

Lessons at 30

I turned 30 in June. The number feels pretty meaningless, especially with everything else going on in the world, but it offered a moment to stop and reflect on some lessons that have proven useful to me over the years. This list is incomplete, and the order is quite random, but to a large extent these are the guiding principles that inform my life. These are by no means advice, but I do hope some of them spark something in you too.

1. Everything in this world is better in moderation, except one: humility. – Moses Maimonides
2. Engagement, passion, caring, enthusiasm, and curiosity serve as magnets for good luck and good people
3. Anything achieved through brute force never lasts – you must change the structure of the system if you want to have any sort of long-term impact ([Robert Fritz](#))
4. Seek long-term games with long-term people ([Naval Ravikant](#))
5. Win/Win is the only infinitely sustainable mindset
6. Trust is the most powerful yet fragile tool in your repertoire
7. The true wealth in life lies in relationships. The quality of any network lies in its links
8. Simple but not simplistic – “When I’m working on a problem, I never think about beauty. I think only how to solve the problem. But when I have finished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it is wrong.” – Buckminster Fuller
9. Abundance > Scarcity – in every aspect and facet of life, give more to get more. Timing, magnitude, place, and certainty are all unknown, but this mindset is worth it even if you never get anything in return (which you inevitably will)
10. There is no bigger waste of time than doing something efficiently that shouldn’t be done at all. But, if you do choose to do something, do your best and go all out
11. Trust that everything you learn and do will someday be helpful – this fuels infinite and effortless curiosity and motivation
12. Positioning > Prediction – understand what the feasible fluctuations are and make sure that you can first survive them and then thrive in them
13. There’s a reason George Marshall named his horse “Preparation” – “Sometimes magic is just someone spending more time on something than anyone else might reasonably expect.” – Raymond Joseph Teller
14. Assume ignorance, not malice – give people the benefit of the doubt. Envy, hatred, jealousy, anger are simply acids that eat away at the container they’re kept in

15. Karin's Cup – my mom always told me to first fill my own cup (to have enough self-love, self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-confidence) before I could “fill” others'. Those whose cups are empty are black holes who can never be satisfied – be sure not to be this person yourself and beware of those in your life who are. “Perhaps the most counter-intuitive truth of the universe is that the more you give to others, the more you'll get. Understanding this is the beginning of wisdom.” – Kevin Kelly
16. Impatience with actions...
17. ...but patience with results ([Naval Ravikant](#))
18. Fight for what you believe in and stand up for what you think is right
19. Finding contrast in anything you do is the master key – “Don't be the best. Be the only.” – Kevin Kelly
20. Unobstructed authenticity in everything you do – this helps attract those who love you for exactly who you are and helps you focus on the things that really matter to you ([Josh Waitzkin](#))
21. Systems > Goals – Habits, routines, defaults, and incentives are superpowers (or supervillains). Systems help structure your life for long-term benefit whereas goals can be gamed and tend towards shorter-term mindsets
22. Process > Outcomes – you can't judge a decision based on the outcome alone. Was it luck? Was your process repeatable?
23. Seek leverage in all that you do – code, media, software, technology, distribution, wisdom, judgment, capital, health, teaching others
24. To be interesting, be interested. ([John Gardner](#))
25. Giving your all with no fear of failing is a valuable skill that few have. Decouple who you are from what you do
26. Love the problem, not the solution – if you're only focused on and care about the solution, when tough times come, your motivation and dedication will falter
27. You'll be surprised how often you find something when you know exactly what you're looking for ([The Infinite Game](#))
28. I've found that the 7 life dimensions – health, family, friends, work, community service, spiritual development, personal development – is a great framework in which to think about the important pillars in my life, finding balance that is appropriate given your priorities
29. Be very aware of who/what brings or detracts energy
30. Quality > Quantity – whether in things, thoughts, relationships, etc.
31. Long, uninterrupted periods of time are key to make progress in challenging pursuits

32. Good things take time
33. The Master/Apprentice model is impossible to beat. Aim to find someone you can build this type of relationship with, both up and down
34. [Richard Hamming's Trifecta](#) – what are the most important problems in your field? Are you working on them? If not, why not?
35. El Flojo Trabaja el Doble – a key lesson I learned from my dad and an interesting life paradox. Oftentimes, simply doing the hard work upfront is actually less work than trying to find ways around it
36. Effortless mastery in all that you seek – another paradox where trying to force a skill or habit tends to backfire. Find ways to enjoy every step, making it effortless and sustainable ([Kenny Werner](#))
37. What would the ideal version of yourself do? You'd be surprised how often the answer immediately surfaces if you simply ask
38. Sharing knowledge compounds it and teaching helps you learn it even better
39. Writing clearly = thinking clearly ([Paul Graham](#))
40. You never know what someone is battling – let this thought lead you by the hand towards patience and empathy
41. Scott Adams' Talent Stack – blending and combining unusual talents, traits, passions, hobbies, and elements leads to leaping-emergent effects that are powerful and hard to predict
42. The language behind complexity science is some of the deepest and most powerful I've found to describe and think about the world around us ([On Complexity](#))
43. Systems thinking bears fruit regardless of field, industry, or context ([Donella Meadows](#))
44. The power of synthesis to help distill, crystallize, and inform ideas ([Charlie Munger](#), [Will Durant](#))
45. If you bring forth a problem, also propose a solution
46. Intelligence is about seeing more options and wisdom lies in understanding the effects of those options
47. Nobody knows anything