

THE BIG IDEAS

The 10 Reasons

Why your life might suck.

Radio station "KNOW"

Tune in!

Gold Fish & Bonzi Trees

And you.

Your Thought Bouncer

Put him to work.

Turn on the Light

And the darkness disappears.

Two Lawyers in Your Head

Pay one more.

The Secret of Genius

Is focus.

Follow Your Spirit

And let results be by-products.

Getting Approval

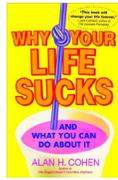
Start with yourself.

Nourish Your Spirit

It's super important.

Success

There's only one true measure.



Why Your Life Sucks

And What You Can Do About It

BY ALAN COHEN · BANTAM BOOKS © 2007 · 224 PAGES

"When it comes to your life sucking, you can't just walk away from it. You can't just put your life aside and go on to something else that feels better. When your life sucks, that's serious. It's a big wake-up call. It's an invitation to do something different. Not more of the same. If coins keep falling out of a hole in your pocket, the answer is not to go out and get a second job. The answer is to plug the hole. This book will help you find and patch any leaks in your system. It is honest and practical, with teeth. ... If your life is getting in your face, you might want to know why, so you can do something about it before it gets worse. As you face and plug each hole, you will transform every challenge into a gift. Together we can turn tragedy into triumph and make it all a win."

~ Alan Cohen from *Why Your Life Sucks*

First things first: Alan Cohen is hilarious. I have no idea why it took me so long to discover his work but I'm glad I did.

(Side note on that: I was introduced to Cohen's work when I was watching a sneak peek of an upcoming documentary called *Finding Joe*—all about Joseph Campbell and his Ideas about our hero's journey and how they apply to our 21st century lives. He and I are both in the movie and his segments are *awesome*!)

In addition to being ridiculously, laugh-out-loud and read-it-to-my-Wife funny, Cohen is also brilliant and wise. He's a remarkable story teller and this little book is packed with Big Ideas on a) Why your life may suck; and, b) What you can do about it.

I literally Kindle-highlighted nearly the whole thing so let's jump in and explore some of my favorite Ideas on how to unsuck our lives, shall we.? :)

THE 10 REASONS YOUR LIFE MIGHT SUCK

1. "You give your power away.
2. You expect it to suck.
3. You get fooled by appearances.
4. You waste energy on things that suck.
5. You keep trying to prove yourself.
6. You say yes when you mean no.
7. You think you have to do it all yourself.
8. You try to fix other people.
9. You starve your soul.
10. You forgot to enjoy the ride."

"The only thing harder than waking up is staying asleep in a nightmare. Let's do it. It's time."

~ Alan Cohen

Those are the 10 reasons your life might suck. :)

The book has a chapter for each of those 10 reasons where Cohen establishes why your life would suck if you engaged in one of those activities and how you can change it!

DIAL IN TO “KNOW”

“You will not connect with your muse by following the herd; most of them are rambling over a cliff.”

~ Alan Cohen

“Imagine a radio station that we’ll call KNOW broadcasting sound advice from somewhere deep inside you 24 hours a day. Then imagine you have a tuner capable of receiving its signal. If you set your tuner to the right frequency, you hear the broadcast and pick up vital information. If your dial is set elsewhere, you miss the message.”

Time to tune in to KNOW, yo! :)

So, Cohen profiles ten reasons why our lives might suck and the #1 reason is because we don’t trust ourselves.

We talk about this all the time. Ralph Waldo Emerson comes to mind here (see Notes). He wrote an entire essay on the importance of trusting ourselves (check out *Self-Reliance!*) and says this about it: “*Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.*”

So... TRUST YOURSELF!!

GOLD FISH, BONZI TREES & YOU

“As Lily Tomlin noted, “The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you’re still a rat.”

~ Alan Cohen

“We have all been hypnotized into thinking that we are smaller than we are. Just as an undersized flowerpot keeps a mighty tree root-bound or a little fishbowl keeps goldfish tiny, we have adapted, adjusted, and accommodated to a Lilliputian life. But place the same tree in an open field or the fish in a lake, and they will grow to hundreds of times their size. Unlike the tree or goldfish, you are not dependent on someone else to move you. You have the power to move yourself. You can step into a broader domain and grow to your full potential.”

Did you know that goldfish are kept tiny because of their little bowl?! And that if we let them swim in a natural size lake they’d grow to 100+ times that little size?!

THAT’S WACKY!

And same with bonzi trees, eh? Restrict the roots by putting it in a tiny pot and you’ll get a tiny tree. Put that same tree in a forest and let its roots stretch out and voila! We’ve got a ginormous tree.

SAME THING WITH OUR LIVES.

If we buy into the hypnosis of our limited potential, we’ll be stunted little beings. If, however, we can plant ourselves in the spaciousness of our vast potential, watch out!! :)

YOUR THOUGHT BOUNCER

“As soon as you become aware that something is not working, immediately shift your focus to the desired result.”

~ Alan Cohen

“Your real enemies are the self-defeating thoughts, paltry expectations, and beliefs that you must live at less than full throttle. You will experience as much pain as you are willing to accept. You do have control over how much you hurt. Pain happens; suffering is optional. You can choose thoughts that bring you relief rather than imprisonment. To find your freedom, stand at the doorway of your mind and monitor your thoughts. Notice which ones lift you and which ones drag you down. Then, like a bouncer at an exclusive party, admit only those on the invitation list and send the others back where they came from. Fate is not a net cast over you by capricious fortune; it is a garden you cultivate by the thoughts you attend to. Shift your attention and you will shift your life.”

LOVE that image of a bouncer at the doorway of your mind!

How AWESOME is *that?* :)

We talk about this All. The. Time.

For good reason: It's the key to your happiness.

So, get your big bad bouncer self rockin' that velvet thought rope, will ya?! Challenge your negative thoughts. Don't let them crash your party!

TURNING ON THE LIGHT

"Your life is not what the stars, numbers, genetics, environment, politics, or economic conditions make it; it is what you make it. External variables influence, but internal variables determine."

~ Alan Cohen

"To be a master, act like one. Assuming greatness is not phony; unworthiness is the imposter. You may have played small for a long time and fallen prey to the hallucination, "I can't." But behind every "can't" is a "won't." When you reach the chalk circle others have drawn around you, keep walking. The moment you look a monster in the eye and demand, "Show me what you really are," the beast will shapeshift into an ally. Emerson proclaimed, "Do the thing you fear, and the death of fear is certain." When dark and light are placed in the same room, light always wins. And because your nature is light, you will triumph over every limit you have learned."

Ahhhh... So much goodness here.

First, some Walter Russell goodness from *The Man Who Tapped the Secrets of the Universe* (see Notes): *"I believe that every man has consummate genius within him. Some appear to have it more than others only because they are aware of it more than others are, and the awareness or unawareness of it is what makes each one of them into masters or holds them down to mediocrity. I believe that mediocrity is self-inflicted and that genius is self-bestowed."*

Mediocrity is self-inflicted and genius is self-bestowed. That's strong. :)

And on to the "acting as if" mojo. As I've mentioned before, I used to have an allergy to it but Wayne Dyer won me over in his great book *Real Magic* (see Notes). Imagine the greatest version of yourself—as a creator, husband/wife or boyfriend/girlfriend, parent, colleague, whatever.

How would that most enlightened version of yourself act on a day-to-day basis?

Sweet. ACT LIKE THAT NOW. :)

And when you're ever wondering what the right thing to do would be, check in on your ideal self and ask him/her. Then act as if you were that version of yourself now!!

The image of the battle between dark and light (with light always winning) reminds me of this Vernon Howard mojo from *The Power of Your Supermind* (see Notes): *"It is a mistake for anyone to think he has lived too long in his old, unsatisfactory ways to make the great change. If you switch on the light in a dark room, it makes no difference how long it was dark because the light will still shine. Be teachable. That is the whole secret."*

So, here's to facing our fears head on, flipping on the light switch and acting like the masters we are.

TWO LAWYERS IN YOUR HEAD

"Your true strength resides in holding your power in the midst of those who have abdicated theirs."

~ Alan Cohen

"Imagine two lawyers in a courtroom inside your head. One is arguing for your possibilities and you achieving your goals. The other is arguing for your limits and why you don't deserve what you want. Who will win? The lawyer whom you pay the most. The way you pay these lawyers, however, is not with money; it is with your attention."

This is an awesome tweak to the popular two wolves story Cohen talks about in the book and that we shared in our Note on Marci Schimoff's *Happy for No Reason*: *"One evening a Cherokee elder told his grandson about the battle that goes on inside of people. He said, 'My son, the battle is between the two 'wolves' that live inside us all. One is Unhappiness. It is fear, worry,*

"Your life is not a problem to be solved, but an adventure to be enjoyed. You are doing better than you think."

~ Alan Cohen

anger, jealousy, sorrow, self-pity, resentment, and inferiority. The other is Happiness. It is joy, love, hope, serenity, kindness, generosity, truth, and compassion.'

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, 'Which wolf wins?' The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

So, what are you focusing on?

Pay attention!

THE SECRET OF GENIUS IS FOCUS

"The secret of genius is focus. If you can laser your attention on any subject or project, it will reveal its blueprint to you. George Washington Carver discovered 325 uses for the peanut and 100 for the sweet potato! Great geniuses are powerful focusers. Many have been called eccentric or insane because they put aside worldly concerns for the sake of their music, art, architecture, drama, inventing, or writing. But they are the individuals who change the world, while those with scattered attention wade through mediocre lives. Geniuses don't fritter their precious minds on mass trends. They create the trends that alter the masses."

Focus. Focus. Focus.

As Cohen tells us, it's the secret of genius.

We know scientifically that the more energy we put into a given domain, the more our brains will become wired toward mastery in that area. The process is called "myelination" and we talk about it in the Note on *The Talent Code*.

It really isn't that complicated. If we want to truly master something, we've gotta be willing to quit fragmenting our energy and FOCUS.

As Seneca tells us (see Notes on *Letters from a Stoic*), "To be everywhere is to be nowhere."

While the 20th century renaissance man/genius Walter Russell tells us: "The thinking of creative and successful men is never exerted in any direction other than that intended. That is why great men produce such a prodigious amount of work, seemingly without effort and without fatigue. The amount of work such men leave to posterity is amazing."

So, what's worthy of YOUR focus?

(Personally: I'm committed to using every day as another opportunity to become wiser and more in integrity with my values as I study, embody and share all this wisdom! I'm a few full-time years in and I'm excited to see how it all unfolds in the years and decades ahead! :)

BY-PRODUCTS OF FOLLOWING YOUR SPIRIT

"Money, fame, a hard body, and first prizes are not healthy goals to pursue for their own sake. If you do, you doom yourself before you begin. You are building your house on sand, and when the first rain comes, you had better own a Speedo. Instead, allow these rewards to show up as by-products of following your spirit. Build your business or body because you enjoy doing it. Sing for your love of the song. Compete for the sake of honing your skills. What you do may look the same as the actions of those clamoring for approval, but the reason you do it and the way you feel as you proceed will be radically different. You will proceed from wholeness rather than inadequacy, and that will make all the difference."

Love it.

We've been talking about this whole "external rewards as by-products of living an authentically awesome life" dealio quite a bit in Volume II. It's a HUGE idea.

"If you settle for less than what you really want, you will get exactly that. If you expect your life to suck, it will."

~ Alan Cohen

THE ONLY TRUE MEASURE OF SUCCESS

"The only thing you can't afford to postpone is joy."

~ Alan Cohen

"At the end of an introductory surfing class I took, the teacher left us with a brilliant motto to remember: "The best surfer is the one having the most fun." The same rule applies to the art of surfing through life. You have been taught that the most successful person is the one with the most money, sex appeal, prestige, power, skill, strength, or speed. But the most successful person is the one having the most fun. The only true measure of success is happiness."

"The only true measure of success is happiness."

Amen to that.

Reminds me of Tal Ben-Shahar's description of "the ultimate currency" in his fantastic book *Happier* (see Notes): "A human being, like a business, makes profits and suffers losses. For a human being, however, the ultimate currency is not money, nor is it any external measure, such as fame, fortune, or power. The ultimate currency for a human being is happiness."

Think about it.

Our ultimate currency is happiness. The only reason we do what we do is because we think it will make us happier. Unfortunately, a lot of the things we *think* will make us happier simply won't. They may provide fleeting moments of pleasure, but there's a big difference between the buzz of drinking a beer or watching a football game and the consistent, underlying enthusiasm and joy we feel when we trust ourselves and align our lives with the fundamentals of Optimal Living.

So, here's to having fun unsucking our lives and rockin' this precious hero's journey of ours!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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you'll probably like...

Happier
Happy for No Reason
Constructive Living
The Talent Code
Mindset

About the Author of "Why Your Life Sucks"

ALAN COHEN



Alan H. Cohen is the author of 18 popular inspirational titles, including *The Dragon Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and *Dare to be Yourself*. A frequent guest on television and radio, he conducts life mastery seminars in Hawaii and online, and is an acclaimed keynote speaker for educational, health, church, and corporate groups. He lives on Maui, Hawaii. Visit www.alancohen.com to learn more. (from Amazon)

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson is a lover of wisdom (aka a "Philosopher") and a passionate student of life who's committed to inspiring and empowering millions of people to live their greatest lives as he studies, embodies and shares the universal truths of optimal living. He harts his job.