

## THE BIG IDEAS

### The 1% Intention

Aggregated and compounded = !!!

### The Motions

You going or growing through them?

### A + S + GOYA = R

Ability + Strategy + Get Off Your  
Anatomy = !!!!

### The Success Cycle

In three steps.

### Plant the Tree

TODAY.

*" Consistent execution  
of a simple personal and  
professional growth plan is  
exactly how we close the gap  
from where we are to where  
we want to be."*

~ Brian Cain

# One Percent Better

A Story About How To Close The Gap From Where You Are To Where You Want To Be

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**"The best place to start is to intentionally invest 1% of your day into yourself and become a better version of you today than you were yesterday. Then wake up tomorrow and do the same thing. Rinse and repeat. It's actually quite simple."**

~ Brian Cain from *One Percent Better*

Welcome to our second note on one of Brian Cain's little mental toughness/optimal living fables.

As we discussed in our Note on [The 10 Pillars of Mental Performance Mastery](#), Brian is one of the world's leading mental toughness coaches. He's also a long-time student of mine and easily tied for first as one of the most inspiring, energized human beings I know.

His client list includes four Major League Baseball Cy Young Award winners, eight UFC world champion mixed martial artists, World Series and Super Bowl Champions and MVPs, Olympic medalists, and countless other elite athletes and coaches.

Brian recently visited me and the Johnson fam out here in the country outside of Austin. The kids and wifey and I had fun learning how to eat fire and break an arrow with our necks and do other fun things we didn't think we could do.

He left this book and *10 Pillars* with me as a gift. They're both super-quick reading, inspiring books packed with a ton of wisdom. I read both of them in the same weekend.

Think: If [Paulo Coelho](#) wrote about mental toughness. And kinda like Robin Sharma's [Monk Who Sold His Ferrari](#) or [Dan Millman's Way of the Peaceful Warrior](#).

*10 Pillars* is all about the foundation of Brian's mental performance mastery program. This one is all about, as per the sub-title, "How to Close the Gap from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be." It features a burned-out teacher (Mr. Big) who meets a dynamic mentor (Sunny) who helps him get his mojo back. (Get a copy [here](#).)

How? By getting ONE PERCENT BETTER.

When? TODAY, Hero.

It's packed with Big Ideas and I'm excited to share a handful of my favorites so let's jump straight in!

## THE 1% INTENTION

**"Good morning, Mr. Big! It's time to get juiced. Either we are going to dominate the day or the day will dominate us. Are you ready?" Sunny asked this with the excitement of a kid on Christmas Day.**

**As we began walking the halls to the scent of bacon and breakfast, Sunny started asking me about math. 'Mr. Big, there are 24 hours in a day and 60 minutes in each hour. How many minutes are there in a day?'**

*"If you don't have a plan, how are you getting better? The problem is when you stop getting better, you start getting bitter, and nobody likes being around people who are bitter all the time."*

~ Brian Cain

I quickly took out my phone and asked, 'Hey, Siri. How many minutes in a day?'

'There are 1,440 minutes in a day,' Siri chimed back.

Then she asked, 'What's 1% of 1,440?'

This is where I was stumped. I wasn't sure how to do the math. After all, I wasn't a math teacher.

'No idea,' I replied.

'1% of a day is 14 minutes and 24 seconds,' she said emphatically. 'Everyone wants to get 1% better but they fail to intentionally invest 1% of their day because they don't even know that it's a strategy for success.'

Mr. Big is a burned-out teacher. Sunny is his mentor. She works in the cafeteria and "brings the juice!" all day every day. Her #1 lesson and the focal point of the entire book?

Let me repeat the quote from the intro we just reviewed...

*"The best place to start is to intentionally invest 1% of your day into yourself and become a better version of you today than you were yesterday. Then wake up tomorrow and do the same thing. Rinse and repeat. It's actually quite simple."*

Now, let's review the math.

There are 24 hours in a day. 60 minutes per hour. That's 1,440 minutes per day.

1% of that?

14 minutes and 24 seconds.

1% of your day.

Here's the question: What's the #1 thing you KNOW you could be doing that, if you spent just 1% of your day doing it, would have THE most positive impact in your life?

Seriously. What is it?

1% of your day meditating is 14 minutes and 24 seconds of meditation.

Would that change your life?

How about 1% of your day training? Or 1% of your day with ZERO technology spent 101% focused on being present with your significant other and/or kids?

Or how about investing 1% of your day reflecting on your life purpose. Or LIVING more on purpose—doing the things you KNOW you could be doing for just 14 minutes and 24 seconds TODAY?

+1%. +1%. +1%

Tiny investments that lead to tiny gains. That add up. Fast.

Let's bring in some other great teachers for their wisdom on the mathematics of a day and small, incremental gains aggregated and compounded over an extended period of time.

We'll start with Robin Sharma then talk about James Clear.

In [\*The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari\*](#), Robin Sharma tells us to go ALL IN for just ONE MONTH and see just how much we can change our lives.

He tells us: "Six hundred and seventy-two hours of inner work to profoundly improve every waking moment of the rest of your life is quite a bargain, don't you think? Investing in yourself is the best investment you will ever make. It will not only improve your life, it will improve the lives of all those around you."

*"The reason why writing it down is so important is that when you write down your intention, you take it from the clouds and you put it in the dirt. Where do things grow?*

*In the dirt."*

~ Brian Cain

Then there's some James Clear wisdom from his brilliant book [Atomic Habits](#).

He tells us: "It is so easy to overestimate the importance of one defining moment and underestimate the value of making small improvements on a daily basis. Too often, we convince ourselves that massive success requires massive action. Whether it is losing weight, building a business, writing a book, winning a championship, or achieving any other goal, we put pressure on ourselves to make some earth-shattering improvement that everyone will talk about.

Meanwhile, improving 1 percent isn't particularly notable—sometimes it isn't even noticeable— but it can be far more meaningful, especially in the long run. The difference a tiny improvement can make over time is astounding. Here's how the math works out: if you can get 1 percent better each day for one year, you'll end up thirty-seven times better by the time you're done. Conversely, if you get 1 percent worse each day for one year, you'll decline nearly down to zero. What starts as a small win or a minor setback accumulates into something much more.

*Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. The same way that money multiplies through compound interest, the effects of your habits multiply as you repeat them. They seem to make little difference on any given day and yet the impact they deliver over the months and years can be enormous. It is only when looking back two, five, or perhaps ten years later that the value of good habits and the cost of bad ones becomes strikingly apparent."*

1% gains aggregated and compounded for a year equals an astonishing 37x improvement.

And... As I say in that Note, create a spreadsheet ([like this](#)) and run that 1% daily improvement out for another year. Guess what? After two years, you're not 74 times better. You're now 1,400 (!! ) times better.

Why stop there? Run it out another year. After the third year of aggregating and compounding those 1% gains, you're now 53,405 times better. Four years? You're 2,017,828 times better. Five years? You're 76,240,507 times better.

Shall we run it 10 years out? OK. Let's. Result: Well, on day 3,472 we hit our last normal number. We're 998,822,690,009,590 times better. (That's nearly a quadrillion times better by the way.) Then we break our Google Spreadsheet by day 3,650 when we're at 5.87074E+15. I don't even know what that means but I assume it's even more zeroes. lol.

All that to say: Little things matter. A lot. Especially when we compound them over time.

Let's +1. TODAY.

## GROWING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

"Mr. Big, it's the start that stops most people. An object, in this case you, in motion stays in motion. It's breaking inertia that is the hardest part. Did you know that a space shuttle uses about 80% of its fuel in the first hour of its journey? Once you get momentum on your side, success comes your way. You create a rhythm and routine and start operating your habits and routines more intentionally instead of blindly going through the motions. I like to call it *growing through the motions* vs. *going through the motions*,' Sunny asserted. "The best place to start is always with your intention and your investment. Your 1% intention is flexible and flowing. It can adapt over time, but it must ALWAYS be written down and it must always be in action, preferably as part of your A.M. or P.M. routine because that's where you have the most control of your day."

Are you mindlessly \*going\* through the motions or are you deliberately GROWING through the motions—consistently dominating your highest-leverage habits so you can make your prior best your new baseline and stay curious about what you're truly capable of?

*"You must embody that which you want to share with others. You CANNOT give to others that which you do not first personally possess. If you want other people to be juiced, you must first be juiced yourself. If you want others to be intentional, you must first be intentional yourself."*

~ Brian Cain

Remember: It's the beginning that's always the hardest part.

Which is why Aristotle tells us: *"By common consent, the beginning is more than half the whole task, and throws a flood of light on many of the aspects of the inquiry."*

It's also why Greg Krech puts it this way in [The Art of Taking Action](#): *"Here's Newton's First Law of Physics: An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by some outside force."*

*Sir Isaac Newton was one of the most extraordinary intellects of his time. He realized that when an object is at rest it will basically stay at rest unless something influences it. It's also true that when an object is in motion it will basically stay in motion. This is what we refer to as momentum. This is why small steps can be so valuable. They offer momentum at a fairly low cost. In other words, it takes very little effort to create momentum. One pushup, one dish washed, one photo organized, one paragraph written in your novel-to-be. Have you gone very far? No. Do you now have momentum? Yes! And once you have momentum (you are in motion), you are more likely to continue—in motion."*

It's also why BJ Fogg tells us we need to make our habits TINY and why he named his book [Tiny Habits](#). And why James Clear echoes that in his [ATOMIC Habits](#). And Stephen Guise echoes all that wisdom in [Mini Habits](#).

Want to dominate your day? Start small. Make it easy to win. Then +1 all day every day.

Especially TODAY.

P.S. Darren Hardy echoes all this wisdom in HIS great book [The Compound Effect](#) where he tells us: *"The same thing happens when a rocket ship launches. The space shuttle uses more fuel during the first few minutes of its flight than it does the rest of the entire trip. Why? Because it has to break free from the pull of gravity. Once it does, it can glide in orbit. The hard part? Getting off the ground. Your old ways and your old conditioning are just like the inertia of the merry-go-round or the pull of gravity. Everything just wants to stay at rest. You'll need a lot of energy to break your inertia and get your new enterprise under way. But once you get momentum, you will be hard to stop—virtually unbeatable—even though you're now putting out considerably less effort while receiving greater results."*

Hardy is also the one who helped me get super-clear on the power of "A.M. and P.M. Bookends."

Here's how he puts THAT: *"The key to becoming world-class in your endeavors is to build your performance around world-class routines. It can be difficult, even futile, to predict or control what will show up in the middle of your workday. But you can almost always control how your day starts and ends. I have routines for both."*

[Check out our Mastery Series](#) for more on how to create Masterpiece Days!

## **A + S + GOYA = R**

**"Today's Success Hotline message was about exactly how to go from temporary to legendary. Dr. Gilbert talked about A + S + GOYA = R,' Sunny explained.**

**'Dr. Gilbert is using an acronym that means Ability + Strategy + Get Off Your Anatomy and do the work = Results,' Sunny recited aloud as she wrote it on the white board in my classroom.**

**'Mr. Big, ability is not something you are lacking to be the optimal version of yourself. You are simply blocking it. How we unblock our ability is by giving you the right strategy. In this case, that strategy is simply your 1% intention. You then have to get off your anatomy and do your 1% intention each day. When you do that, you will see better results.'"**

Want to become legendary and tap into your ultimate potential?

*"If you're juiceful, you're useful, and if you're juiceless, you're useless."*

~ Brian Cain

You're not necessarily lacking the *Ability*. The real issue might be that you don't have the right STRATEGY.

This was a lesson that Brian made vividly real for me and the kids when he visited recently.

How he'd do it? He showed us how to break an arrow with our neck and eat fire!

What's breaking arrows with your neck and eating fire have to do with this idea? Everything.

Here's the short story.

Brian took a wooden arrow and placed one end against the wall and the other end against his neck. Then he took a deep breath, stepped forward and SNAPPED THE ARROW in half.

Then he invited us to do it. To which we were all tempted to say: "Nope! We're good!" (Hah.)

Then he told us, *"You don't lack the ABILITY to break the arrow with your neck. You just lack the STRATEGY on how to easily do it safely."*

Then he taught us how to do it. Then I did it. BOOM!

Same thing with eating fire. There's a STRATEGY on how to do it. Once you know it, it's EASY.

And, well, same thing with pretty much E V E R Y T H I N G in our lives.

BJ Fogg echoes this wisdom in *Tiny Habits*. He tells us: *"We are not the problem. Our approach to change is. It's a design flaw—not a personal flaw."*

Again, it's a STRATEGY issue not an ABILITY issue.

Which brings us back to the equation  $A + S + GOYA = R$ .

Ability + Strategy + Get Off Your Anatomy and DO THE WORK if you want the results!!

You can't just know what to do. You have to DO IT. Which is why the #1 thing we are most committed to with Heroic is helping you move from Theory to Practice to Mastery. We need to actually DO the things we know we could be doing. Not someday. TODAY.

GOYA and go dominate!!

## THE 3 STEP SUCCESS CYCLE

*"When you create a 1% intention, you want to be sure that you can follow the 3 step success cycle. The 3 step success cycle is a process that is applied to all types of performance, teaching, marriage, athletic, business, and yes, your 1% intention," Sunny said.*

*'First, you have to prepare for your performance. Then, you perform. Finally, you have to reflect on your performance to maximize your learning from that performance on that day. The biggest mistake I see in people who set the 1% intention is that they prepare by writing down what they will do, then they do their 1% intention for a short period of time, but fail to reflect on it. Reflection is where the golden nuggets of wisdom and development are mined. You have to reflect so you can learn. Otherwise, you slip back into going through the motions instead of growing through the motions.'*

The 3 Step Success Cycle.

We prepare. We perform. We reflect.

Let's focus on the reflection side of things for a moment.

Note: One of the absolute best ways to see Cainer's wisdom in action is to [read this article in The Athletic](#) on one of his clients: Cy Young Winner, Corbin Burnes.

Before working with Brian, Corbin was LITERALLY the statistically \*worst\* performing pitcher in Major League Baseball. Now, he's one of the absolute most dominant.

One of the keys to his success? He's constantly (!) working his protocol and constantly (!!!) getting better by reviewing his performance and finding little ways to optimize.

Brian describes it as "well, better, how." The basic approach is similar to our 1-2-3 Optimizing protocol that we talk about in [this +1 on Lanny Bassham's three-step process](#).

1. Identify what went WELL.
2. Identify what needs work (that you can do "BETTER").
3. Identify specifically HOW you will do things a little better next time.

Repeat.

+1. +1. +1.

All the way to the Cy Young.

## PLANT THE TREE

"Well, Mr. Big, the best time to plant the tree of investment and intention would have been 20 years ago when you started, because it would be fully grown and able to provide fruit for others. But the second-best time to plant the tree is right now."

Feeling any regret that you didn't start showing up like you meant it years (or maybe decades) ago? Perfect. It is what it is. Accept reality. Use that pain as fuel to give us all you've got.

As John F. Kennedy once said: *"I am reminded of the story of the great French Marshal Lyautey, who once asked his gardener to plant a tree. The gardener objected that the tree was slow-growing and would not reach maturity for a hundred years. The Marshal replied, 'In that case, there is no time to lose, plant it this afternoon.'"*

Then there's Seth Godin. In [The Icarus Deception](#) he tells us: *"It's too bad that so much time has been wasted, but it would be unforgivable to wait any longer. You have the ability to contribute so much. We need you, now."*

I repeat: *"It's too bad that so much time has been wasted, but it would be unforgivable to wait any longer. You have the ability to contribute so much. We need you, now."*

It's Day 1, Hero. How will YOU get 1% better TODAY? All in. Let's go!

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
*Heroic Philosopher CEO*

## About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at [heroic.us](http://heroic.us).

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