

The nomad's mindset

7 core beliefs that drive our
unconventional lifestyle

While society's norms and expectations work for many, they leave too many of us feeling lost and unsatisfied. But it can be hard to break free when everyone around you is subscribing to the same mentality. If you've been working hard to check all of life's boxes—college degree, marriage, mortgage, kids, promotions, etc.—only to find yourself feeling hollow and worn down, we're here to remind you that you can opt out.

At the surface, it may appear as though we live on the road full-time simply because we love to travel and have new experiences. Those things are true, but the root of our motivation runs far deeper. Living nomadically has been the platform in which we've been able to prioritize what's most important to us.

The following seven core beliefs are the heart of our unconventional lifestyle. Collectively, they are the north star that keeps us on a path of fulfillment. May they open your mind to new ideas. May they help you feel like less of an outcast if conforming isn't working for you. May they inspire you on the way to creating a right-fit life, no matter what that looks like.



Warmly,
Michele & Mark

ONE:

Conformity is optional

*The only certainty for us
all is death. Everything
else between now and
then is a blank canvas for
you to create.*



When I was a kid, I dreamt of becoming a professional photographer. My grandpa was a passionate hobbyist, and something about the craft resonated with me from a very young age. Unfortunately, by the time I graduated from high school, the excitement of pursuing my passion had been overtaken by the responsibility I felt to pursue a more stable, lucrative career. At twenty years old, after two years toiling over what career path I wanted to go down, I became a realtor. My mom was a realtor, and so it was the most obvious choice. A well-trodden path is so much easier to pursue than blazing your own trail. At least, it felt that way until I got my first paycheck.

The real estate market was flourishing in my hometown at the time, and the money came easily. The world around me had led me to believe that how much money I made was the most important factor in a successful career. However, if that was true, my first paycheck should have overjoyed me. Instead, I felt like a hollow shell of myself. The sole reason I pursued a career in real estate was for the money. Nothing about it aligned with my personality or interests.

In one short year as a realtor, I learned an important life lesson: I'd rather be happy and broke than rich and miserable.

While my life in Arizona was on the brink of veering off the path of conformity, Mark was on a similar trajectory in the Midwest. He was enrolled at Iowa State University, following the path taken before him by his family. He anticipated a career in computer networking, like his dad. However, during Mark's first year in college, his dad was laid off from the corporation he had devoted twenty years of his life to. Just five years shy of retirement, he had the rug ripped out from underneath him. This struck a nerve with Mark. He began to question why he wanted to dedicate his life to that path when it could so unexpectedly be taken away.

My soul-sucking experience as a realtor and Mark's dad's layoff were the catalysts that caused us to reconsider pursuing our passions. This is why, in 2002, we each enrolled at The Art Institute of Colorado to obtain our photography degrees. We met the first day of school and quickly became friends. We had a lot in common, but little did we know at the time, we were both primed and ready to shed society's expectations so that we could each begin crafting a life that felt true to who we were. Being on a path that no one had taken before either of us was both confusing and liberating. There's a lot more to learn, a lot more

decisions to be made, and a lot more soul-searching to do when carving your own path. At the same time, there's a bone-deep feeling that you're doing what you were meant to do. It's easier to believe in yourself and your choices when your gut tells you that you're on the right track.

Mark and I went on to become roommates. Our friendship evolved into a romantic relationship, and immediately after graduating, we started a photography business together. We both had a lot of determination when it came to making a living as photographers, even though few people with photography degrees go on to make a livable wage with their craft. It took us years of hard work, but eventually, our business gained traction and could support us.

Although we had chosen an uncommon career path, the expectation to conform still nipped at our heels in a variety of ways. We worked tirelessly to become homeowners, people wondered when we would have kids, and we assumed that if our business wasn't growing every year, we were failing in some way. None of these things sat well with us. We didn't feel satisfied when we bought a house. We knew we didn't want to have kids, even though every adult around us insisted we would either change our minds or regret our decision. And every time we experimented with scaling our business, our hearts weren't in it.

The older we got, the more value we saw in ownership over our time above all else. We didn't want to live to work; we wanted to work to live. We began to see the differences between what society valued and what we valued. We craved free time and new experiences over money and things. That desire led to the purchase of our truck camper, because it was a tool that facilitated longer trips without the expense of hotels and airfare.

Extended trips in our truck camper opened our eyes to alternative ways of living. We were never excited to go home, and we realized that we didn't need a house. Pursuing our own unique value set led us to a far richer and more fulfilling life. That's when we learned that conformity is optional. We'd awakened to the fact that there are a multitude of ways to move through life.

Just because a certain path worked for your parents or is working for your peers, doesn't mean it's going to work for you. At first, this can be confusing and frustrating. You might feel like you're failing or question where you went wrong. That's hardly the case. Resistance to the path you're on is often a sign that you're not meant to be on that path. That's when it's time to get really critical with yourself and your motivations. What's driving you? What's important to you? Who are you trying to please or impress?

Just because everyone else is doing it, doesn't mean you have to. When our family or society is pushing us in a direction, it's okay to stop and ask why. Ask others why. But most importantly, ask yourself why. Why should I do this? Why should I buy this? Will it enrich my life, or am I trying to please others? Is this what I want, or what others are leading me to believe I think I want? No matter how good the intentions are of those telling you what to do, they are not you. You're the only one that has to live with your decisions. And if you don't want to do what everyone else is doing, own that, embrace your individuality, and don't feel bad.

Pursuing a path of non-conformity isn't easy. Many people will question and doubt you along the way. And doubting yourself is part of the deal when blazing your own trail. Things like acceptance, belonging, and stability are harder to cultivate in a non-conforming lifestyle. However, the reward for pursuing a life that feels true to you is a feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment that no amount of money can buy.

Life is an experiment. There are a million different ways to go about it. No one really knows what they're doing; we're all figuring it out as we go. Stop doing what you think you're supposed to be doing or should be doing and follow your heart. The only certainty for us all is death. Everything else between now and then is a blank canvas for you to create.



T W O :

The less you own, the less that owns you

*Less stuff gives you what
consumerism can't: more
time, more freedom, and
less stress.*



In our twenties and early thirties, Mark and I were on what author Paul Millerd calls “the default path”: work hard, earn more, buy more. All for the societal promise of happiness and acceptance among our family and peers. The problem that slowly became more and more palpable was that the default path didn’t feel right. But we weren’t entirely sure why, or what the right path for us was.

During that period of existential confusion, I came across the phrase, “the less you own, the less that owns you.” The words immediately resonated, even though we were on the path to acquiring more. Those nine words pointed to a different way of thinking, a different way of living, that we’d never seen demonstrated by anyone around us.

My growing curiosity around unconventional living led me to Leo Babauta’s blog, ZenHabits.net. I devoured his ideas like a bear preparing to hibernate. In short order, I came upon an essay where he deemed possessions as being “worse than worthless.” I took a screenshot of the following paragraph, and it has resided on my computer for the last fifteen years:

“Possessions are worse than worthless—they’re harmful. They add no value to your life, and cost you everything. Not just the money required to buy them, but the time and money spent shopping for them, maintaining them, worrying about them, insuring them, fixing them, etc.”

This sentiment directly opposed everything that my upbringing and capitalism had taught me to be true about how to be successful and happy. But Leo’s words resonated. He was right. I was thirty years old and had spent the last few years relentlessly pursuing the goal of purchasing our first home. We achieved that goal, and now I felt weighed down by it. We had checked the next box that illustrated to the world we were “doing well for ourselves.” We were sold the promise of fulfillment from this massive purchase (and subsequent acquisition of debt), only to feel bogged down by the furnishings that needed to be purchased, repairs that needed to be made, and updates that apparently—like our friends and family—we should enjoy spending our free time on.

Not feeling satisfied or fulfilled by acquiring more begged the question, “what do I want then?” I wanted more free time, I wanted new experiences, and I didn’t want my life to be entirely devoted to work. Eight years of grinding day and night to grow our photography business

was already taking a toll on my health and happiness. There had to be a better way. Owning less felt like it may be the path that could lead us to a more satisfying life.

For the sake of keeping it real, I think it's important to point out that Mark and I are not minimalists like Leo Babauta. To say that every single possession is worse than worthless is an extreme statement. However, it took that extreme statement to look at my life and possessions with a critical eye; to question the usefulness and necessity of the things we were expected to have—like a house, for example. We didn't set out to sell all of our possessions. Instead, we began looking at our possessions as tools. What was serving us and the life we wanted? What was bogging us down and costing us more time and money than we wanted to spend?

Shortly into our thirties, we bought our truck camper, and it became the tool that led us to having the new experiences we craved. Longer and longer trips in the camper showed us how little we actually needed to live and thrive; driving the point home that homeownership wasn't for us. As we began purging and downsizing our life, a weight began to lift. We had no clue how much mental real estate was being occupied by all the stuff we owned (worrying about paying for it, stressing about finding the time to maintain it, all the things Leo said) until they were gone.

We trade our time (our most precious commodity) for money. We trade our money for stuff. The stuff piles up and requires our time to tend to it. This cycle begs the question: how much of our lives' finite energy is being devoted to managing our possessions?

If you look around at your possessions and are genuinely happy with all that they provide, that's awesome. But if you feel bogged down, overwhelmed, or unsatisfied in your life, call into question the usefulness of your possessions. Set aside the status they may offer and decide if the things you own are worth the time you're exchanging them for. Get curious about what life would be like without the things that may be weighing you down.

The economy thrives on selling you on the idea that you need more to be happy. But less stuff gives you what consumerism can't: more time, more freedom, and less stress. True happiness and contentment are derived from leading a life that feels true to you. For us, owning less is what steered us away from the path of conformity and onto our own unique and satisfying life trajectory.



THREE:

Good health is the foundation for a good life

Our physical and mental health dictates how we show up for our partners, our jobs, and our community. This is why we prioritize feeling good above all else.



I have always been fascinated by endurance athletes, like the people out running hundreds of miles in a single race, for example. I read the memoirs written by these folks and watch their accomplishments on YouTube, and I am always left in awe of what the human body is capable of. Essentially, these people prove that when we nurture our minds and bodies, we become practically limitless in our abilities.

On the flip side, it's incredible what our bodies can withstand in terms of abuse. Overeating, alcohol, drugs, little to no exercise, and chronic sitting—the body can largely survive these things (to a point, of course). But there's a silent cost that is sometimes hard to connect to what we're consuming. This abuse can lead to endless consequences, including anxiety, depression, obesity, diabetes, chronic illness, chronic pain, and heart disease. The list goes on.

Then there's our mental diets, or lack thereof. If food directly impacts our physical health, I believe it's also true that the media and information fed to our brains every day directly impacts our mental health. Mental health diseases are on the rise at the same time that we've begun consuming more media and information than ever before. Twenty-four-hour news cycles, social media feeds, movies, tv, video games, message boards, texts, and emails...the rise of digital content has far exceeded our brains' ability to keep up with it all.

In that sea of information are endless books, videos, courses, podcasts, and more that claim to have the answers for the best diet, the cure for anxiety, aging hacks, and on and on. But every *body* is different, and what works for you may not work for me. The inclination to seek answers in all this information is natural, but what Mark and I have learned over the years is that looking within is the only way to get honest feedback about what's working and what's not.

When we perform little experiments, like taking a month off of social media for example, we're able to see firsthand how something affects us. From there, we can decide if it's worth consuming or not. When I discovered that gluten was the culprit for my chronic headaches and heavy brain fog, it was much easier to give up.

We have more control over how we feel than we realize. How we feel, physically and mentally, directly impacts our quality of life. This fact is why we prioritize feeling good. Our quality of physical and mental health is directly related to how we show up for our partners, our jobs, and our community.

If we were to put contaminated fuel into our truck, it's not going to run well, if at all. The same is true for what we feed our minds and bodies. Toxic food and information lead us to function poorly overall. Nurturing our minds and bodies has the opposite effect. Prioritizing our health can help us tap into happiness, clarity, contentment, and capabilities that we may not have known resided within us.

Caring for ourselves is a potent way to improve our quality of life. It can be overwhelming at first, but all it takes is starting with the smallest step. Try going for a walk instead of reading the news, or eating fruit for dessert instead of sugary treats. When you do these things, pay attention to how you feel. There's a snowball effect that will develop over time. When you catch yourself slipping back into old patterns, stop and ask yourself: "Am I consuming this thing because I feel bad, or do I feel bad because I'm consuming this thing?"

We only get so much time on this earth, and our bodies are aging and inching closer to that ending every day. By treating our health as the foundation of a good life, we not only increase the likelihood of living longer, but we also increase the enjoyment we're able to extract from each and every day.

If breaking bad habits and creating good habits feels like a daunting task, James Clear's Atomic Habits is the seminal book on habits and is a fantastic place to start.



FOUR:

Time is our greatest asset

*Money comes and goes.
Time, on the other hand, is
something we can never
get back.*



It's in my nature to prioritize work. I grew up in an environment where money and status were valued above all else. To earn these things required work—hard work. And, as we all know, in American culture working hard in itself is celebrated, as though that's the most respectable way to spend one's time.

I can hardly blame my parents for following this path; it's a well-trodden one that has been promoted for generations. As a young adult, I bought into this path until my work ethic began to backfire on me.

In our twenties, Mark and I spent the majority of our days at our computers, determined to make our photography business a success (at the time, my definition of success was solely determined by the size of my bank account). What we didn't realize was how much we were sacrificing in order to make that happen. We didn't take care of ourselves, we didn't spend much time with friends and family, we just worked... a lot.

One day while out walking our dogs, Mark said, "I want to work to live, not live to work." I felt that sentiment deeply. Not long after that, I came across a Dalai Lama quote that shook me to my core. What American culture was selling us wasn't working, and these words shed light on why that was true.

The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered:

"Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices his money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die and then dies having never really lived."

That was us. We were buying into the belief that if we worked hard enough now, we would have the money to enjoy life later. But later isn't guaranteed. And, the pursuit of money was costing us our ability to enjoy the present.

A few years later, after purchasing our truck camper, we were able to begin maximizing the free time that we had during our business's slow season. It was 2012, pre-vanlife, pre-digital nomads, and so the people we met during our winter travels to the desert were primarily retirees. We'd just turned 30 and we stood out, often receiving praise from the

people we came across: “Good for you guys, travel now, while you’re young and able.” We lost track of the number of stories we were told that all shared the common thread of a friend or family member dying before they reached retirement or being too unhealthy to enjoy retirement. Sad stories about people who worked and saved, and ultimately, it was all for nothing.

The age-old saying, “only two things in life are guaranteed; death and taxes,” calls out an important truth. Life costs money, and our time here is finite. To spend your time and money wisely, I think it’s vital to befriend your mortality—to get really clear on the fact that our time here on earth could quite literally end at any moment. I ask myself regularly: “If I were to die tomorrow, would I be proud of the life I’ve lived?” It’s a quick way to check in, to get a bird’s-eye view of my decisions, to determine if I feel good about the path I’m on and how I’m spending my time.

Money comes and goes. Time, on the other hand, is something we can never get back. What’s become really clear to me as I’ve gotten older is that the things that make my life feel the most full and satisfying cost little to no money. They all involve time. Time in the great outdoors, quality time spent enjoying the company of people I love, time to cook a delicious meal, time for reading and writing, time to dance, laugh, play... time to be human, not a productivity machine.

We exchange our time for money. Then we exchange our money for goods and services. Some things are necessities; many things are not. So much time is traded to earn money in an attempt to buy happiness or to earn status in our community. What we’re really doing is giving away our life— and in turn, our ability to appreciate the little things, the free things, that make life feel meaningful and worth living.

Mark and I now feel successful beyond measure, not because we’re monetarily rich, far from it, but because we’ve designed our lives in a way that allows us the time to spend our days doing what we want rather than hoping we can buy ourselves the freedom to do it later.



FIVE:

Gratitude turns what we have into enough

*Your life will never feel like
enough until you consciously
decide that it is.*



Living on the road and not inhabiting a traditional house or apartment is a direct violation of society's expectations. This lifestyle goes against the grain of how most people live, and because of that, it has revealed to me the immense weight of what we've been led to believe is important.

We've been conditioned to believe we should always be striving for more. More money. More stuff. American life often feels like a constant, never-ending pursuit of a newer, bigger house, new cars, promotions, vacations, season tickets, a fancy wardrobe, the latest technology, etc. If you're not constantly working toward something "bigger," you're often seen as lazy, unmotivated, or lacking ambition. Sadly, it's as if simply appreciating your life as it is is some kind of failure.

But when is it ever enough? Where is the finish line? Where is the pat on the back and the "you've made it" certificate? There is no such thing. We fight like hell for more, and all we're ever left with is wanting even more. It's an exhausting, never-ending pursuit. And what is it all for? Acceptance? Approval from our friends and family? Points on some invisible score board?

When we first moved onto the road, I could feel an invisible force pushing back. The society-trained voice in my head whispered, "You're doing it all wrong; you can't live like this." Living on the road full-time has forced us to get really clear on what we truly need versus everything the outside world tells us we need. When we stock up our truck for a week or two in a remote backcountry location, there's no running to the store to pick something up. There's no ordering things online or receiving packages. There's no access to unlimited water, only the 35 gallons we carry—to name just a few of the limitations we've become accustomed to.

The happiness we've derived from living in a tiny space has revealed to us that living a good life is so much simpler than we've made it out to be. To have food to eat, clean water to drink, fresh air to breathe, a place to call home (no matter the size), and love in our lives is all we really need. Those are our basic needs; everything else is a bonus.

Every now and then a song lyric or quote will hit me at just the right time. In this case, during our first year on the road, it was hearing Jack Johnson's lyric: "*We've got everything we need right here and everything we need is enough.*" That word *enough* hit me in the face like a lead balloon.

My life is enough. I have an incredible husband. A comfortable home (that just happens to have wheels). A business that pays the bills. Family. Friends. Food. Water. Freedom. What more could I possibly want? And more importantly, why?

At what point do we stop chasing and start enjoying everything we've been working for? There is no finish line. Your life will never feel like enough until you consciously decide that it is.

How we cultivate gratitude

Constantly wanting more develops a feeling of perpetual lack. We unconsciously feel as though something is always missing, and we trick ourselves into believing that acquiring something new will finally fill that hole. But when we practice appreciation for everything we already have, we experience a feeling of fullness that directly counteracts that lack.

So, how do Mark and I cultivate gratitude? We ask ourselves how we can find awe in everyday moments.

Spending our winters in Mexico and immersing ourselves in a foreign culture has afforded us some eye-opening experiences that have put our American privilege into sharp perspective. Those experiences have resulted in a profound feeling of amazement toward what we so easily take for granted here in the States.

Take gasoline, for example. What if you pulled into your local gas station to fill your tank, only to learn that there was no gas and another delivery wasn't coming for days? What if this was true of every station in town?

This exact scenario happened to us one day while traveling through a remote region on the Baja peninsula, except, it was the only gas station for 100 miles. While I imagine anyone confronted with this dilemma in the States would react with fear or rage, no one around us seemed to be the least bit concerned. Fuel would be delivered in three days, and that was that.

Have you ever pulled up to a gas station and considered all the things that had to happen in order for you to fill your tank? Heavy equipment had to be manufactured to extract the raw crude oil from deep inside the earth. That oil then had to be shipped—perhaps from the other side of the world, or pumped through thousands of miles of pipelines—just to reach a refinery. There, it had to be processed and transformed into usable gasoline, purchased, moved to a distribution facility, loaded into tanker trucks, driven to your specific gas station, and finally pumped into a holding tank beneath your feet. The sheer amount of heavy equipment, trucks, ships, pipelines and roads that needed to be built and maintained to make this all possible is something I can't even begin

to calculate. Not to mention the millions of people who had to show up and do their jobs to make it all happen. All so we can drive our cars around to our heart's content.

The same time and resource intensive efforts go into every piece of food on our plates, every item of furniture in our homes, every device we use, and every product that has ever been magically delivered to our doorsteps. It's mind-bending when you really think about it. Yet, we have simply come to expect these things.

When you consider all the raw materials that had to be mined, the infrastructure that needed to be built, and the people who needed to show up so that we can have all that is available to us on a daily basis... it's truly astonishing.

When we choose to view life through this lens, a feeling of awe naturally follows, and the feelings of lack naturally fade away. Gratitude fills the space left behind, turning whatever we have right now into enough.



SIX:

Time spent in nature is time well spent

*In nature, our senses are
engaged and something
primal inside of us is
satisfied that can't be
accessed by technology.*



When Mark and I graduated from college, we moved a lot. Unbeknownst to us, a trend was developing—with every move, we got a little bit further away from populated areas. We went from a major metropolitan area, to a small city, to a small town, and eventually to a rural area far from anywhere. It was a leap of faith buying our first home in a remote location. Would we get bored or lonely? Would the inconvenience of having to drive thirty minutes to the grocery store—or any store for that matter—be frustrating? We had no idea.

But we had consciously traded the convenience of civilization for immediate access to all that the Rocky Mountains had to offer. Surrounding our home was a wealth of public land: a national forest, BLM land, a picturesque lake, and the stunning Blue River running through it all. Every day, we would load our dogs up in the car and drive five minutes to one of a dozen trails that we had access to. Rarely did we see another person, and our dogs had unlimited freedom. The beauty and peacefulness of our surroundings satisfied us in a way no other place had.

Over time, it became more and more apparent to us how underrated nature is and how overrated convenience is.

When we immerse ourselves in nature, our living, breathing selves have the opportunity to experience harmony with the living, breathing world around us. Our senses are awakened, and the world around us is experienced through them. In this day and age, we spend far more time satisfying our brains than our senses. When our senses are engaged, something primal inside of us is able to be satisfied that can't be accessed by technology. In nature, I feel a deep sense that my life is enough. Nature doesn't need me to perform; nature doesn't care how much money I make or what my status among my peers is. In nature, I am able to experience awe—a deeply powerful sensation.

“Awe acts like a kind of reset button: it makes people forget themselves and their petty concerns. Awe opens people to new possibilities, values, and directions in life. Awe is one of the emotions most closely linked to the hive switch, along with collective love and collective joy. People describe nature in spiritual terms precisely because nature can trigger the hive switch and shut down the self, making you feel that you are simply part of the whole.”

—Jonathan Haidt, The Righteous Mind

Our consumer-based culture offers something very different. We can satisfy our every want, need, or desire at the click of a button. We're led to believe that if we're not happy, there's a product out there that will solve our feelings of lack. We're always seeking more, as though we'll eventually discover the golden ticket—the thing that will cure us of feeling incomplete and unsatisfied. But the superficial things we acquire in our quest to be happy end up only providing us with temporary relief. The dopamine hit always fades; the goal post always gets pushed further down the line. Conveniences and comforts, things that are sold to us as the ultimate luxuries, end up becoming more of a trap than a gift.

When we spend time in nature, we experience peace, joy, contentment, beauty, wonder, awe, adventure, and inspiration. Our senses awaken, and our thinking minds relax. Wild places offer the opportunity to scare yourself, challenge yourself, and find yourself. In the outdoors, we can be free. Free to roam, free to be still, free to discover and savor this wildly magnificent world that we inhabit.



SEVEN:

**When you
stay inside
your comfort
zone it shrinks**

*Fear should not be a wall
that turns us around when
it can be a bridge that
leads us to a stronger,
better version of
ourselves.*



Over the last six years living on the road full-time, we've found that having a home base is key to keeping our nomadic lifestyle sustainable. Home base for us is a raw piece of land in Colorado where we are able to live in our RV for one to two months at a time—something we love doing in the spring and fall. Those one to two months feel like a lifetime when the rest of the year is spent moving to a new location once or twice a week. While the opportunity to rest and reset is needed, I can't help but notice how different life feels.

During our time spent sitting still, I feel life start to contract. We settle into routines, and the days seamlessly blend from one to the next. Life becomes more predictable. We get comfortable and, in exchange, less adventurous. Life begins to feel very linear: wake up to the same view, stare at the same screen, scroll through the same apps, go to the same stores, see the same people, rinse, and repeat. It's not super exciting, but it's comfortable. And after months on end of traveling, comfort can be intoxicating.

When we head to Mexico for the winter, the opposite happens. The moment we cross the border, we're forced into unfamiliar and unpredictable situations. We're humbled repeatedly when we attempt to communicate with the very little Spanish we know. We constantly have to overcome and adapt to ever-changing circumstances when searching for a place to sleep or seeking out resources like food and water. And, the weather dictates how comfortable we will or won't be on any given day.

In exchange for the challenge and adversity that we face on the road, we're rewarded with things comfort and familiarity could never provide. We learn how capable we are, we bond as a couple, we get to experience the kindness and generosity of strangers, we make friends in unexpected places, and we have more memorable experiences than I could ever begin to count. When Mark and I step outside our comfort zone, we feel life expand rather than contract.

The contrast of living inside my comfort zone (while on our property in Colorado) with living outside my comfort zone (while traveling all over Mexico in our truck camper) has been enlightening. When we focus on creating a life of permanent comfort and certainty, we leave no room for opportunity. Life is a long hallway simply leading to the end. Maybe it's a pretty hallway or a cozy hallway—and it's a wonderful place to pause and catch your breath— but it's one single, defined path nonetheless. When you let go of your grip on that perceived security, take a leap of faith, and embrace uncertainty, all of a sudden, that

hallway has a thousand doors that lead to different views, opportunities, and life experiences.

I think it may be safe to say that many Americans today are the most comfortable they've ever been. We have our houses and our recliners and our remote controls and our devices and our circle of friends and our neighborhood stores, and we value those things greatly. Why would we ever stir the pot and risk discomfort? Because, without even realizing it, comfort comes at a cost. Growth, adventure, opportunity, spontaneity, and unpredictable delights—these are all things we unconsciously give up in the name of comfort, and because of it, our worlds get smaller.

Living on the road has taught me the value of doing things that scare me. I don't consider myself an adventurous person; I've simply realized that I can be scared and do the thing anyway. Always, without fail, I come out the other side feeling empowered. Anytime I step outside my comfort zone, I'm reminded that I'm capable of so much more than I give myself credit for. I shudder to think how much life experience I would have never had if I let fear dictate my every move.

| *"Fear does not prevent dying, it prevents living."*

- Buddha

When we decide to not let fear dictate our actions is when empowerment follows. We learn that fear does not dictate our lives. Fear merely turns up the volume in our lives. It makes us fiercely present and aware of our surroundings—aware of our mortality and fragility. But fear should not be a wall that turns us around when it can be a bridge that leads us to a stronger version of ourselves.

The problem with treating fear as a wall is that the more we let fear stop us, the more those walls will close in on us. When fear wins, our world gets smaller. And as we get older, we'll be more likely to stick to the comforts and safety of our easy chairs than we will be inclined to face our fears and try new things. When, instead, we are willing to face our fears, cross that bridge and see what's on the other side, we break down the walls in our lives and open up our world. Fear is shattered and replaced with confidence and opportunity. If I can do this, what else can I do?

Travel has taught me what a big, magnificently beautiful world we live in that is filled with mostly good people. When I step outside my comfort zone and discover how much good there is in this world, I develop optimism and feel ease towards life. When I put comfort and

security above all else, I get scared, anxious, and fearful towards anything outside my bubble. Stepping outside my comfort zone has rewarded me so many times over that it's gotten easier. I feel certain that I will be rewarded in some way.

You don't have to travel, though, to reap the benefits of getting outside your comfort zone. It's simply a matter of facing your fears. Do something often, no matter how small, that scares you. Say "yes" to something you wouldn't normally say yes to. Go somewhere you've never been, no matter how near or far. Take a different route to get where you're going (literally or metaphorically).

Most importantly, pursue your curiosity. If something lights you up at just the thought of it... go for it. Embrace all the fear, all the failures, and all the successes along the way, but most of all, figure out how you can make your future self proud. No one on their deathbed ever said, "I'm glad I spent my life playing it safe."





In this wild, wonderful, difficult, and unpredictable world, may you remember this...no one really knows what they're doing. Each and every one of us is figuring it out as we go.

There are an infinite number of ways to go about life if you're willing to step outside the box and experiment. Look beyond the confines of conformity and let curiosity be your guide.

We wish you all the best in your quest for a right-fit life.



Inspiration is meant to be shared

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