

Oh, the Places You'll Go

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TAKE THE ROAD
LESS TRAVELLED

OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO

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Take the Road Less Travelled: Oh, the Places You'll Go

Lesson 2— PDF Transcript

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Apply the “baby-step” approach to your life, so you can beat overwhelm and stop procrastination
- Bypass your fears by tricking the lizard brain
- Avoid the fatal mistake that makes you anxious and upset

Hello everyone and welcome to *Take the Road Less Travelled*. My name is Olle Lindholm and I'm really glad to have you here.

Introducing the baby-step approach

Today, we'll be talking about applying the “baby-step” approach to your life, so you can overcome your fears and move towards a happier and more fulfilling life.

I've seen the results of this approach in my own and in my students' life, and now I want the same for you. The idea behind the approach actually comes from a Japanese philosophy called **kaizen**. You've probably heard of it before in the popular saying:

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”.

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It is one of my absolute favourite quotes and I refer to it all the time, mainly because the idea behind it is so simple, and yet so powerful. It goes something like this: **make small, instrumental improvements over time, and you will see a big difference over the long haul.**

This philosophy goes against most of Western culture, where we want change to happen quickly and efficiently. Just think about New Year's resolutions. They are the exact opposite of kaizen, or this "baby-step" approach.

With a New Year's resolution, you're asking to make a drastic change overnight. All of a sudden, you are going to work out three days a week, or quit smoking and drinking.

We all know how those New Year's resolutions go... Most of them don't even last the week, not to mention the month. That's because change is hard and we fear the unknown.

Why New Year resolutions don't work (and what does)

I stopped making New Year's resolutions a few years ago.

I just felt so bad for not being able to keep them that I came across this "baby-step" approach instead.

Whenever I want to make a new change in my life, I break it down into this incredibly small, almost ridiculous step.

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For example, to get myself into a new writing habit, I decided to write “daily highlights” in my journal, and then I put a few bullet points below it.

So, each day, I simply had to fill in the bullet points, and write two or three short sentences about it. That was it. I patted myself on the shoulder, and congratulated myself for a job well done. As my dear sister likes to say:

“The best training is the training that gets done.”

This perfectly sums up the kaizen approach. It’s better to start small, than to not start at all. Let’s see why the “baby-step” approach works, and how you can apply it to your own life.

Bypass your fears by tricking the lizard brain

A lot of research has been done on how to make life changes that last.

One Small Step Can Change Your Life: The Kaizen Way is perhaps one of the most famous examples.

Dr. Maurer’s research shows, through brain scans, that taking small steps actually helps you bypass your fears, because it doesn’t wake up our lizard brain.

(You know, that old brain we inherited from our ancestors, the good-old “oh shit, I see a sable-toothed tiger, I better run!” It’s the classic fight-flight response in action.)

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So, even though it sounds ridiculous to write only one sentence in your journal or two, the practice itself carries several benefits.

Over time, this small and simple practice of writing in your journal every day helps to create new neural connections in your brain, and by making these small changes, you start becoming more used to them.

Ask small and positive questions

You can start right now by asking small and positive questions to yourself. Try asking yourself this:

If I were guaranteed not to fail, what would I be doing differently?

Or what is one small step I could take to improve my health? (Or my relationship? Or my career?) Or any other area for that matter?

Your brain loves to solve puzzles and answer questions that it finds compelling and interesting. (Just remember the kids from Dr. Dweck's research in the last lesson!)

The "baby-step" approach also has an extra side bonus. It helps you overcome overwhelm and beat procrastination.

The smaller and more focused the task, the less resistance we feel about doing it. I've put together some really useful exercises you can try in the next action worksheet, to see how this works in reality and so that you can apply it to your own life. Because the "baby-step" approach all boils down to this...

Visualise outcomes and remember to take action (no matter how small)

The Western culture often talks about instant gratification, but forgets to mention the small steps that get us there.

Change needs to happen fast, but that approach can be scary and overwhelming, so instead you're standing still, only *dreaming* about the life that you want, rather than *doing* something about it.

The "baby-step" approach helps you overcome that hurdle. Taking small steps is not as scary and overwhelming as taking giant leaps. Ironically, small steps result in big change and improvements over time.

Remember that famous saying I told you about at the start of the lesson?

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Overcoming procrastination – one baby step at a time

Here's how you can overcome your fears and procrastination and take that one baby step at a time.

I want you to think about something that you really want to do, but that you're currently not doing because the task is so big that it scares you and it wakes up the lizard brain. Think about it for a second, and let's give it the "baby-step" treatment by asking a very simple, but powerful question:

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“What is the SMALLEST possible step you can take to get started on your journey?”

Yes, the smaller and more ridiculous, the better. There is no such thing as too short of a step. Don't fall into the trap in thinking that the step is too small and insignificant.

Avoid this fatal mistake that causes you unnecessary stress and anxiety. And take comfort that you have neuroscience on your side. Besides, you also have my own experience as well as my students' results that show you otherwise.

I don't want you to get stuck in thinking that you have to make major changes to take the road less travelled. Amazing things start to happen once you apply the “baby-step” approach to your life.

Oh, the places you'll go with this approach! Simply start to put these thoughts in to practice, and imagine where you can go.

In the next lesson, we'll talk more about the road ahead and how you can plan for it.

As we both know, there will always be some hiccups on our journey towards a more happy and fulfilling life. But that's the price we pay for taking the road less travelled.

Thanks for listening. This is Olle Lindholm with *Take the Road Less Travelled*.