

TOOLS OF TITANS BY TIM FERRISS | BOOK SUMMARY

Tools of Titans is a fantastic read and there really is something for everyone in this book. Broken up into three sections; healthy, wealthy and wise, author Tim Ferriss deconstructs the habits, routines and daily rituals of the world's top performers.

This summary is a little different to my normal format. As the book is so full of information, what you'll find below is a collection of highlights I made while reading on my Kindle.

HEALTHY

"Hyperthermic conditioning" (calculated heat exposure) can help you to increase growth hormone (GH) levels and substantially improve endurance. I now take 20-minute sauna sessions post-workout or post-stretching at least four times per week, typically at roughly 160 to 170°F. If nothing else, it seems to dramatically decrease DOMS (delayed-onset muscle soreness)."

"If the best in the world are stretching their asses off in order to get strong, why aren't you?"

"Flexibility" can be passive, whereas "mobility" requires that you can demonstrate strength throughout the entire range of motion, including the end ranges.

Chris elaborates: "Generally, what all of this comes down to is whether you are on offense or defense. I think that as you survey the challenges in your lives, it's just: Which of those did you assign yourself, and which of those are you doing to please someone else? Your inbox is a to-do list to which anyone in the world can add an action item. I needed to get out of my inbox and back to my own to-do list."

I like to promote mild to moderate ketosis for health and longevity, which is between 1 to 3 mmol.

If you don't have cancer and you do a therapeutic fast 1 to 3 times per year, you could purge any precancerous cells that may be living in your body.

"Before I describe the exercise, I shall repeat my usual refrain: Don't be stupid and hurt yourself, please. Use a very soft surface in case you face plant."

1. Do a set of push-ups and end a few repetitions short of failure. Record the number.
2. Rest at least 30 minutes.
3. Do 40 repetitions of the following breathing exercise: Max inhale (raise chest) and “let go” exhale (drop chest sharply). The let-go exhale can be thought of as a short “hah.” If you’re doing this correctly, after 20 to 30 reps you might feel loose, mild lightheadedness, and a little bit of tingling. The tingling is often felt in the hands first.
4. On the last breathing cycle, breathe in completely, exhale completely, then do another set of push-ups. More often than not, people will experience a sharp increase in the max number of push-ups, even though their lungs are empty.

Wim, surfing king Laird Hamilton (page 92), and Tony Robbins (page 210) all use cold exposure as a tool. It can improve immune function, increase fat loss (partially by increasing levels of the hormone adiponectin), and dramatically elevate mood.

The slow-carb diet cheat sheet:

1. Rule #1: Avoid “white” starchy carbohydrates (or those that can be white)
2. Rule #2: Eat the same few meals over and over again, especially for breakfast and lunch.
3. Rule #3: Don’t drink calories.
4. Rule #4: Don’t eat fruit.
5. Rule #5: Whenever possible, measure your progress in body fat percentage, NOT total pounds.
6. Rule #6: Take one day off per week and go nuts.

When everything else failed, Cossack squats with a kettlebell roughly doubled my ankle mobility, which had a chain of positive effects. Keep your heels on the ground throughout, keep your knees in line with your toes, and keep your hips as low as possible when switching sides. I do 5 to 6 reps per side for 2 to 3 sets, often supersetting with Eric Cressey’s “walking Spiderman” warmup.

I always say that I’ll go first. . . . That means if I’m checking out at the store, I’ll say hello first. If I’m coming across somebody and make eye contact, I’ll smile first. I wish people would experiment with that in their life a little bit: Be first, because—not all times, but most times—it comes in your favor. The response is pretty amazing. . . .

Men, if you wake up and you don’t have a boner, there’s a problem. Yes or no? One or zero? Boner, no boner?

The campfire test - If you can't squat all the way down to the ground with your feet and knees together, then you are missing full hip and ankle range of motion. This is the mechanism causing your hip impingement, plantar fasciitis, torn Achilles, pulled calf, etc. That is the fucking problem, and you should be obsessing about fixing this.

Doing light-weight overhead squats with a narrow stance, in combination with Cossack squats (page 87), for 3 months is what helped me get 99% toward passing the "campfire test" above. My left ankle is still sadly bone on bone.

5 Morning rituals that help me to win the day:

1. Make your bed.
2. Meditate.
3. Do 5-10 reps of something.
4. Prepare "Titanium Tea" (this name was a joke, but it stuck). Ingredients: Pu-erh aged black tea. Dragon well green tea (or other green tea). Turmeric and ginger shavings (often also Rishi brand)
5. Morning pages or 5-Minute Journal.

More than 80% of the world-class performers I've interviewed have some form of daily meditation or mindfulness practice.

I may be the laziest mindfulness instructor in the world because I tell my students that all they need to commit to is one mindful breath a day. Just one. Breathe in and breathe out mindfully, and your commitment for the day is fulfilled. Everything else is a bonus.

WEALTHY

"It's a belief: Life is always happening for us, not to us. It's our job to find out where the benefit is. If we do, life is magnificent."

"'Stressed' is the achiever word for 'fear.'"

The first 3 minutes: "Feeling totally grateful for three things. I make sure that one of them is very, very simple:

The last 3 minutes: “Focusing on three things that I’m going to make happen, my ‘three to thrive.’ . . . See it as though it’s already been done, feel the emotions, etc. . . .

HOPE IS NOT A STRATEGY. LUCK IS NOT A FACTOR. FEAR IS NOT AN OPTION.

“You realize that you will never be the best-looking person in the room. You’ll never be the smartest person in the room. You’ll never be the most educated, the most well-versed. You can never compete on those levels. But what you can always compete on, the true egalitarian aspect to success, is hard work. You can always work harder than the next guy.”

“This brain inside our heads is a 2 million-year-old brain. . . . It’s ancient, old survival software that is running you a good deal of time. Whenever you’re suffering, that survival software is there. The reason you’re suffering is you’re focused on yourself. People tell me, ‘I’m not suffering that way. I’m worrying about my kids. My kids are not what they need to be.’ No, the reason [these people are] upset is they feel they failed their kids. It’s still about them. . . . Suffering comes from three thought patterns: loss, less, never.”

“It turns out that when I graduated from high school, I had already used up 93% of my in-person parent time. I’m now enjoying the last 5% of that time. We’re in the tail end.” Might be time for you (and me) to rethink our personal priorities.

“Slow down. I think a lot of the mistakes of my youth were mistakes of ambition, not mistakes of sloth. So just slowing down, whether that’s meditating, whether that’s taking time for yourself away from screens, whether that’s really focusing in on who you’re talking to or who you’re with.”

“Once we get those muddy, maddening, confusing thoughts nebulous worries, jitters, and preoccupations on the page, we face our day with clearer eyes.”

“I have come to learn that part of the business strategy is to solve the simplest, easiest, and most valuable problem. And actually, in fact, part of doing strategy is to solve the easiest problem, so part of the reason why you work on software and bits is that atoms physical products are actually very difficult.”

“Never go to sleep without a request to your subconscious.” —Thomas Edison

‘In order to move fast, I expect you’ll make some foot faults. I’m okay with an error rate of 10 to 20%—times when I would have made a different decision in a given situation—if it means you can move fast.’

So if you’re planning to do something with your life, if you have a 10-year plan of how to get there, you should ask: Why can’t you do this in 6 months?

“The way that I hacked the system was setting my first hired, day-rate gig at several thousand dollars a day. I pushed myself to a point that was incredibly uncomfortable and required myself to deliver at the highest level. I charged accordingly because I had done the work, done the research, and knew what the top guys and gals were getting. I put myself in that caliber right away. . . . I set it at \$2,000 to \$2,500 a day.

“If I’ve learned anything from podcasting, it’s don’t be afraid to do something you’re not qualified to do.”

“Success” need not be complicated. Just start with making 1,000 people extremely, extremely happy.

Asking the right dumb question is often the smartest thing you can do.”

If you spend your time focusing on the things that are wrong, and that’s what you express and project to people you know, you don’t become a source of growth for people, you become a source of destruction for people.

On Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, Noah schedules nothing but “Learning.” This is a great reminder that, for anything important, you don’t find time. It’s only real if it’s on the calendar.

‘The biggest mistake you can make is to accept the norms of your time.’ Not accepting norms is where you innovate, whether it’s with technology, with books, with anything. So, not accepting the norm is the secret to really big success and changing the world.”

TF: Neil and I, and many other writers, use “TK” as a placeholder for things we need to research later (e.g., “He was TK years old at the time.”). This is common practice, as almost no English words have TK in them (except that pesky Atkins), making it easy to use Control-F when it’s time to batch-research or fact-check.

What do you believe that others think is insane? “It is essential to get lost and jam up your plans every now and then. It’s a source of creativity and perspective. The danger of maps, capable assistants, and planning is that you may end up living your life as planned. If you do, your potential cannot possibly exceed your expectations.”

Sometimes you need to stop doing things you love in order to nurture the one thing that matters most.”

Truth is, young creative minds don’t need more ideas, they need to take more responsibility with the ideas they’ve already got.”

The more we associate experience with cash value, the more we think that money is what we need to live. And the more we associate money with life, the more we convince ourselves that we’re too poor to buy our freedom.

Long-term travel isn’t about being a college student—it’s about being a student of daily life. Long-term travel isn’t an act of rebellion against society—it’s an act of common sense within society.

Are You Doing What You’re Uniquely Capable of, What You Feel Placed Here on Earth to Do? Can You Be Replaced?

How Often Are You Saying “Hell, Yeah!”?

How Much of Your Life Is Making Versus Managing? How Do You Feel About the Split?

What Blessings in Excess Have Become a Curse? Where Do You Have Too Much of a Good Thing?

For me, the goal of “investing” has always been simple: to allocate resources (e.g., money, time, energy) to improve quality of life. This is a personal definition, as yours likely will be.

Making health #1 50% of the time doesn’t work. It’s absolutely all-or-nothing. If it’s #1 50% of the time, you’ll compromise precisely when it’s most important not to.

Allow me to share a real-world example: a transcript of the journal page that convinced me to write this and kickstart an extended startup vacation:

“Hit snooze 4–5 times, so up at 10:15 instead of 8:33. The anxiety is mostly related to email and startups: new pitches, new intros, etc.

Do a 2-week test where “no” to ALL cold intros and pitches?

Why am I hesitant? For saying “no” to all:

PROS:

- *100% guaranteed anxiety reduction*
- *Feeling of freedom*
- *Less indecision, less deliberation, far more bandwidth for CREATING, for READING, for PHYSICAL TRAINING, for EXPERIMENTS*

CONS (i.e., why not?):

- *Might find the next Uber (<10% chance)*
- *Who cares? Wouldn't materialize for 7–9 years minimum. If Uber pops (IPO), it won't matter.*
- *Not get more deals. But who cares?*
- *Dinner with 5 friends fixes it.”*
- *One blog post for sourcing from readers fixes it.*
- *NONE of my best deals (Shyp, Shopify, Uber, Twitter, Facebook, Alibaba, etc.) came from cold intros from acquaintances.*
If try 2 weeks, how to ensure successful:
- *I don't even see new startup emails.*
- *No con-calls. Cite “con-call vacation” → push to email or EOD end-of-day review with assistant.*
- *Offer additional “office hours” on Fridays for existing portfolio?”*

WISE

“I usually know when I'm on to something when I'm a little bit afraid of it. I go: 'Wow, I could mess this up.' ”

We are essentially in a dream state, and it's through this veil of thought that we go about our day and perceive our environment. But we are just talking to ourselves nonstop, and until you can break that spell and begin to notice thoughts themselves as objects of consciousness, just arising and passing away, you can't even pay attention to your breath, or to anything else, with any clarity."

There is more freedom to be gained from practicing poverty than chasing wealth. Suffer a little regularly and you often cease to suffer.

"Happiness is wanting what you have."

"The most important trick to be happy is to realize that happiness is a choice that you make and a skill that you develop. You choose to be happy, and then you work at it. It's just like building muscles."

"In any situation in life, you only have three options. You always have three options. You can change it, you can accept it, or you can leave it. What is not a good option is to sit around wishing you would change it but not changing it, wishing you would leave it but not leaving it, and not accepting it. It's that struggle, that aversion, that is responsible for most of our misery. The phrase that I probably use the most to myself in my head is just one word: accept."

"Desire is a contract you make with yourself to be unhappy until you get what you want." I don't think most of us realize that's what it is. I think we go about desiring things all day long, and then wondering why we're unhappy. So, I like to stay aware of that because then I can choose my desires very carefully. I try not to have more than one big desire in my life at any given time, and I also recognize that as the axis of my suffering. I realize that that's where I've chosen to be unhappy. I think that is an important one."

Be present above all else.

Desire is suffering (Buddha).

99% of all effort is wasted.

"The key in a restaurant, and the key in any kind of high-pressure situation, I think, is that 75% of success is staying calm and not losing your nerve. The rest you figure out, but once you lose your calm, everything else starts falling apart fast."

Josh has no social media, does no interviews (except my podcast, for which he often says to me, “You fuck!”), and avoids nearly all meetings and phone calls. He minimizes input to maximize output, much like Rick Rubin. Josh says: “I cultivate empty space as a way of life for the creative process.”

Josh focuses on depth over breadth. He often uses a principle nicknamed “learning the macro from the micro.” This means focusing on something very small in a field (whether chess, martial arts, or elsewhere) to internalize extremely powerful macro principles that apply everywhere.

“Lateral thinking or thematic thinking, the ability to take a lesson from one thing and transfer it to another, is one of the most important disciplines that any of us can cultivate.

Now, whenever it’s a rainy day, Jack says, ‘Look, Dada, it’s such a beautiful rainy day,’ and we go out and we play in it. I wanted him to have this internal locus of control—to not be reliant on external conditions being just so.”

Deloading for business, in my case, consists of strategically taking my foot off of the gas. I alternate intense periods of batching similar tasks (recording podcasts, clearing the inbox, writing blog posts, handling accounting, etc.) with extended periods of—for lack of poetic description—unplugging and fucking around.

Deloading blocks must be scheduled and defended more strongly than your business commitments. The former can strengthen and inform the latter, but not vice versa.

“I want to build my life around flow states the sense of being ‘in the zone’.”

TESTING THE “IMPOSSIBLE”: 17 QUESTIONS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

1. What if I did the opposite for 48 hours?
2. What do I spend a silly amount of money on? How might I scratch my own itch?
3. What would I do/have/be if I had \$10 million? What’s my real TMI?
4. What are the worst things that could happen? Could I get back here?
5. If I could only work 2 hours per week on my business, what would I do?
6. What if I let them make decisions up to \$100? \$500? \$1,000?
7. What’s the least crowded channel?
8. What if I couldn’t pitch my product directly?
9. What if I created my own real-world MBA?
10. Do I need to make it back the way I lost it?

11. What if I could only subtract to solve problems?
12. What might I put in place to allow me to go off the grid for 4 to 8 weeks, with no phone or email?
13. Am I hunting antelope or field mice?
14. Could it be that everything is fine and complete as is?
15. What would this look like if it were easy?
16. How can I throw money at this problem? How can I “waste” money to improve the quality of my life?
17. No hurry, no pause.

I could popularize a new term and aim for pop culture (see “lifestyle design”

You can get 95% of the results you want by calmly putting one foot in front of the other.

“Slow is smooth. Smooth is fast.”

‘Is this an itch, or is it burning?’ If it is just an itch, it is not sufficient. It gets to this point of how badly you really want it. For me, I burned the boats. There was no way I was going to get a job. Failure was never an option. I had to make this work.”

If it’s truly important, schedule it. As Paul might ask you, “Is that a dream or a goal?” If it isn’t on the calendar, it isn’t real.

When something is wrong or going bad, you just look at me and say, ‘Good.’” And I said, “Well, I mean it. Because that is how I operate.” So I explained to him that when things are going bad, there’s going to be some good that will come from it.

“You must want to be a butterfly so badly, you are willing to give up being a caterpillar.”

I’m a list maker. It’s how I keep my life in order, my world organized. What most surprised me about my calmness was that there was no list involved. I’d simply tested one or two titan one-liners or tools in my head every day, and—as Cal Fussman told me—“the good shit sticks.” The things I needed at any given time kept coming to mind. The more I reread and pondered them, the more I saw the impact.