

100 People. 50 Lessons.
One Brave Choice: To Grow.

THE
NOTE BOOK
— OF —
WISDOM

Real Advice. Real People.
Timeless Lessons for a Courageous Life.



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Introduction

When I started this journey, I never planned to write a book. It began as a personal experiment one simple challenge to help me overcome four fears that had quietly shaped much of my life: fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of judgment, and fear of asking. For most of my life, I was a shy person. I avoided confrontation. I rarely took risks. I stayed inside familiar routines because they felt safe. Looking back, I realize I was living within invisible boundaries that I had slowly built over the years. Everything changed the day I understood something powerful. The fears we inherit or build throughout our lives are not permanent. They can be challenged. They can be changed.

That realization started my journey of personal development. I attended seminars, read books, followed training programs, and learned every technique I could find to unlock more of my potential. Yet, despite everything I learned, something was still holding me back. This year, I finally recognized what it was. It wasn't a lack of knowledge. It was fear. Fear of failing. Fear of being rejected. Fear of being judged and fear of simply asking. I decided it was time to stop studying fear and start facing it. I searched for one exercise that could challenge all four fears at the same time. After thinking about it for a while, an unusual idea came to me. What if I simply asked people for advice? Not famous people. Not experts. Just ordinary people. People I had never spoken to before.

I decided to make the challenge progressive. First, I approached colleagues at work whom I didn't know very well. Then, I moved on to people whose jobs naturally involved talking to strangers—travel information staff, police officers, waiters, shop assistants, and others. Finally came the biggest challenge of all: complete strangers on the street. Every conversation required courage. Every step pushed me outside my comfort zone. My goal was simple: ask 100 people one question: "What is the most important advice or wisdom you would like to share with the world?"

By the end of the experiment, I had asked 100 people. Fifty shared their wisdom. Fifty said no. Surprisingly, I celebrated the rejections even more than the advice. The

advice was a gift. The rejections were my training. Each rejection weakened the fears that had controlled me for years. Instead of measuring my success by how many people said yes, I measured it by how many times I had the courage to ask. That small change transformed everything. I could not control whether someone accepted or rejected my question, but I could always control whether I asked.

During the journey, I experienced every emotion imaginable: excitement, motivation, fear, resistance, embarrassment, disappointment, and joy. Some days felt effortless. Other days, I questioned whether I should continue. But I accepted every emotion because I realized they were not obstacles. They were part of the journey. At first, I believed this experiment was only about overcoming my own fears. I was wrong. It became something much bigger.

Every conversation reminded me that every person carries a story. From the outside, people may appear ordinary. They may look busy, serious, confident, or quiet. But behind every face is a lifetime of experiences, victories, mistakes, heartbreaks, dreams, and lessons that no one else has lived. Speaking with strangers expanded my understanding of people. It stretched my map of reality. It taught me to see people not for what they do, but for who they are. Each person became a reminder that wisdom doesn't belong only to authors, teachers, or successful entrepreneurs. Sometimes it lives inside a waiter, a cleaner, a student, a retiree, a tourist, a parent, or someone simply walking down the street.

Perhaps the greatest surprise was this: I thought I was asking people for help. Instead, many of them thanked me. Several people told me that no one had ever asked them such a meaningful question before. Some paused for several moments before answering. Others smiled as memories returned. Some became emotional.

For a brief moment, they stopped thinking about their daily responsibilities and reconnected with a lesson that life had taught them years earlier. I realized I wasn't only collecting wisdom. I was giving people a chance to reconnect with themselves. That may be the greatest gift this project gave me.

This book is a collection of those moments. Every piece of advice has a story behind it. Sometimes the advice may seem simple. But once you understand where it came from,

everything changes. You'll discover the pain that shaped it. The mistakes that inspired it. The victories that confirmed it. Some stories will make you smile. Some may make you laugh. Others may touch your heart. Every one of them is unique because every human life is unique.

As you read this book, I invite you to become part of the journey. Imagine yourself standing beside me. Feel the hesitation before I approach a stranger. Notice the sounds around us. Watch their first reaction. Listen carefully as their story unfolds. Allow each piece of wisdom to become more than just words on a page. Let it become a conversation. A reflection. A whisper that stays with you long after you finish the chapter. Some people shared their nationality, while others preferred not to. Whenever it was available, I included it. Not to separate people, but to reveal something beautiful. No matter where we come from, what language we speak, or what culture shaped us, many of our deepest lessons are surprisingly similar. We all struggle. We all hope. We all fail. We all love and we all have wisdom worth sharing.

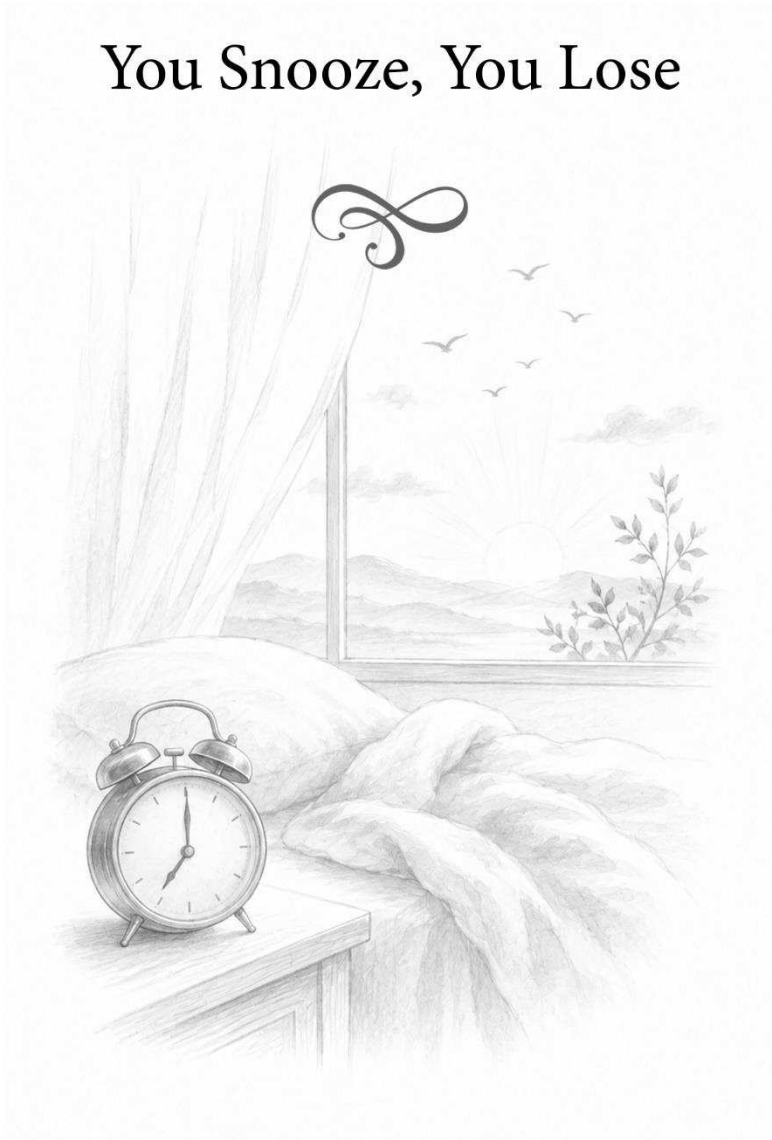
This book began as an exercise to overcome fear. It became a journey of courage. A journey of connection. A journey of listening. Most importantly, it became a reminder that extraordinary wisdom often comes from ordinary people.

So, thank you for joining me. Now, let's begin the journey together.

CHAPTER

One

You Snooze, You Lose



Chapter One

You Snooze, You Lose

**Collected in: Eindhoven Bus 408, Netherlands/Date: 24 March
2026/Nationality: Lithuanian**

Sometimes the lessons that stay with us for years are learned in a matter of seconds. A crowded bus. A split-second decision. One moment of hesitation. That was all it took. I was sitting on Bus 408 in Eindhoven with a Lithuanian colleague when I asked him the question that had already become a habit for me: "What is the most important advice you would like to share with the world?" He smiled. For a few seconds, he looked out of the window as if searching through old memories. Then he laughed softly. "I learned this one in Spain," he said. I opened my notebook. "What happened?" He leaned back and began telling me a story that had stayed with him for years.

He had traveled to Spain with a close friend. Like many travelers, they spent their days exploring the city, walking through crowded streets, and relying on public transportation to move around. One afternoon, they arrived at a bus stop. The weather was warm. The streets were busy. Tourists filled every corner. They waited patiently. After a while, the bus finally appeared in the distance. But there was a problem. It was already packed. People immediately started moving toward the doors before the bus had even stopped completely. My colleague looked at the crowd and decided to stay calm. "There will be another bus," he thought. The doors closed. The bus left. They waited. A second bus arrived.

This time, the crowd seemed even bigger. People rushed forward from every direction. Some squeezed between others. Some pushed. Some moved aggressively toward the entrance. My colleague watched the chaos unfold. Inside, he felt uncomfortable. "I don't want to be that person," he thought. He wanted to be polite. He wanted to be respectful. He wanted to wait his turn. So he stepped back.

Then something happened, his friend reacted completely differently. The moment the bus stopped, his friend moved like lightning. He pushed forward. Not out of anger. Not because he was rude. But because he immediately recognized the reality of the situation. Within seconds, he had secured a place inside. My colleague stood outside, shocked by how quickly everything had happened. Then suddenly, he heard his friend's voice. "Come!" His friend had not only secured a place for himself. He had secured a second place as well. My colleague rushed in just before the doors closed. The bus drove away, and with it came a realization he would never forget.

As he told me the story, I could still see the surprise on his face. Not because of the crowded bus. Not because of the pushing. But because of what the moment revealed. For years, he had believed that being polite was always the right answer. Most of the time, it is. But life is rarely black and white. Some situations require patience. Others require speed. Some situations reward caution. Others reward action. The wisdom he wrote in my notebook was simple: "You snooze, you lose. Situations dictate actions." I looked at the sentence. At first glance, it sounded almost humorous, like something you might hear in a casual conversation. But the more I reflected on it, the deeper it became. Because the lesson was not about buses. It was about life.

Many of us have been taught to protect our image. We want to appear kind. We want to appear thoughtful. We want to appear reasonable. But sometimes we become so attached to appearing good that we fail to do what the situation actually requires. We hesitate. We overthink. We wait. While we are waiting, opportunities move on. The job is taken. The customer signs elsewhere. The dream remains a dream. The chance disappears. Not because we were incapable. But because we delayed action.

I recognized myself in his story. One of the reasons I started approaching strangers was because of hesitation. I had spent years allowing fear to make decisions for me. Fear of rejection. Fear of judgment. Fear of embarrassment. Every time I wanted to approach someone, there was a moment where my mind tried to convince me not to. "Maybe later." "Maybe another person." "Maybe this isn't the right moment." If I listened to that voice long enough, the opportunity disappeared. The stranger walked away. The conversation never happened. The wisdom remained undiscovered.

What fascinated me most was that his friend was not necessarily a better person. He simply understood the situation faster. He adapted. That is what made the difference. Life rewards adaptation. Nature rewards adaptation. Business rewards adaptation. Relationships reward adaptation. The people who thrive are not always the strongest. They are often the people who recognize what the moment requires. Sometimes the moment requires patience. Sometimes it requires courage. Sometimes it requires kindness, and sometimes it requires immediate action. Wisdom is knowing the difference.

As our conversation ended, my colleague smiled. He told me that since that day, he had become much quicker at evaluating situations. Not impulsive. Not reckless. Just more aware. More responsive. More adaptable. The crowded bus in Spain had become one of his greatest teachers. A lesson delivered in seconds. A lesson remembered for years.

Perhaps that is how wisdom often arrives. Not through grand speeches. Not through books. Not through classrooms. But through ordinary moments that suddenly reveal an extraordinary truth. A crowded bus. A closing door. A split-second decision, and a lesson that can change the way we move through life.

Because sometimes being polite is the right choice, and sometimes life whispers something different: "You snooze, you lose. Situations dictate actions." Maybe the real wisdom is learning which moment is which.

The Courage to Walk Away

Collected in: High Tech Campus Eindhoven, Netherlands/Date: 24 March 2026/Nationality: Italian

Some of the hardest decisions in life are not about what to fight for. They are about what to stop fighting for. We grow up hearing stories about persistence: never quit, keep pushing, fight until the end. And there is great truth in that. But there is another kind of wisdom that receives far less attention—the wisdom of knowing when to let go, when a chapter has reached its final page, and when walking away is the choice that allows you to find yourself again.

I learned this lesson from an Italian man on a quiet afternoon at the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven. It was one of those days when people seemed busy but not rushed. Engineers, researchers, and professionals moved between buildings with laptops and coffee cups, each person carrying their own responsibilities and destinations. As I walked through the campus with my notebook, I noticed an Italian man standing nearby. Like many times before, I felt that familiar hesitation before approaching someone. The questions appeared immediately: "What if he says no?" "What if he thinks this is strange?" "What if I am interrupting him?" But I had learned not to let those thoughts decide for me. So I walked over and asked, "If there was one piece of wisdom you could share with the world, what would it be?"

He smiled, but instead of answering immediately, he paused. His eyes seemed to travel somewhere far away—not physically, but emotionally. It felt as if my question had opened a door to a place filled with memories and lessons. Then he said, "I have two pieces of advice." He carefully wrote the first one down: "Dreams without goals are only wishes that slowly fade into disappointment. Discipline turns vision into action when motivation disappears. Commitment gives you the courage to begin the journey, but only consistency carries you to the end." Then he wrote his second piece of advice: "Not every discussion needs to become a struggle for supremacy. Those who step back are not weak. The people who are truly happy know how to pause, reflect, and let go. What may look like a step back is often a step forward."

I looked at his words and immediately felt that they came from experience rather than theory. When I asked where these lessons came from, he took a deep breath and shared his story. The year was 2018, a year he would never forget. For many years, he had been married. Together they had built a home, created memories, raised children, and shared dreams and struggles. From the outside, everything probably looked fine. But behind closed doors, things had changed. The connection that once brought happiness slowly faded. Conversations became difficult. Problems repeated themselves. Days became months, and months became years. Yet he stayed, like many people do, because leaving is painful, because history is difficult to abandon, and because hope can make us believe that one more attempt might finally change everything.

He described it with a sentence I never forgot: "It felt like hitting the same wall over and over again, hoping to find a breakthrough." The image was powerful. A person standing in front of a wall, pushing harder and trying longer, believing that enough effort will eventually create a different result. But sometimes the wall is not there to be broken. Sometimes it is there to show us that we are moving in the wrong direction. The divorce became one of the hardest decisions of his life. There were memories in every corner, children involved, years invested, and dreams that would never happen. It hurt deeply. Yet he also knew it was necessary. Sometimes pain is not proof that we are making the wrong decision. Sometimes pain is simply the price of making the right one.

After the divorce, he had to rebuild his life. He had to rediscover who he was outside the marriage and create a new future when he thought his future had already been decided. Eventually, he met another woman, and like many new beginnings, it started with hope and possibility. But over time, he noticed familiar patterns returning: tension, emotional exhaustion, and the same feelings he had experienced before. This time, however, something had changed. He had learned to recognize the warning signs. Instead of waiting years, he made a difficult decision and ended the relationship—not because he was heartless, but because he understood something important: you cannot save yourself by abandoning yourself.

As he continued speaking, I realized his lesson was much bigger than relationships. Relationships were simply the classroom where he learned it. Many people spend years fighting battles that should have ended long ago: arguments, friendships, careers,

business partnerships, or dreams that no longer belong to them. They continue because they believe walking away means failure. But what if walking away is wisdom? What if letting go is not surrender? What if the bravest decision is not continuing, but stopping when something no longer serves you?

His second piece of advice suddenly became even clearer: "Not every discussion needs to become a struggle for supremacy." How much energy do we waste trying to win? Trying to prove ourselves right? Trying to have the final word? Often, we gain very little. The Italian man had learned that peace can be more valuable than victory. Strength is not always found in confrontation. Sometimes strength appears in restraint, in silence, and in the ability to say, "This is no longer serving me," before walking away.

His two pieces of advice were deeply connected. Dreams require discipline. Goals require consistency. But wisdom requires discernment. Not every path deserves our commitment. Not every battle deserves our energy. Not every relationship deserves another year of our lives. The challenge is knowing the difference—knowing when to persevere and knowing when to let go. As our conversation ended, I thanked him for sharing something so personal. He smiled with the quiet confidence of someone who had experienced storms and survived them.

As I walked away, one sentence remained in my mind: "What may look like a step back is often in reality a step forward." How many people stay trapped because they are afraid to take one step back? How many opportunities are waiting on the other side of a difficult ending? How many new beginnings are hidden inside the things we refuse to release? Perhaps life is not only about learning how to hold on. Perhaps life is also about learning how to let go. Because sometimes the strongest thing a person can do is not continue fighting. Sometimes the strongest thing a person can do is walk away and begin again.

The Donkey, the Father, and the Impossible Task

Collected in: Restaurant, High Tech Campus Eindhoven, Netherlands/Date: 26 March 2026/

Nationality: Senegalese

Have you ever noticed that no matter what you do, someone has an opinion about it? If you speak, someone thinks you talk too much. If you stay quiet, someone asks why you never say anything. If you take a risk, people call you reckless. If you play it safe, people call you fearful. It almost feels as if there is an invisible audience watching every decision we make. The strange thing is that the audience can never agree. One person applauds what another person criticizes. One person admires what another person condemns. The more I meet people, the more I realize that one of the greatest prisons in life is the desire to please everyone.

I was reminded of this truth during a lunch break at the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven. And it came from a story that had traveled thousands of kilometers across continents before reaching my notebook. It was lunchtime. The restaurant was alive with conversation. People carried trays filled with sandwiches, soup, coffee, and salads. The sound of cutlery, laughter, and business discussions blended together into the familiar soundtrack of a busy workday. I found myself sharing a table with two men. One was from Senegal. The other was from China. We were strangers connected only by circumstance and a few empty seats at the same table. As I had done many times before, I took out my notebook. By then, carrying it had become second nature. Inside were pages filled with wisdom from people I had met in train stations, offices, buses, and city streets. Every new conversation felt like opening a mystery box. You never knew what lesson would be waiting inside.

I looked at the two men and smiled. "I have a question for both of you," I said. "If you could share one piece of advice with the world, what would it be?" The Senegalese man immediately leaned forward. His eyes lit up. Instead of giving me advice directly, he said, "Let me tell you a story." He explained that he had first heard the story as a young boy growing up in Senegal. It was one of those stories that parents and teachers pass from

one generation to another. Simple. Memorable. And impossible to forget. The story was about a father, his son, and a donkey.

One day, the father and his son were traveling between villages to sell their goods. The son was riding the donkey while the father walked beside him. As they entered the first village, people began whispering. Some shook their heads. Others openly criticized them. "Look at that boy," one person said. "How can he sit comfortably while his old father walks? What kind of son does that?" The father heard the criticism. It bothered him. Perhaps they were right, he thought. So, when they left the village, he asked his son to get down and offered to ride the donkey himself. When they arrived at the next village, something surprising happened. The criticism returned. But this time, it came from the opposite direction. People stared at the father with disapproval. "What kind of man is this?" they said. "He rides comfortably while his young son walks. He must have a cruel heart." The father felt embarrassed. He had changed his behavior to avoid criticism. Yet criticism had found him anyway.

So, once again, he adjusted. This time, both father and son walked beside the donkey. Surely nobody could complain now. The arrangement seemed fair. The father was walking. The son was walking. The donkey was walking. Everyone was treated equally. Or so they thought. When they reached the next village, people laughed. "Look at these fools," someone said. "They have a perfectly healthy donkey, yet neither of them rides it." Others joined in. "They must be crazy." The father stood there confused. No matter what he did, somebody found fault with it. Ride the donkey? Wrong. Let the son ride? Wrong. Walk together? Still wrong. Every decision created a new critic.

The Senegalese man smiled as he finished the story. Then he gave me the lesson. The same lesson he had carried with him since childhood. "Whatever you do, people will always criticize you, and if you try to please them, you will go crazy. So choose your decisions wisely and do what makes you comfortable." I looked down at my notebook. The advice was simple. But it felt powerful because it was true. Almost everyone has experienced this. We change ourselves to gain approval, then discover that approval never lasts. One group wants us to move left. Another wants us to move right. A third group wonders why we moved at all. Trying to satisfy everyone becomes an impossible task. Like chasing the horizon. No matter how far you travel, you never reach it.

As I was reflecting on the story, something unexpected happened. The Chinese man sitting beside us suddenly smiled. Then he said something that surprised both me and the Senegalese man. "I know that story." We both turned toward him. "You do?" He nodded. "Yes. We learned it in school when I was a child in China." For a moment, I simply stared at the two men. One had grown up in Senegal. The other had grown up in China. Different continents. Different languages. Different cultures. Different childhoods. And yet somehow they had both learned the exact same lesson. The same father. The same son. The same donkey. The same wisdom. The story had crossed borders, oceans, and generations. And now both men were sitting at the same table in Eindhoven. I found that beautiful. Because it reminded me that human beings often have far more in common than we realize. We may eat different food. Speak different languages. Pray differently. Dress differently. But many of life's deepest lessons belong to all of us. Wisdom has no passport.

As I left the restaurant later that day, I kept thinking about the father in the story. I realized that many of my fears before approaching strangers came from the same place. Fear of judgment. Fear of criticism. Fear of looking foolish. What if people laughed? What if they thought I was strange? What if they rejected me? Yet the father's story revealed something important. People will always have opinions. Some will admire what you do. Others will question it. Some will support you. Others will criticize you. The criticism itself is unavoidable. The real choice is whether we allow it to control our lives.

The older I become, the more I understand that confidence is not getting everyone to agree with you. That will never happen. Confidence is accepting that disagreement will exist and moving forward anyway. The artist will be criticized. The entrepreneur will be criticized. The athlete will be criticized. The parent will be criticized. The student will be criticized. Even the person who tries to avoid criticism will be criticized. The father in the story learned this while walking beside a donkey. Many of us spend years learning the same lesson.

As I closed my notebook that afternoon, I realized the Senegalese man's advice was not really about criticism. It was about freedom. The freedom that comes when you stop trying to earn approval from everyone. The freedom that comes when your decisions are guided by your values instead of other people's opinions. The freedom to live your own

life. Because eventually, no matter what path you choose, somebody will think you chose wrong. And that is perfectly fine. The father, the son, and the donkey discovered a truth that remains just as relevant today as it was generations ago: "Whatever you do, people will always criticize you. If you try to please them all, you will go crazy. So choose your decisions wisely and do what makes you comfortable." Perhaps the happiest people are not the ones who receive the least criticism. Perhaps they are the ones who no longer allow criticism to decide who they become.