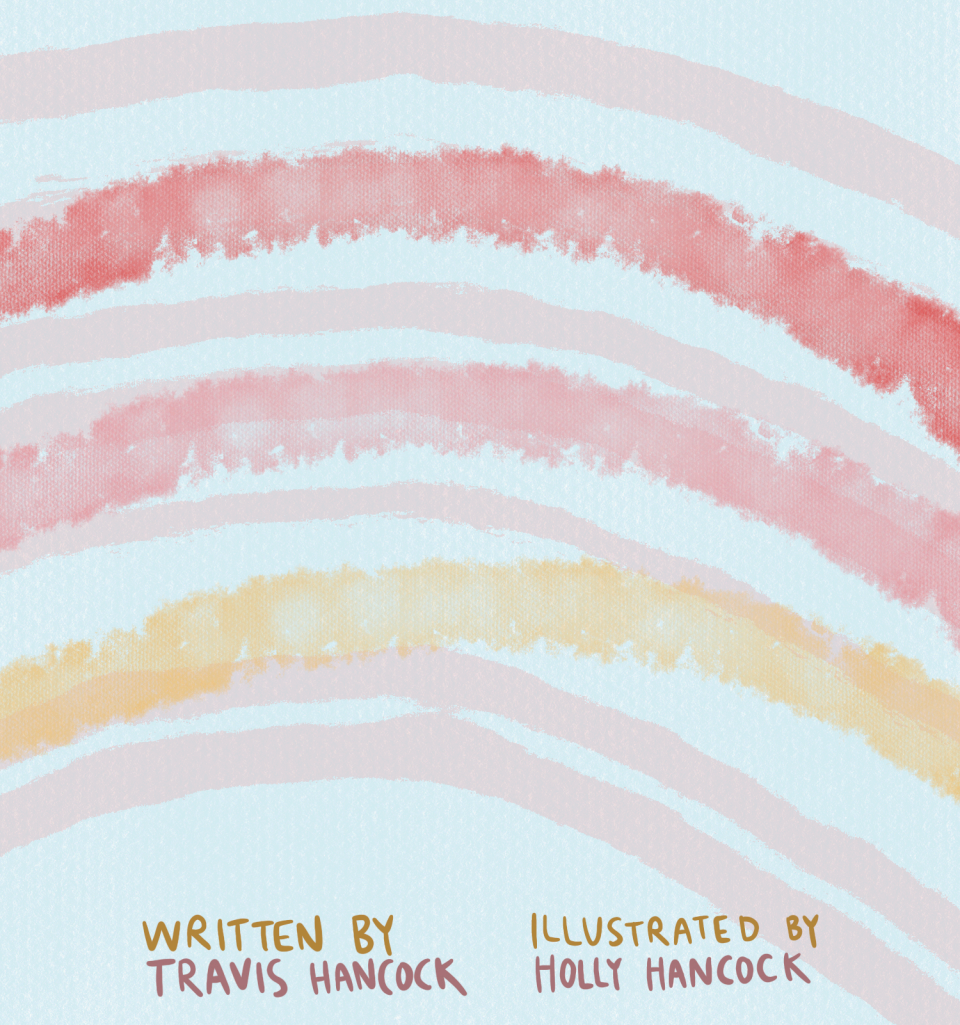




Dear Margo

TEN THINGS I WANT YOU TO KNOW



WRITTEN BY
TRAVIS HANCOCK

ILLUSTRATED BY
HOLLY HANCOCK

for our
girls

-T&H

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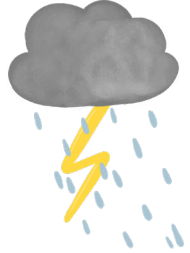


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Dear Margo,

Three years ago we met. You cried for a bit, snuggled up to mom for a while, and then I got to hold you. And since then we've been friends. But even though we're friends, I'm also your dad. And one thing that dads are best at is giving "dadvice."

I hope more than anything that you and I get to hang out for a long time, but that's something that life doesn't guarantee. Therefore, the premise of this book is as follows: if all of a sudden I couldn't be with you, what words would I want to leave behind to help you live a great life?

So here they are: the top ten takeaways from my first few decades of life. And I want you to know that I'm not perfect at living by my own advice, so sometimes you may need to refer me to my own chapters.

Not all of this will make sense now, but I hope that you'll keep this book on your shelf, and when you're having a hard time something in it will help your day go better. Here goes, kid!

*love,
Dad*

P.S. For everyone who is not Margo...Margo has always been a very good sharer and I'm sure she won't mind letting you read her book. And if you happen to be Margo's sister Jane (or any other sibling who may not exist yet)...this is for you too, and I promise you'll get your own book soon.



Dear Margo,

own it

Own it.

When I was a teenager I was cast in the lead role in my high school's musical. In the show I was expected to sing *especially* high notes and dance shirtless in front of my entire school. Don't get me wrong, I was excited for the opportunity, but there were definitely some "its" that I was nervous about. One rehearsal, my director caught me doing things halfway, trying to hide some of the embarrassment that naturally comes from performing. She took me aside and explained that it's much more embarrassing to be seen doing something at 50% than it is to be doing something at 100%.

I thought about it and realized that she was completely right! Whenever I'd seen someone on a stage embarrassed by their own performance, it would make me squirm in my seat just hoping that the act would end so that the performer would be spared. I'd get the same feeling watching athletes jog at a track meet, watching classmates skip easy assignments, or watching friends make lazy moral decisions. Each time someone wasn't owning their situation, it was pretty painful to watch.

So I decided to own that musical. I signed up for a weightlifting class and was proud of



my body on the stage. I practiced hitting those high notes and sang without shame. I committed to the dance moves and to my lines and to my character. I owned that role and it turned into one of the best experiences of my life.

So own it.

The “its” that you will have to own will be big and small.

“It” will be as little as a Halloween costume or a zit. Wear them with pride and people will sense your confidence and want to be just like you, warts and all!

“It” will be the hobbies, obsessions, quirks and personality traits that make you Margo. Say to the world, “look, I know that ‘it’ is a little strange or weird or embarrassing or unique, but you know what, it’s me 100% so you can deal with it.” You’ll feel awesome for being the real you, and people will gravitate towards that.

“It” will be part of your daily life in the form of a job or a major or a career path. Whatever you decide to do, commit to doing it well! That’s the only way you can make it a successful experience. Just look around at anyone you deem as a successful person. I guarantee that they are 100% committed to their chosen path. The people just going through the motions will stay firmly planted in the middle.

“It” will also go deeper at times. There will be beliefs you hold that won’t be popular. There will be identities that you align with that you may be



pressured to hide. But as I've learned from basically every psychological study out there, hiding who you really are leads to all *kinds* of issues. It will build up anger and resentment inside of you, and leave you in a place of disharmony. I'm guilty of hiding some of my deeper "its," but I'm learning to commit to them, and as I do I can feel myself become lighter and happier and more in line with the true me.

Whatever the case, "it" is part of you however big or small, and pretending "it" isn't there is not a good look. Own it.

love,
Dad

Dear Margo,

make it happen

Would you like to own an ant farm?

Ask the internet where to get one. Ask me how you can earn twenty bucks plus shipping. Place an order. You now own an ant farm.



Do you want to get pretty good at foosball? Play against me 200 times. Keep a tally each time you play. If you stop at 13 times, then you'll discover that you didn't actually want to get great at foosball after all.

Do you want to be a great athlete? Put in a thousand hours of practice on teams, in the backyard, and at the gym. Want to be an athlete for your day job? Do that ten times. A great musician? Scholar? Inventor? Writer? Coder? Same deal.

Do you want to go to the zoo with all your friends? Call the zoo and get all the information about prices and times. Create an info sheet and print one for each of your friends to take home. Call their parents and find a chaperone. Ask me how you can earn twenty bucks. And then go. For most groups of friends, a trip to the zoo won't happen because nobody will step forward to make it happen. But just ask yourself, "if not me, then who? If not now, then when?" Decide if that trip to the zoo is something you *actually* want to happen, and then make it happen.

Do you want to go to Europe when you're older? Get a job, don't spend money on garbage, and make a little Europe fund (it costs less than you think). Go to the post office and ask how to get a passport (it's easy). Buy your flights and reserve your hotels online, and go. You just did what 90% of your friends say they want to do, but won't end up ever doing.

I'm convinced that in life people always get what they want. The things that people say they want but don't end up getting are usually things that they didn't *actually* want that badly. There is always something more you can do to make your goals a reality, but for most people excuses (usually to the tune of "I'm too busy,") are much easier than action.

Always carry a pen and paper. The next time you tell someone you'd like to do something together, pull out your paper and write it down right there in front of them. As they see you commit to it then it will immediately become real for them as well. Then don't



cross it off your paper til it's done or safely stored in an active to do list. Then make it happen. You'll be surprised how many people are shocked that you actually did what you said you'd do. Words are often

meaningless. Action is real, and action will fill your life with accomplishments and experiences.

There are many people who have wanted to write a book just like this one, but they didn't make it happen, and that book will never exist. If you want something to exist, **you** are the one that must make it exist!

There will be many times in your life when you come to me and ask me to do something, or own something, or go somewhere. And you know what my answer to you will always be?

Make it happen.

*love,
Dad*



Dear Margo,

"Say no to garbage"

Say no to garbage.

Now I know that you're thinking, "Well duh, Dad!" and you're partly justified in doing so. Garbage is often pretty easy to spot: drugs, crazy parties, bad friends, breaking laws, bags of potato chips, twinkies, touching hot stoves. Easy peasy.

But garbage also tends to make itself look pretty appealing most of the time. And each form will seek to rob you of your most valuable resource: your time.

Sometimes garbage will disguise itself as something shiny on the outside, but empty on the inside. Hours of TV (or whatever it is your generation watches), hours of mindless phone games, hours of sleeping in til noon, and hours of aimlessly wandering the internet will, in the end, leave you hours closer to death with not much to show for it. Sorry to be morbid, but it's the truth :)



Sometimes garbage comes in the form of a bad attitude. Being grumpy or sad or bitter or whiny is ok. It's ok to express that you're feeling those things and it's important to communicate that to those around you. But dwelling on those things and

becoming a victim of your own anger or gloominess or discontent isn't going to change someone else or solve your problems. It's just going to rob you of days that could have been spent building up your life and the lives around you.

Most people go around acting like they get a second chance at things: at high school, at college, at relationships, at travel opportunities, at everything. But they don't. You don't. If people actually faced the fact that they get one shot, then they wouldn't spend so much time diving into bins of time-robbing garbage.

But that doesn't have to be you. Say no to garbage, and your life will be long and full, no matter how long it is.

*love,
Dad*



Dear Margo,

clarify expectations

Think about the last time you got upset, mad, or bothered by something. With 97.4% accuracy I can tell you the basic cause of that controversy: your expectations were violated.

In our minds we expect things to be a certain way. We expect that a Capri Sun will be in every packed lunch, we expect to make it onto the soccer team, we expect that that car next to us is going to stay in its own lane, we expect to not get rained on when we go to King's Island, and we expect that our kids won't crawl up and randomly bite our fingers while we're sitting on the couch minding our own business. We inadvertently lay out all these expectations for ourselves and our world, and then without fail they are broken. And with each failed expectation there is anger, sadness, and controversy.

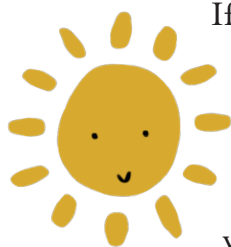


Therefore, I'd invite you to do two things:

Expect the world to not be perfect.

If you expect that you won't get a Capri Sun in your lunch every day, you'll be happy each time it shows up, and you'll be just fine when it doesn't.

If you expect the car next to you to cut you off when it speeds up, you'll be fine when it does and pleasantly surprised when it doesn't. When it does cut you off, just pretend like the driver first opened his window and said, "Hey buddy, in about 4 seconds I'm going to drive in front of you and cut you off." And then when he does, it will be a nice experience.



If you expect that the weather won't be perfect when you go on vacation, imagine how much of a bonus it will feel like each day that it's nice and sunny. And if it does end up raining the whole time you can be grateful for the shorter lines.

It is impossible to change the actions of every person in the world that you meet. It is easy to adjust your expectations to a healthy level. I'm not telling you to be pessimistic about the world; quite the contrary. I'm just telling you that if you view the world and the people in it for the way that they actually are, and not for the way you think they should be, you'll spend a lot less time being sad and angry at them.

Clarify expectations for others.

Expectations are a two way street. By expecting violations you're going to help yourself be content with the world. Part two is helping others be content with you.

When you're going to be late, tell the person waiting for you. Then when you arrive ten minutes late, their expectation will be met. If you don't tell

them, then for ten minutes they'll be waiting on you with their expectations violated and frustration building up against you.

When you're in a relationship, talk with each other about how often you're going to meet up or call. Then follow through on it. If you've agreed to call them twice a week and you call them twice a week, your relationship will last a long time. If you've agreed to call them four times a week and you only call twice a week, somebody's expectations are going to get violated, somebody's going to feel hurt, and somebody's going to be shown the door.

Tell your new roommate exactly what they should expect about your messy habits. I had a roommate at college who told us he would do the dishes when his turn came around, but he didn't, and everyone was upset. If he had told us right away that, "Hey guys, I have trouble doing the dishes and I probably won't do them," then we all would have laughed, accepted it, and probably talked him into buying all the toilet paper each month instead to make up for it. But instead, we expected him to do dishes, he didn't, and controversy ensued.

Clarifying expectations is a huge key to success in business. I have customers in many forms, and for each one I try to tell them as much as possible. I make sure that *unexpected* costs don't show up when they're checking out. I make sure that *unexpected*



delays in shipping are communicated to them as soon as possible. I make sure to tell them when to expect emails or updates about products. This attitude of creating and then meeting customers' expectations will turn your customers into lifelong fans.

I really can't stress enough how much of a game changer this chapter can be for you. If you follow it through it will put you in the driver's seat for 97.4% of pretty much anything unpleasant! Expect that the world won't be perfect and clarify expectations for others and you'll have a great life.

Here's one final example. I am going to end this chapter in exactly 6 words.

See, wasn't that a pleasant experience?

*love,
Dad*



Dear Margo,

be good to people

Be good to people.

There are a million reasons why you should. Perhaps you'll feel morally compelled to do it. Perhaps you'll really like the warm and fuzzy feeling it gives you. Or perhaps you'll realize that what goes around comes around, and that your life will be a lot easier if you help others.

But whatever your reason, be good to people. Here are a few ways to put that into action.

Always say thank you. For everything. Sometimes it will be easy to remember, such as when you receive a gift or a compliment. But you should also remember to say it for the everyday things, like the dinner that mom or dad takes time to make for you or the daily ride to school from your neighbor or even a graded essay from your teacher. Being in a constant state of gratitude will keep you humble and kind and happy. Don't let anything that someone does for you slip by without saying thank you. The easiest way to earn the respect of others is by simply saying thank you as often as you can. (You can start by thanking your grandma and grandpa for hammering this principle into my grumpy ten-year old self).

Give people genuine compliments. People can tell when you're being fake, and giving a fake compliment is often worse than saying nothing at all. Giving genuine compliments is easier than you might think. It usually just takes a few extra seconds of observation. Look at someone and then think about what it is about them that you're genuinely responding to or impressed with. Perhaps you'll notice that they possess an attribute that you're aspiring to have, or that they're working toward an admirable goal, or that they included a neat little detail in a project or a dish or a hairstyle. Then tell them what you noticed. They will love that you took those few extra seconds to find something that you genuinely liked, and then had the bravery to tell them. If you say thank you all the time, *and* give genuine compliments, you won't have an enemy in the world.

Give yourself a do-good budget. Being good to people doesn't have to cost money, but sometimes it's easier with a little bit of a budget. It doesn't matter how much, but having something to spend on others will make it easier for you to buy lunch for a friend,



give a coin to the Salvation Army ringers, give someone an extra dollar for gas, or send money to a deserving charity. As a kid, your budget might be a dime every month. And sometimes as an adult, it might just be a few dollars a month. But having something will open up your

mind to some extra ways of being kind.

The biggest tip I can leave you with though, is this: just do what your mom does. She'll drop all her plans if somebody needs help, and she'll make everyone feel right at home whatever the setting. She is very good to people, so follow her lead and you'll be just fine.

*love,
Dad*

Dear Margo,

don't grow up

Don't ever grow up.

Do get a job (or create one), *do* move out of my house (one day), *do* learn to do all that silly adult stuff (taxes, bills, mortgages, etc). But don't grow up.

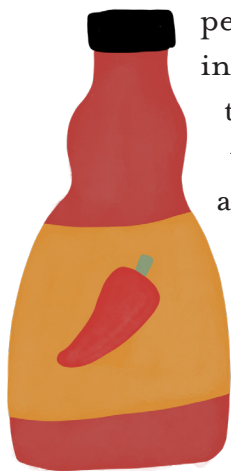
Don't grow out of your hobbies.

For whatever reason, our society delivers hobbies to young people on silver platters. There are tumbling classes and scouts and sports teams and school clubs and choirs and plays and service groups for kids and teenagers almost anywhere you turn. But then you graduate from college, and it becomes a lot harder to do what you love and to find places to do it. Adults get “busy” and tired and stuck in routines and it becomes easier to just let their hobbies die. But it doesn't have to be that way! Pursue your hobbies. Doing so will be one of the greatest services you can provide for your own family. They will see your joy and passion first hand, and your enthusiasm for life will rub off on them.

Don't grow out of your personality (because life is all about the sauce)

Let's have a taco talk. At their core, tacos are pretty similar to each other. They've got a shell and meat and cheese and tomatoes. Find 100 taco stands, and most

of them will have those key ingredients in common. But what keeps us going back to that one taco stand over and over again? The sauce. It's the pico de gallo or the chipotle aioli or the authentic verde salsa or the house guacamole or the one-of-a-kind habanero



pepper sauce that can turn any old taco into the taco. Even though the sauce tends to be the final little detail on top and barely makes up any of the actual taco, in the end it's the sauce that makes it memorable.

People are a lot like tacos. At our core, we're pretty similar to each other. Our brains are similarly wired, and we're all pursuing the same hierarchy of needs. But each person has their own "sauce." Your "sauce" will be what you wear, phrases you say, habits you form, places you've been, favorites that you have, etc. At your funeral, people will talk about the 1% of you that is different from others, not the 99% of you that is the same. Don't ever feel childish for treasuring and keeping that 1%. Also, always ask for extra sauce on the side at restaurants. You'll never regret it.

Don't grow out of your natural yearning to play.

Study after study shows how important it is to play, even long after you've grown up. Play develops creativity and friendships, and it gives you the chance to be part of a world with its own set of rules and triumphs for a bit. Play lays the foundation for an innovative

mind. The escape it provides is so important, and most of your greatest memories will be from play. So don't stop! Make time to play. Go on vacations, build Jenga towers, stick fifty cents in the quarter machines at the grocery store, play "the game" (which you just lost), collect all the state quarters, keep a hacky sack handy in your back pocket, obey the jinx rules, paint a mural on your bedroom wall, and go to as many game nights as you can. The time you spend playing is in no way a waste. Everyone has a natural yearning to play, but not everyone will give in. Don't suppress the yearning!

Don't grow into a jerk.

Adults are good at a lot of things. And for the most part they do a good job running society. But many of them also assume that they are the best at everything, and that turns them into jerks. When you become an adult, stay humble and recognize that people of all ages have built-in advantages that should be



respected and imitated. Babies and toddlers have a curiosity that cannot be matched, children have an unbeatable ability to see the world as a place full of wonder and magic, teenagers can love and dream easily and passionately, young adults are able to fearlessly explore the world and take big risks, and the elderly are wise and know how to savor the good things of life. You will be an adult for a long time, but don't ever be so prideful to think that you are better than those of another age. Instead, learn to be like them and become a student to the curiosity of toddlers, the wonder of children, the passion of teens, and fearlessness of young adults, and the wisdom of the elderly.

One day you may get to watch your own daughter grow up at an alarming rate and you'll do anything you can to get her to stop changing. And you'll probably tell her what I'm telling you now.

Don't ever grow up.

*love,
Dad*

Dear Margo,

people can't
read your mind

People can't read your mind. It's impossible. Mind-reading? Not a real thing.

But you, like most of us humans, will invariably think that the people around you are the exception to that rule.

There will be a time when someone, perhaps your roommate or your sibling or your spouse, will put a dirty cup on the counter and you'll probably think to yourself, "Come on now, they know that goes in the dishwasher." Or in other words, "Can't they read my mind and see that I want them to put that in the dishwasher?"

There will be a time when someone says a comment to you that hurts. Maybe it'll be about your shirt or your smile or something else. But unless that someone is a real jerk, they probably didn't mean for it to hurt so much. But unfortunately, they weren't able to read your mind before they said it.

One time your great-grandma Lynnette was at a friend's house and saw the most delicious chocolate cake with thick chocolate frosting on the counter. She wanted a bite more than anything in the world. But when her friend's mom came over and asked if she wanted a piece, little Lynnette replied with, "I don't care." Her friend's mom, not being a mind

reader, said, “You don’t care, I don’t care,” and took the cake away.

Your mom once learned this lesson herself. Early in our marriage I would often leave kitchen cabinet doors left open, and it drove your mom nuts! She would essentially say to herself, “Doesn’t he know that I want those cabinet doors shut! How rude of him!” But I had no idea. One day she told me how she felt about cabinet doors being closed. Our marriage has been much happier ever since.

Now I know what you’re thinking. “How do I live in a world with people who aren’t able to read my mind?!”

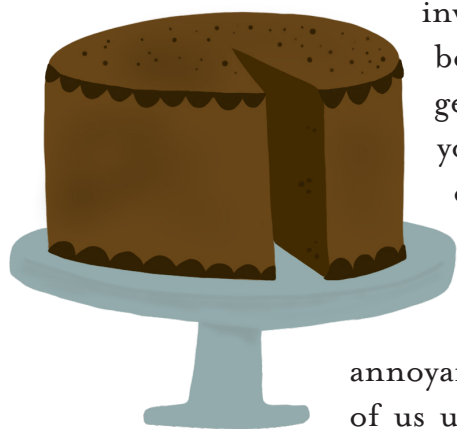
Well I have good news for you, Margo. Communication can fix it all. If there’s a dirty cup on the counter, or a piece of cake that looks tasty, or a comment said to you that hurts, just speak up. Tell people what is on your mind, and more often than not they’ll be happy to set things right.

If something is bothering you, talk to the person

involved. If something is bothering someone else, get them to open up to you so that you can get on the same page. Us

humans have a silly tendency of letting little tempers and

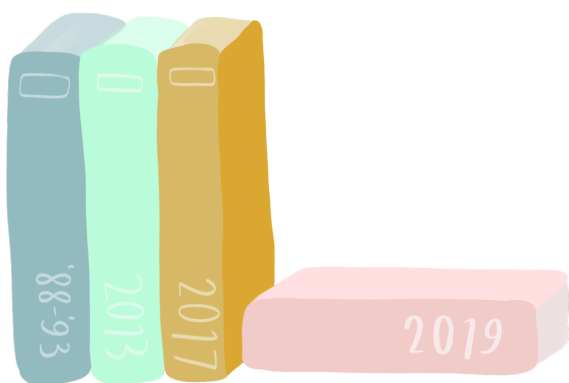
annoyances bubble up inside of us until they explode. But



the sooner you internalize the idea that mind-readers only exist in movies and circus tents, the healthier your relationships will be.

love,
Dad

P.S. Another group of people that won't be able to read your mind are your kids, grandkids, great grandkids, and the history books. They'll make guesses about what you were like and what you accomplished, or what your ten chapters of advice would be, but they won't know for sure unless you tell them. My mom always says, "If you don't write it down, it didn't happen." So write down your life in some way - with journals or pictures or scrapbooks or the way that comes easiest for you. Otherwise someone else will tell your story wrong, or it may not get told at all.



Dear Margo,

stop caring
and you'll succeed

Stop caring and you'll succeed.

Now I know what you're thinking - that sounds like pretty awful advice coming from your dad. But allow me first to explain what I *don't* mean by that.

I *don't* mean stop trying and succeed.

I *don't* mean stop being passionate and succeed.

I *don't* mean have a crummy attitude and succeed.

And I *don't* mean stop working hard and succeed.

What I *do* mean, is stop letting life dictate what you care about.

Everything that you care about will have power, influence, and leverage over you. In some cases, that's okay. You should care about people and family and being a good person and noble causes. But you shouldn't care about trivial or unfair situations, distractions, or expectations. As soon as you stop giving those things a care, you'll become more powerful than them and you will be in control of your life.

Stop caring about following the instructions.

In high school and early into college, everyone and their dog will ask you some form of the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" And

you, like I did, will probably turn to life's instruction book and answer something to the effect of "I'm going to go to college and become a doctor." And that's a fine plan, but make sure it's the plan that you actually want to follow. The minute I stopped caring about the instructions and made my own plan is the minute I started loving what I do and feeling aligned with my true self.

Stop caring so much about your Plan A.

The best way to achieve your plan A is to have a plan B that is equally as amazing. If people are handing out ice cream sandwiches and ice cream cones, you

just have to realize that both options are pretty delicious, and ultimately it's

not a big deal which one you get.

Then, even if your "plan A" ice cream sandwiches all get snatched up, you can still be thrilled that your "plan B" is a delicious ice cream cone. And if somehow you miss out on both of them, "plan

C" will leave you with a happier

stomach anyways. I'm not saying you

should "settle" with something worse than your first option, but soon you'll realize that most Plan B's and C's are actually just extra Plan A's in disguise.

I hope I don't get in trouble for saying this, but your mom was a plan B (just read on, honey). When I was a senior in college, my plan A was to date a lot and hopefully get married before I left school.

But during my last semester just before I met your mom, I developed a new plan A to study abroad in France and then after graduation move to New York or Chicago. Dating became plan B. And then your mom entered the picture. I truly believe that because I wasn't so focused and worried about trying to achieve my one plan, I was able to relax and be myself and just let things happen naturally while we got to know each other. And then somehow we got married, moved to Chicago together, and have traveled to Europe almost every summer since.

Stop caring about making a million bucks.

Soon after we got married, your mom and I started making a board game called "Salem" as a side project. I remember in the early days of development the major driving question in my mind was, "How can I make money from this game?" But that led to headaches and roadblocks and frustrations. I distinctly remember a day when I said to myself, "You know what, who cares if this makes money? I love this game and I enjoy making it. I just want it to turn out really cool for my friends and family to play, even if it doesn't make a dime." And then (with some luck) it took off. I think my passion was re-focused correctly and really let the game soar. And then people bought it. And now your mom and I make board games for a living.



Stop caring so much about what other people think.

Most of the stress in your life will be caused by worrying about what others think of you. You'll care about what they think of your clothes or your hair or your decisions or your social media posts or your whatever. But here's a little secret: those people are too worried about what you are thinking about *them* to actually care about those little things you're stressing about. Most people will spend their lives torturing themselves over judgments from others that don't actually exist.

Never stop caring about the people in your life, but stop caring about the things you can't or shouldn't control.

It is the people in your lives, especially the people living under the same roof, that will help fill your life with meaning and happiness. But they'll have habits or mannerisms that you can't control. They'll smack their lips or sleep through their alarms or steal your hairbrush or make questionable choices. And that's ok. Those are things you can't control, so stop caring about them. Focus on caring about the person and loving them for who they are.

There is always a way to "stop caring" and gain leverage over any situation. Develop a budget that lets you not care so much about the little day-to-day purchases that are stressing you out. Babyproof your house so that you can stop caring about letting *your* Margo roam free. Bring a great book on a road trip

so that you can stop caring about how long it's taking to reach your destination. I challenge you to think of any tough situation you're in and then brainstorm a solution around it using this chapter. There's really always a way for you to stay in control of your life. Stop caring and you'll succeed!

*love,
Dad*



Dear Margo,

you miss all the
shots you don't take

You miss all the shots you don't take.

I owe this quote to The Great One, also known as Wayne Gretzky. He played hockey, and 4,195 times he shot the puck at the goal and he missed. But he also scored 894 times, more than anyone ever has (or perhaps ever will). He would have never reached that record if he only tried to shoot when the opportunity was 100% perfect. Nope, he shot 5,089 times, never afraid to miss, and in the process he became the greatest hockey player of all time.

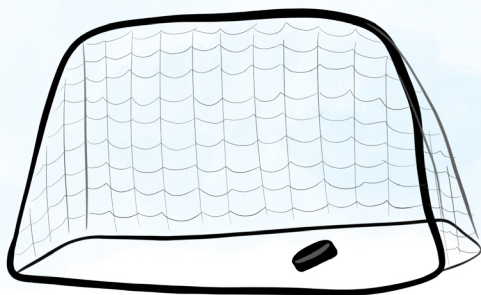
You see Margo, a shot not taken is just the same as a shot missed. So why not take the shot? Your mom doesn't like to talk about it, but I dated a lot of girls growing up. And every time before I asked a girl out I said Gretzky's little quote to myself. And you know what, sometimes a girl said no. But most of the time, she said yes. And one time I knocked on your mom's door and took a shot even though I was nervous. And even though she swears that she tried to shoot me down, I kept taking shots. And eventually your mom said yes. So basically, you owe your very existence to this chapter.

Taking every shot will lead to some failures. Your mom and I have had some tough rainy travel days in Europe, but you know what? We were in Europe! I've

started and failed with several business ideas. But you know what? One of them stuck and now I get to work from home doing something I love because of where those failures led me.

To be honest, failing gets a bad rap. Every failure will come to an end, and you'll be able to look back on every one and either laugh about it or learn from it. And what's so bad about laughing and learning? Failing does not mean you're defective. It means that you're brave, adventurous, and downright smart for taking a shot.

But be careful. People will tell you that you're smart or that you're pretty or that you're clever or "gifted" and that you can't possibly fail. Don't listen to them. Focus less on what you *are* and more about what you are *doing* to improve and to move forward and to take your shot. The people who let others define themselves with adjectives are the ones who won't risk their good reputation on a shot. If Wayne Gretzky got hung up on people calling him "The Great One" then he would not have kept shooting for the fear of missing and failing to live up to what people called him. If he got hung up on people telling him he couldn't miss, then he might have been too scared to keep shooting.



My parents told me that there is always room at the top. Why not go to the Olympics? Why not be a best-selling author? Why not be a world explorer or a surgeon or a philanthropist? Take your shot. Someone has to be the best, so why not you? And if you aim high but miss the top 1%, you'll still end up in the top 5%. I firmly believe that if you want something bad enough and take a real shot at it, you are guaranteed top 5%. And I think there's room in the top 5% for you to make a life out of whatever you choose.

You miss all the shots you don't take. So take some shots and more will go in than you think.

*Love,
Dad*

Dear Margo,

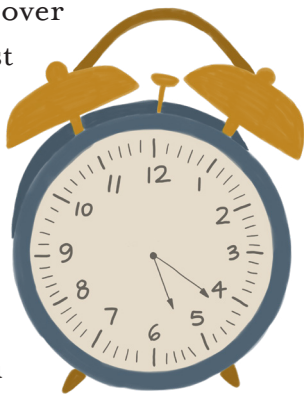
*your friends will be
the ones who show up*

Your friends will be the ones who show up.

You will have two types of people in your life. The first type will be people who you “click” with. It will be easy to talk with them, you’ll have a lot in common, and you’ll probably like doing things together. But either you or they won’t show up. You’ll talk about hanging out, and maybe you will once or twice, but your friendship will remain something that could have been.

The second type will be people who won’t necessarily seem like the best “fit” with you on paper. Your first impression of them may not be anything special. But you or they will show up. They’ll make an effort to sit next to you in class or you’ll invite them over for a study group or sleepover. They’ll show up to help you with “un-fun” tasks or you’ll text them to see how they’re doing. And over time they’ll become your greatest friends simply because you or they made the effort and had the courage to show up.

Time is the most valuable thing we have. I’ve found that it’s best to think of time just like you’d think about money. If you



spent \$1000 on a really great camera, you'd probably treat it a lot better than a shirt you bought for ten bucks. When somebody spends time with you, and you with them, the value of that relationship will naturally increase. And we naturally take care of things that are valuable.

“Showing up” also applies to your enemies. Your life probably won't have “enemies” in the literal sense, but it will have people who you don't understand or who don't understand you. And as history has shown over and over again, it is misunderstanding that is usually at the core of fear and hate. Understanding will beat all of that, and developing understanding takes time (showing up). Ask your “enemies” about their culture or family or past experiences. Show up to their church or extracurriculars or lunch breaks. I guarantee that 90% of the time you'll become friends with those people, or at least you'll grow to respect and defend them.

Showing up applies to your family as well. Living under the same roof isn't the same thing as showing



up. While you're living with your siblings and parents, and especially once you're not living with them, you still need to make an effort in order to develop real friendships and relationships. Play together, talk together, laugh together, cry together. Show up for each other and your family relationships will be some of the most treasured things in your whole life. Families that stop showing up for each other will drift apart without even realizing it, even if they all really like each other and have personalities that naturally "click."

Your best friends in life won't be determined by fate or chemistry. Fate and chemistry will often provide the initial spark, but your lifelong friends will be determined by your decision, or their decision, to keep showing up.

*love,
Dad*

Dear Anyone Who Isn't Margo,

Thank you for taking time to read this book. I hope that a chapter or phrase or idea will spark a positive change in your life. I am in no way an expert at life; I just took the time to write down the biggest takeaways from my first 32 years. I hope that there are many more lessons to be learned ahead of me!

One of the cool things about the human experience is that every human has a different one! Each person grows up with a different time and place and environment and culture and family and “tribe,” so each person’s ten lessons are different.

Life is unpredictable. So tell your Margo your ten lessons, or those lessons may never be shared. You can use the the final page of this book to jot something down and get started. Or, perhaps you’ll record your lessons another way: through art or music or film or something else.

Thanks again for reading. Remember that life is good!

-Travis

Dear _____,

1-

2-

3-

4-

5-

6-

7-

8-

9-

10-

Love,



ABOUT THE AUTHOR + ILLUSTRATOR

Travis + Holly met in college and now live in Columbus, Ohio with their adorable daughters, Margo + Jane. Together, they enjoy traveling, playing pickleball, building Jenga towers, and baking and eating chocolate chip cookies. They founded a board game company called Facade Games, and have enjoyed publishing games since 2015. You can learn more about their company at www.FacadeGames.com or read Travis' blog at www.TravHancock.com.