what we're going to do." I think part of the issue, Stu, is that people have this tremendous fear of failure.

**Stu:** Especially public failure in today's social media landscape and so forth.

**Michael:** But what's the real consequence? Usually it's not that significant. We learn something from it at the very least. But I think there's a big risk of failure when we don't commit. I would rather commit and fail, process the failure, and learn from it than to hang back, play it safe, and never really achieve anything of any consequence.

**Stu:** Absolutely. So that's the second parameter, which is decide either to do or not to do. There's no in between, which is the trying. Okay, what's the third parameter for us?

**Michael:** Commit 100 percent to the outcome you want.

**Stu:** This is what we were talking about before with the goals specifically. You were saying, "Listen, dude. Commit. Let's pick a number and commit to it and go all out for it."

**Michael:** "Let's play full out." I really believe in that. I think so many people kind of make this loose commitment. They're going to try. Then when there's adversity, and there's always adversity... No matter how big the goal is or how small, if it's an important goal, you're going to experience adversity on your way to it. There are going to be obstacles.



Unless you're committed to playing full out, you're not going to have the head of steam you need to make it all the way through. So 100-percent commitment is important in order to get through the messy middle, to get through the obstacles.

**Stu:** I remember specifically with our most recent *Best Year Ever* campaign... I have to admit I was nervous going into that, because we had committed to a goal, and I really wanted us to achieve that as a team, because I had hit that milestone with other projects in the past, and I just knew the significance of crossing that certain milestone for our team.

I remember when we initially did the planning, we had a variety of different upsells in our sales process that would largely contribute to the final goal, and as we were getting closer, we decided, for a variety of reasons, that those were just not a fit. There were two upsells... I don't know if you remember this.

**Michael:** I do remember that, yeah.

**Stu:** They were contributing a large portion of the revenue for this goal. I remember feeling inside of me like, "Oh my goodness. Now this is going to be a real challenge to hit this goal, given that huge chunks of projected revenue are not going to be there." But it was that commitment to the goal. Miraculously, because we stayed committed to the goal, we found other creative ways to find new resources. New ideas came to us.

It was just a great lesson to me. We become most creative when we're most desperate. When we had pulled back, we had to come up with new ideas, new strategies, and as a result, those have been huge contributions to our overall strategy now and completely changed the direction, but it wouldn't have happened if we weren't 100-percent committed to that goal.

**Michael:** When you're only trying, you never get the opportunity to do that, because you've built in the possibility of failure, and you've made it respectable to walk off the field. This is a thing I see over and over again: people walking off the field, just quitting before the whistle blows. We've done a whole episode on that, so I won't repeat that here.

Stay on the field, fully engaged, playing full out until the whistle blows, because you don't know the future. You don't know where resources will come from. You don't know if suddenly you'll stumble onto something that just blows the whole thing wide open, which has happened to us a number of times. You can't see that from the beginning, and you're definitely not going to see it unless you're committed to an outcome.



**Stu:** Well, for everybody listening, if they are stuck in the trying trap, you've given them three great parameters to escape that. First, eliminate the word *try* from your vocabulary. Second, decide either to do or not to do. Third, commit 100 percent to the outcome you want.

As we look to wind down this episode, one of the things that most often keeps us stuck at trying rather than doing is we just don't know where to start. So as we conclude this episode, can you give us some examples of first steps we can take to really start doing something in a few key areas of our lives?

**Michael:** Yeah. Well, let's look at some examples from different areas of our lives. Like strengthening a marriage. I think where I would start there, if I was going to do and not try, is I would first of all check my intention. Am I fully committed to this? I would eliminate the sentence, "We're going to try to make this work."

I would take the leadership position. Whether I was the man or the woman, I would take the leadership position, and I would say, "We are absolutely going to make this marriage work. I'm totally committed to that. I don't know how. I'm not going to *pretend* to know how, but it starts with my commitment."

**Stu:** In today's society, I think that is lost in marriage.

**Michael:** I do too.

**Stu:** It's just that stake-in-the-ground commitment to making it work and finding a way, because it has just become easy to back out of relationships and to back out of a lot of things in life, but really strengthening that marriage comes down to that commitment.

**Michael:** Yeah, I think so too, and I think once you've made that commitment, to even list a bunch of whys... You know, why is this important? What's at stake here? Because the truth is, if I don't save this relationship, I'm not going to learn the lessons I need to learn to become a better human being.

The truth is anybody can stay in a relationship that's easy. That requires no growth on my part. It requires no learning. It requires no compromise. Nothing has to change. I just stay the same. But when I'm in a more difficult relationship (which is basically with any other human being, because they're different than I am), that requires me to change, to evolve, to become more than I am, and that's a good, good thing.

So I would start in marriage with that intention. Then the whole future opens up. You can take a course. You can read a book. You can get counseling or therapy, all of which I've done. You

can decide to have fun together, create meaningful experiences. There are a bunch of things you can do, but that's only going to become possible if you stop trying and start doing. So that's just an example for marriage.

**Stu:** I think that commitment is the real key point. Recently, I had a friend of mine who had a challenge with her significant other, and she was actively seeking advice from others. I just commended her for being proactive about it, seeking outside advice and guidance and counsel, because a lot of people don't do that. They don't commit to it.

She was fully committed. She said, "I want to make this relationship work. I'm going to make this relationship work, and I'm trying to find as many insights from as many different people who have relationships that are working." It was great.

**Michael:** It starts with that commitment.

**Stu:** Commitment. Absolutely. So strengthening your marriage is one example of how we could implement this in our lives. What's another?

**Michael:** Another one is becoming a better parent.

**Stu:** I love this one.

**Michael:** The truth is most of us haven't had much training.

**Stu:** Zero training.

**Michael:** We grow up in the homes we grow up in, and our parents probably do the best they can, but they're not perfect parents. We don't have a wide range of experience. We only learn from the two people or the one person who raised us, and that's all we have. Again, I think it begins with that commitment.

I want to give to my kids a better future than I had. I want to give to them every advantage I can give to them to be successful, to realize their potential. So making that commitment. This is an easy one to make a commitment, because you're not going to bail. You're not going to say at some point, "Okay, that's it. I'm done."

**Stu:** "You guys are on your own."

**Michael:** You may feel that way, but you're not going to do that if you're a responsible parent. So then the same thing begins again, like we were talking about in marriage. I have the

commitment. Now what are the resources that are available? I know a man... He and his wife adopted a couple of kids with some very traumatic backgrounds.

They've had a real challenge raising those kids, but they're totally committed. They're not going to return the kids. They're getting counseling. They're getting in-home training. They're getting every advantage they can to be the best parents they can. They're not trying. They're doing it, and they're going to be successful because they *are* doing it.

**Stu:** I think, too, once you make that commitment, you all of a sudden have this awareness of outside resources that can help you strengthen that commitment. For example, my wife and I right from the onset wanted to be amazing parents.

**Michael:** You *are* amazing parents.

**Stu:** I appreciate that. We're still learning. I'm still learning, and every age has new opportunities to learn.

**Michael:** Yes, it does.

**Stu:** I remember when we decided we were going to have children and we wanted to raise great kids. One of the things that immediately became aware to us were families where they had kids who were the kinds of children we wanted to raise. There was one specific example. My wife was a grade-one teacher. She taught grade one for eight years. She saw firsthand many examples of different parenting styles and how that played out with the kids in the classroom.

There was one particular little boy she never forgot. His name was Jack. She said Jack was like the ultimate little boy. He was polite. He helped everybody. He was smart. He always came with a positive attitude. So at one parent meeting, my wife asked his parents, "What do you do at home? Jack is the most delightful little boy." They shared with Amy some great examples of what they're intentionally doing as parents to be better parents, to raise great kids.

As a little example, and I know you've heard this before, because I think Dave Ramsey talks about it... They talked about how when they give their kid's allowance, they have three jars: save, spend, and give. That was a new concept to us at the time. We were like, "That's amazing." Then every month, he collects what he has accumulated in his give jar, and he goes and gives it to somewhere else. We thought, "We're absolutely doing that with our kids."

So once you make that commitment, you become aware of opportunities to learn and to pull resources from outside people that can help you strengthen that commitment.

**Michael:** That's perfect. Sometimes the resources don't appear until you've made the commitment, so that's another reason why the commitment is important.

**Stu:** Awesome. Okay, so strengthening your marriage and becoming a better parent are two great examples of this in action. Any others?

**Michael:** Yeah, here's one: improving your health. You hear people want to try this all the time. "I want to try to get in shape. I want to try to lose some weight. I want to try to quit smoking." They end up going nowhere, because they're never fully engaged. They're never fully committed.

I would just encourage people who are listening to this podcast, if they want an improvement in their health: stop trying, start doing, and get committed. Begin by eliminating the word from your vocabulary. Instead of saying, "I'm going to try to eat better," just eat better. If you fail at it, if you go backwards, that's fine. It's okay. You process it. You move on. But at no time do you need to protect yourself by saying *trying*. Just do it.

**Stu:** When I was 8 years old, I was attending a school assembly. I can't even remember who it was, but they came and gave a presentation on smoking and the health implications of smoking and how it leads to lung cancer and, obviously, that can lead to death, and so forth. I came home, and as a little 8-year-old boy, this was just like racing through my mind, because my dad smoked at the time.

One night, he came to put me to bed, and I was crying. He came up and said, "What is wrong? Why are you crying?" I said, "You're going to die!" He's like, "What?" I said, "You're going to die!" He's like, "Why am I going to die?" I said, "Because you smoke. You're going to die." That had an amazing effect on him.

**Michael:** I'll bet.

**Stu:** He didn't *try* to stop smoking; he immediately stopped smoking the next day. I'll never forget that moment, because he had tried before that, but that day it was like he committed, and that was it. I think it comes back to something you said before. It's the *why* behind the commitment. Once you get in touch with that *why*, it really strengthens the commitment.

**Michael:** It totally does. Again, eliminating that word *try* eliminates the back door that keeps you from succeeding.

**Stu:** Right. So improving your health is another great example. What's the final one?

**Michael:** Here's another one: winning at work. People may be skeptical about that. They say, "I've moved up as high as I can in my organization." But what if you haven't? What if you made the commitment that you were going to advance in your career? Maybe you're going to learn different skills, and once you've made the commitment, you're going to bring in other resources. You're going to get career counseling. You're going to take a course, something that makes you more valuable to your organization so that you're more likely to get promoted.

Again, it begins with the commitment. So I think for everybody, regardless of the sphere of life it's in, begin with that intention. What is it you want? What are you committed to? Then be on the lookout for the resources. If you were committed, what would be the next thing you would do?

**Stu:** I think of an example in your life in particular. You had risen through the ranks in the corporate world, the CEO of a major publishing company. I mean, that's as high as you can go, but yet it wasn't for you, because once you had gotten there, you realized there were a lot of things about it you loved and enjoyed, but there was another side of it for you. It was creating havoc in terms of your lifestyle. You wanted a different lifestyle.

So you committed to a completely different work environment, if you will, going out and being an entrepreneur. It was like you were saying. Even though you *think* you may have reached the top level, there's probably another option.

**Michael:** Absolutely. I remember at the time my friends were saying to me, "Oh, so you're going to retire?" "No, I'm not going to retire." By that they meant, "So you're going to kind of step it down, gear it down, kind of land the plane, coast." I was like, "No."

Today, I'm having greater impact, making more money, and have a much bigger future than I had back then, when at the time it seemed like I'd crested the tallest mountain and there was no future. It, again, began with that commitment. Stand for that better future, that bigger future, and then see where that gets you.

**Stu:** Awesome. Well, my friend, I want to thank you, and I want to thank everybody listening. If you've enjoyed today's episode, you can find the show notes over at [michaelhyatt.com](http://michaelhyatt.com). You can also see the video version of today's show at [michaelhyatt.com](http://michaelhyatt.com). I would love to ask you if you could do us a quick favor. It'll take you 30 seconds.

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Michael, as we wind down today's episode on eliminating *trying* from our vocabulary, our lives, and so forth, and really committing to actually doing and taking more action, do you have any final thoughts?

**Michael:** Yeah, I would say just be alert for how that sneaks in. You may say, "Well, it doesn't really matter; this isn't a big deal," but we're practicing. We're training our minds and wills to do really important stuff. So just be alert to that word sneaking in, and eliminate it. Just commit. Go ahead and commit.

**Stu:** Awesome. Well, thank you, my friend. This was a great episode.

**Michael:** Thank you.

**Stu:** Thank you to the listener, and remember, until next time: your life, your one and only life, is a gift. Now go make it count.