# *Less Unstrategic / (Thinking in Dominos?)*

*Why blunder around cluelessly when thinking ahead do trick?*

*Ayo, @visakanv here. This phrase popped into my mind when I was having one of my routine frustrations at observing how unstrategic people tend to be. It made me laugh, which is always a good sign that there's something there. As David Ogilvy said, "The best ideas start out as jokes. Make your thinking as funny as possible." I'm writing this half for fun, partially to take a break from working on INTROSPECT (shipped Feb2022!). And also more generally as a way of collecting my disparate notes and thoughts about strategy. I will eventually consolidate it into something more readable.*

*Comments encouraged!*

*"What is strategy? A mental tapestry of changing intentions for harmonizing and focusing war efforts as a basis for realizing some aim or purpose in an unfolding and often unforeseen world of many bewildering events and many contending interests."* – [John Boyd](), *military strategist*

[Jan2023] Alright it's time to start being more strategic about this document itself, lol. So far I've just been dumping notes into it, now it's time to seek out resonance across the subheaders…

## Why be strategic?

Because you win more, and winning is fuckin' great. Winning is how you unlock more resources that you can deploy towards good and noble ends. Being strategic can also sometimes allow you to win while compromising less on your values.

I would say that the single most important thing about being strategic is playing a longer game than others. See the bigger picture, take the longer view, have a sense of where things are going. Most people are trapped in daily news cycles. If you read history, you get a sense that things move in much longer cycles. It's often – or at least sometimes – actually possible to skate to where the puck is going to go. To "move into position", to prepare for opportunities that everybody else seems to be overlooking because they're so distracted arguing with each other.

## Open the doors

When I was in Junior College (2007), I'd often get frustrated when large crowds of students were bottlenecked when entering or leaving a lecture theater. 10 years ago and I still think about this. There are two sets of two doors, and yet invariably only one was opened. Agonizingly slow.

I would repeatedly unlock and open the second door, and enjoy watching the stream of students double in speed. I always thought, why isn't this the norm? Why don't people habitually open both doors? It could save 5-10 mins per lecture, multiplied by hundreds of lectures a year.

I honestly think those doors shaped my attitude towards the world. Ie the world is full of myopic individuals who follow the herd, streaming through a narrow pass, and almost nobody bothers to think about how to make life better for all. I never saw anybody else opening the 2nd door.

## *Quick note: things are at least somewhat knowable*

Not sure where to put this, maybe I'll edit it into the start or something – but I just wanna vent somewhere that I get really annoyed when people talk about things like they're not knowable. Yea that's vague and I'd like to get into specifics in this document. I realize I'm sort of repeating a bunch of things from a Taleb/Antifragile-ish point of view. I already have sections about survival and luck. Steer out of probabilistically bad situations. Steer into good ones. Cultivate your instincts.

## *Winning and creating value*

([og thread](#)) When you're starting out, it feels like you don't have a lot of value to contribute. but as you get better at some X, the amount of value you can create increases… not just in tandem with the value of your X itself, but the value of your X multiplied by the value of someone else's Y.

This sounds abstract so lemme describe some examples like. Consider say, doing good design, copywriting, etc etc – this value isn't much in a vacuum. But if you help a successful business owner improve his sales by 10%, then the value you've created is that much. Could be anywhere from $1k to $100k to $1m or beyond, derived from the same principles.

When i was starting out as some kid, i was mainly hanging out with other kids like myself, none of us having built or accomplished anything of note, and we reasoned about possibilities by extrapolating from our experience. This is erroneous: the market is larger than your experience.

When I was starting out I thought I had to sell to people who didn't understand marketing, and that can be an excruciating thing. These days i get clients who startle me with how good their products are, how they already have an existing customer base, etc, and they pay me more.

this is an off the cuff thread because i want to express this before i forget, so i'm not really being rigorous in laying the whole thing out properly, but it's just… wack, how tremendously varied the possibilities are. you can build a life where your clients are excited to pay you. There are actually people in the world who are already doing wonderful work in their area of expertise, who don't have the time and energy and headspace to work on the secondary/auxillary thing that would improve their situation, and they love to work with other serious people.

And interestingly i find that there's an element of… prospecting, that goes into anything. like 80% of success is choosing the right clients and gently saying no to people who you can't help. the regular job equivalent here is abt choosing the right company/manager to work for

choosing the right people and the right contexts is ~80%+ of the outcome. but we hardly talk about this openly/publicly. like, this is true for friends, lovers, spouses, everything. completely different life depending on where you go, who you interface with, how you present yourself

i've read probably 10s of 1000s of articles, blogposts, etc, maybe 100k+, and a common feature of mediocre writing, mediocre advice, mediocre everything is a lack of emphasis. emphasis takes conviction, which mediocrity does not have. it's listicles of 20 things when you need 2

you know someone really, really knows their shit when they say things like "focus on X, a bit of Y, and ignore everything else until you've gotten Z result"

people who don't know will waffle about, "here's 30 things that I learned" what's the point? nobody internalizes 30 things! (i'm being a bit overdramatic here, there are surely exceptions bla bla but this is the spirit of the truth of it imo)

i wanna share a funny story I remember about the best striker on my secondary school's football team, who iirc was kind of a chubby dude who hardly showed up for training and smoked cigarettes etc. This was so long ago i might be making some of this up but its good so bear with me lol:

"Mani is so slow, so unfit, his ball handling is so mediocre, his shots are so average. the only thing he has going for him is that he mysteriously somehow always manages to be at the right place at the right time to score goals"

now imagine you could have Mani on your team, who scores goals, vs someone else who is fast, fit, amazing ball handling, amazing shots, but is somehow never in the right place at the right time, and thus never scores goals.

What mani had was a fingertip sensitivity for the nature of the game. he was an opportunist. he could smell opportunity and he seized it. and that's what winners look like. they win. you know them by their wins. they can look and sound like absolute clowns but they win.

I have a bunch of other threads I could link to from here but I guess I'll just link to the google doc and update that with the other threads ok i got other things to do kthxbye

## More on winning:

I'm not a *fan* of divvying people up arbitrarily into winners and losers – one should never be gleeful about this – but I do have a subconscious subroutine that does it for me, and it's very useful mental machinery, even accounting for some small % of error rate (5-10%?)

I am being sincere with my explicit utterances when I say: it is good to be kind, be gentle, be soft, be nourishing, be supportive. I mean every one of those things.

IME, as a guy: to sustainably do those things, you have to be sensitive, smart and strong, and you have to win.

in finite/infinite terms: one shouldn't be entirely obsessed with winning to the point where it consumes you like an addiction. the point is to keep playing. but you do have to win in order to keep playing. you can't keep losing indefinitely.

"wait, winning? win at what?"

[gestures around] everything. I mean this in the broadest sense. it ranges from little things like "doing what you want" to big things like "living in accordance with your values". it's very contextual and every person has 100s of things going on

part of why i'm vague here is because I don't particularly subscribe to any 1 ideology or aesthetic. there are as many ways to win as there are different kinds of music genres or art styles. you get to decide and define for yourself what winning means to you. To me, it feels obvious that there are children of billionaires who are absolute failsons, dyed-in-the-wool losers – and also, there are people born in poverty who will sadly never be able to rise above it because of systemic factors, and yet in tiny little ways they are winners. Yes I am channeling [Invictus](Invictus) here.

You could build a worldview from this sort of thing... good times weak men blah blah. I'm not really interested in that sort of grandiosity, it's often a distraction. What I try to do is to win at games I personally deem worthy, and to associate with winners that I respect and admire, and help each other win more, win better, and be more compassionate, courageous, etc along the way.

I DO NOT  think that non-winners are "lesser" people, or that they deserve scorn, or pity, or anything of the sort. nor do I think that winners should be glorified and pedestalized. all of those things I think are actually distractions from the real thing. I DO think that winning gives you resources – attention, money, social capital, etc – that you can then subsequently choose to direct towards things that you deem good and worthy. as patio11 once said (I paraphrase) every dollar spent is a vote for how you want the world to be.

I don't actively evaluate "how can I win?!?!" in every interaction – I just live my life. but I win, and I talk about it openly because I promised my younger self that I would, because nobody else said these things to me. I taught myself how to do it. You can probably do too. Winning feels good. You can use your wins to help and serve others, that they might win too.

"What if I'm a loser? What do I do?" I don't think anybody is ever 100% a loser all the way through. everyone has some assets, some small victories, some experience, something. think of yourself as inheriting a city, or a company, or a sports team, etc that's largely dysfunctional. the first thing to do is to take an inventory of everything. you want to face the full reality of who you are. your successes and failures, your assets and liabilities. what have been the mistakes you've made in life? list them out; literally write them down.

from here on it's basically a video game, but the challenge is that you have to always be as clearly honest with yourself as you can. how can you repeat the successes? how can you diminish the failures? what are the contexts in which the failures happen, how do you avoid them?

the early stages of transition are the hardest, because early progress will often force you to face your own incompetence more starkly than if you chose to try to be ignorant of them. like how going for a jog when you're unfit *hurts* a lot more than eating junk and watching TV. there isn't any globally correct method for how to approach this. it really is "choose your own adventure". do you want to start with more/bigger wins, or do you want to start by diminishing your fails/losses?

important: do NOT obsess about researching this. choose, & act

the most foundational elements of this can feel silly to state out loud, but some people might have to do this:

- you have to believe that winning is POSSIBLE
- you have to believe that losers *can* BECOME winners, through the magic of incremental growth and change, and framing

if you don't currently believe these things, or your belief in these things is kinda flimsy, I recommend [psyops-ing yourself to strengthen these beliefs](). I have a whole database of things that reaffirm my most powerful beliefs, it's a thing winners do. I could go on and on and on. My ebook is titled FRIENDLY AMBITIOUS NERD, but you could just as easily read it as "HOW TO WIN". (I deliberately avoided that sort of title, because it selects for a kind of audience that I do not want)

So with all of that in mind, and with utmost love and support: Are ya winning, son?

## Winning Fields

[drafting] there's something I might describe as a success field, or a winning field. when you are in this field, you win more. over time you can observe who spends time in winning fields and who doesn't. it's so weird to talk about, but it's weirder still to leave it undiscussed

in practice the field is sort of a patchwork of fields distributed unevenly across space and time, and it activates differently for different people according to different variables. This seeming complexity trips some people up, but you don't even need to really know it to win

like suppose we're talking about sunlight exposure. maybe the sun is unevenly distributed because of cloud cover, shadows from buildings, etc. And these change depending on where the sun is in the sky, the weather, etc. but "get some sunlight" doesn't require a phd

I talk out loud about this stuff because I have a very strong conviction that it's possible to win more just as it's possible to get more sunlight, and I'm here to find other people who like sunlight, and we collectively sunlight-maxxing. Build some solar panels next. Etc

you can conceptualize a sort of sales funnel of people who are at varying stages of win-seeking. And there's some complexity about different flavors of win-seeking, different motivations, compulsions, etc. some is unhealthy. it's all quite discernible

if a good king is caring + daring, today we are talking mostly about daring. daring is how you win. acquire the resources/capital you need to feed your family, tend to your people, build systems of care, provide structure and support and so on

I used to spend more time/effort trying to persuade people who didn't even believe in the possibility of winning, that it's possible. I have done more than my fair share of time in those trenches, lol. I've since learned to take a more ecological view. The ratios gotta be right

this actually reminds me of one of the oldest conundrums I remember arguing about when I was 14 or 15: how should a society or a community allocate its best teachers? Should they go to the strongest students, or the weakest? It's an important and consequential question

I've come to question the premise. I think the answer should be more ecological and 'cross-knitty'. everybody should get at least some exposure to the best teachers. and students shd teach each other, too. but overall I think learning should be exciting n aspirational

which is to say, if you get the ratios right, and the context right, the best teachers should be continually producing more good teachers… also the question kinda strips agency from the teachers! Some teachers *want* to help weaker students and they absolutely should
also teaching weaker students can make you more knowledgeable a better teacher! everyone should do at least a little teaching as part of their learning

## win_loops

have a draft of an essay i've sort of lazily idling on titled "win loops" and i might as well just tweet it out.

funnily, me quoting this tweet (really just to springboard off the phrase "biggest wins", it's almost unrelated to rival's tweet) is itself an example of a win_loop

first a story of strange, repetitive "failure". when i was a kid there were some video games that i liked playing, even though i didn't really understand the mechanics of the games. one is playing GTA not knowing anything about the missions. another was how I played simcity 3000.

i'd open the map creator, flatten out the entire map, then I'd spend all of my money building roads that outlined the outermost square of the map. i'd spend so much $ building these roads that i'd get fired as mayor bc the maintenance cost would bankrupt the non-existent city.

I repeated this cycle endlessly. I suppose you could say maybe it wasn't a failure in the sense that I really liked building roads. that feels like cope, tho. i just didn't know how to play the game. i would have enjoyed building roads more in the context of a functional city

(what you're supposed to do is to lay out a bunch of zones: residential, commercial, industrial. you connect these with roads. also build a power plant, and power lines. then sims show up and build buildings and pay taxes. now you can afford to build n maintain more roads)

what i just described is an example of the core win_loop in simcity 3000: you need sims and to make them happy → they pay taxes → you get money → you can do more things → get more sims who pay more taxes → you can care about things like education and healthcare and tech

now lets talk about sth that i have some positive experiences in, like writing. before i get any further i guess i'll drop my hypothesis, which is: anywhere you see success, there must surely be win_loops going on. obvious? maybe. but ppl seldom rigorously examine them imo

i think the best win_loops in my life have revolved around writing online. i have written what casual people might consider an insane amount. (tho serious 0.1% pro writers would consider them table stakes, I think.) almost 250k tweets here, prob 2m+ words elsewhere

how? it's definitely not that i'm a focused or disciplined person in general, lol. i'm quite sloppy and disorganized and don't really have good habits. in fact, i did the largest volume of my writing from 2013-2018 on my commutes, and i haven't been able to replicate that since

so what's going on there? to understand this i break out my win_loop analysis: prior to me becoming a full time writerperson via my twitter blowing up, writing for me was an act of desperation, to keep my creative spirit alive amidst realworld drudgery

bills, mortgages, deliverables, etc etc were driving me to the edge. i clung on to this somewhat self-tormented mindset of "I have to write >1k words/day on my commutes or i'm fucked as a creative". this raised the stakes tremendously for me. i wrote 500,000+ words like that

those stakes aren't really real to me anymore. like, i won, lmao. i sell ebooks in my sleep now. i can just hang out with my wife and son and chill. i could probably almost kinda retire if i wanted to. so imo i have to invent or recreate new win_loops if i want things to change

there's many different ways to think about win_loops. like, i do still enjoy tweeting. each tweet feels like a micro-win. that's satisfying. but it's not BIG satisfying. lemme invent some fake play number/points to try and convey the feelings (i dont actually think in these # s)

if i just lounge on twitter all day, that usually averages to sth like a "50 points" kinda day. which is much better than a "0 points" day where i do fuckall. on a GOOD day, where I write a really meaningful thread, or help a friend make a breakthrough, etc, it could be 500pts

on the other hand, writing something REALLY substantial? writing an essay like We Were Voyagers feels like 10,000pts. Are You Serious felt like 50,000 pts. Books like Friendly Ambitious Nerd and Introspect feel like 1,000,000pts++ and they residually keep earning more points

lemme check on those numbers… am i saying that Are You Serious felt like 100 Very Good days on Twitter? yes. it felt that good. but here's wassup. the twitter win_loop is very easy for me to participate in. writing books, and good essays, is goddam fucken hard biiitch!!

a thing that i believe, but haven't yet proven, but hope to prove, even if only to myself, is that the moment i figure out a working win_loop for me for my substack, I should be able to "effortlessly" publish like a hundred essays in a year. i already have the drafts

the imaginary point system thing is an interesting thing to play with. can i imagine writing another book for another 1 million points? theoretically, someday, yeah. could i work on such a book right now? absolutely not, i freeze and flinch at the thought. i got too much mess

that's the interesting thing about imaginary points. it's like children's play, improv. theoretically speaking you can do anything, but in practice, you're semi-constrained by a kind of magical plausibility. i find myself wondering, what could i get 1 million points from?

ok now lets switch entirely from everything else to talking about fitness, which is actually the thing that got me pondering all of this lately.

i've always been sort of moderately fit for a sedentary laptop worker. tall, skinny, i used to be a picky eater with anxiety and a poor appetite but i fixed that. i sorta cycle i'd say what feels like 40th percentile to 60th percentile fitness. i'd hit the gym every 2yrs or so

i'd go hard for maybe ~3 months, see some gains that i'm happy with, and then typically i'd either get bored, or i'd get some minor injury or strain, and then i'd fall off the wagon for the next 6-18 months before starting over. it's quite funny to read my captions every 2 yrs

this year though i feel like something different is happening. i feel like i'm inhabiting a win_loop re: my workouts that's much more robust than my previous ones. i feel a bit shy talking about it since its just been a month but i feel very very good about this one

anyway it feels premature to talk about the fitness stuff, i wouldn't bother listening to me about it until at least 3-6 months of proven "this isn't like the previous cycles". but i saw rivals tweet, and i thought, eh, might be fun to just tweet the draft out

this is a sort of win in that i now.. can drop that draft from my plate, I guess? maybe i should spend an hour doing a thread abt one of my drafts each day. that sounds like a great idea actually. it uses my established win_loop of twitter poasting to chisel away at my drafts

this took an hour, which might seem wasteful to some, but it actually saved me like 3 more hours of working on a draft in isolation and thinking "nyeh, that's not right". it's an investment in the context of the longer game i'm playing:

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**Visakan Veerasamy** @visakanv · Jan 25

@vinveliveera reviewing my past 18 or so years of periodically going to the gym, working out for a few months and then stopping, I realize my issue is almost always some form of: I went too hard too fast, got hurt (luckily never serious injury) then I drop off for months

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**Visakan Veerasamy**
@visakanv

anyway so i just wanna do a lil update, been doing overhead tricep extensions and bent over rows with this 12kg kettlebell for about a month now and i feel fantastic. there were moments where i felt tightness and soreness in my calf (!) and then my forearms, but now i find myself wanting to naturally do more pushups, and now i feel like i want to hit the barbell and do pullups etc etc. aim to keep going and will update periodically, maybe with progress pics in a few months

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11

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this took an hour, which might seem wasteful to some, but it actually saved me like 3 more hours of working on a draft in isolation and thinking "nyeh, that's not right". it's an investment in the context of the longer game i'm playing: (My goal in life is to be a word artist)

I think i'll end on that, which is that even "losing" repeatedly at a particular game can be winning at the metagame, as long as you're learning from yr experience, or sometimes even just eliminating the things that don't work (…which is learning from your xp) gn. 200 points

actually if i start a new habit of tweeting out a thread about a draft each day, that'll be like 1000 points/day minimum. cautiously excited. about these imaginary points i just made up. i am so serious

## Theory of constraints

Tiago Forte [wrote some good blogposts about this](). It's a pretty old concept but it's always relevant and it continues to be underappreciated.

In a tweet: **The only meaningful improvement you can make in any system is at its tightest bottleneck**. Progress at the second tightest bottleneck is still constrained by the tightest bottleneck, and it can actually make things worse, because of congestion.

I know this seems like a bold claim if you're not familiar. Will expand at some point. Read Tiago's blogposts above if you have the time – I would say the concept of bottlenecks and constraints clarified my thinking substantially in my mid-20s.

## Show up, don't die, don't quit

**The big lesson of survivor bias is that you should optimize for being a survivor.** You can't win if you lose – so learn to not lose. Most major failure conditions are avoidable with a little bit of foresight, planning, study and so on. Analyze failures and take conscientious steps to avoid them.

From my reading and conversations over the years, I get the sense that most businesses fail because most (more than half of) businesses seem to be started by people who don't do any due diligence. For example, using your life savings to start a restaurant without ever having worked in one, or even read about the specifics of the struggles involved. Being able to make a nice meal for your friends doesn't mean you'll be able to run a professional kitchen, and even if you could, it doesn't mean you'll be able to do the marketing to get people in the door, handle the relationships with your suppliers, and so on.

Failures are inevitable, but the trick is that you can fail early or fail late. You want to isolate your failures as early as possible. Do 100 pitches. You likely won't even get that far.

Try to fail (intelligently) as much as possible, as cheaply as possible, as early as possible. You learn what's right by eliminating everything that's wrong. You can generally do that a lot faster and a lot cheaper than people seem to assume.

Then, when you win, after decades of putting in the work, and more importantly, avoiding the big open pits in the ground that everyone around you keeps falling into, they'll say, "Well, it's survivor bias."

## *Optimize for luck*

In 2007, Marc Andreessen wrote a blogpost titled [Luck and the Entrepreneur](). It's worth reading in its entirety, but to summarize the key bits here, he quotes James Austin, a neurologist and researcher who's written extensively about luck.

Here's my interpretation of Andreessen's interpretation of Austin's 4 kinds of luck:

**I. Blind luck** – this is when something literally falls out of the sky into your lap, like finding a $100 bill stuck to your shoe. You didn't do anything to deserve it, and anybody else could've taken advantage of that luck. Being born wealthy and privileged is a matter of blind luck. (If you buy a lottery ticket and win, you got lucky, but you did have to buy a ticket. Blind luck is if the winning lottery ticket just appears in your life out of the blue.)

**II. "Persistent tinkering" luck** – Austin says that "a certain level of action "stirs up the pot", brings in random ideas that will collide and stick together in fresh combinations, lets chance operate". This is the luck you get from doing things. If you write lots of tweets, eventually some of them will do better than others. Maybe you accidentally said something insightful-sounding.

People who don't tinker persistently may not appreciate just how the process of tinkering itself fundamentally introduces variability. Someone with "B" level ability on average will occasionally produce A+ work by sheer chance. If you're lucky, it will be recognized and you will be rewarded accordingly. (Notice the passive voice here – it's significant, because…)

**III. "Prepared mind" luck** – This is when you introduce discernment into the equation. Austin's words: "Chance III special receptivity, discernment, and intuitive grasp of significance unique to one particular recipient". Louis Pasteur characterized it for all time when he said "Chance favors the prepared mind".

The classic example is Alexander Fleming discovering penicillin from a "spoiled" experiment that most other people would probably have dismissed as some sort of error or fluke. There's an interestingly similar story about [how stainless steel was discovered by accident](#). Brearley was trying to make better gun barrels for WW1, shiny steel technically had no direct application to what he was doing. But he had the tinkerer's insight to realize that he had stumbled upon something useful.

The difference between random Chance II and Chance III is discernment. You recognize when you've stumbled onto something great, when nobody else might have yet.

**IV. "Perfect storm" luck** – "Chance IV comes to you, unsought, because of who you are and how you behave. […] By the time Chance IV finally occurs, the easy, more accessible problems will already have been solved earlier by conventional actions, conventional logics, or by the operations of the other forms of chance. What remains is a tough core of complex, resistant problems. Such problems yield to none but an unusual approach […] Whereas the lucky connections in Chance II might come to anyone with disposable energy as the happy by-product of any aimless, circular stirring of the pot, the links of Chance IV can be drawn together and fused only by one quixotic rider cantering in on his own homemade hobby horse to intercept the problem at an odd angle."

Basically, for Chance IV to work its magic, you have to be a high-functioning weirdo. You have to be famous enough for people to know to come to you, and also weirdo-tolerant enough for people to come to you with weird observations, thoughts and ideas. And also productive enough to do something interesting with all of that, when it comes to you.

## *People will say I got lucky*

([thread](#)) Nov2019: Meditating on the fact that when I eventually "succeed" (as defined by others), people will say that I was lucky, and that using me as a case study = survivor bias.

I think luck is a lot more complex and nuanced than people tend to make it out to be. There are layers of luck. Some things, like being born in the developed world, having access to books & internet, etc are foundational. Past a certain point though you can build "luck catchers"

Lots of people vaguely fantasize about getting a lucky break. The trick is to be precisely specific about it. What exactly does the lucky break look like? How prepared are you to capitalise on it if it actually hits? Doing the prep makes it dramatically likelier that it'll happen

Y'know how "Batman has a plan for taking down everybody"? I have a version of that: Visa has a plan for making friends with every person he'd like to be friends with. People much busier than me make time for me because they can see from my proof-of-work that I won't waste their time

Am I lucky? Yeah. Am I constantly being blessed with blind/random luck? Eh. I *prepare* for luck, and I move *fast* when I see a window of opportunity. I think everybody underestimates how much luck they are bombarded with every day bc they don't do the prep + they move slow.

I also think that most people are too fixated on whatever it is that they have in front of them in order to even recognise when they have a lucky window. You can't be too hyper-focused, you have to be relaxed, flexible, playful, open, curious. Allow life to surprise you

## More stuff about luck, survivor bias…

the older I get, the better I've gotten at sensing when something won't work, but this is generally cursed information. I've had people end friendships with me over "that won't work", like a year before their thing withers, implodes, dies. So I mostly just keep private notes

not all success can be predicted, not all failure can be predicted, there are always all sorts of unknowable elements that come into play. but, when the unit economics are fundamentally broken, when you have no happy users/readers/customers, you have nothing to work with, 🚩🚩🚩

Local magazine that was doomed to fail
https://twitter.com/visakanv/status/1439925030616387584

Facebook misplaced nostalgia project, doomed to fail
https://twitter.com/visakanv/status/1509292923510132737

I don't mean to be discouraging but some things are just doomed from the start and we ought to be honest with each other about this so that we can actually direct resources towards the things that can actually make a difference

## Understand unit economics / solve for distribution

The wack thing about making a living out of anything is that a lot of it boils down to the delivery mechanism or distribution of the thing that you're doing. Loosely a lot of what a job is, is you're counting on your employer to do the delivery for you, as a proxy for the market

This is obviously true for writers, artists, etc but it's also true for dentists and plumbers and so on. product and distribution (or customer acquisition if you like. or marketing. whatever) are significantly different problems, even if intimately intertwined

I started on this train of thought with the silly-fun idea "you can make a living making silly observations if you're serious about it", but that statement on its own sort of obfuscates half the challenge for ppl who don't intuitively see the product/distribution duality

otherwise smart people continually, repeatedly underestimate distribution at their own peril. people collectively waste billions of dollars on this, it's wild to see. there are two main reasons your business failed: failure of product or failure of marketing/distribution. (more on this: https://visakanv.com/marketing/solve-for-distribution/)

Or unit economics… well unit economics is sort of a meta-level concept about both product and distribution and the costs of each so it does circle back to the same thing. Peter Drucker saw this stuff very clearly.

Circling back: a lot of makers get kinda precious about the stuff they make and it impedes them from looking with clear eyes about what the market wants from them. a good way to work through this is to spend a month closely examining your own consumer behavior.

Which isn't to say that you should "give the market what it wants", that often ends up being a race to the bottom for the lowest common denominator. Rather, you should *understand* the market in your domain so you can negotiate and dance with it to get what you want out of it. Aside, I'm very proud of my personal journey wrt these ideas and concepts, and it ties back to what I was talking about earlier about practical philosophy as a way of reducing anxiety

This would be a great moment to shill the fact that I do take marketing consulting clients! At the time I wrote this I was too busy because I was focused on my book, but the book has been shipped and so I am free to take clients now.

the optimal amount of precious to be is not zero, in fact I think one should aim to be as precious as possible. 😂 Thing is you can't be precious 24/7 indefinitely unless you have an inheritance or something, so you gotta understand this stuff so you can afford to keep being precious


https://twitter.com/visakanv/status/1390831357010477057



## Well prepared


a fluid sense, of a comprehensive 4-tier if-this-then-that flowchart, is, ~80% of the time (in most casual interactions with most people), indistinguishable from clairvoyance

Wellprepared

## *expand your options*

([thread](#)) (meme: a girl, labelled "people born into wealth and privilege", with a tuba, labeled "if you work hard you can achieve anything", blowing into the face of another girl, labelled "the children of poor people")

I'm feeling silly enough to attempt to rephrase the tuba. I don't know about people who are struggling with truly intense poverty situations where their choices are super constrained, but rather than "work hard enough → achieve anything" I'd say, "try to look for openings that expand your options."

"Achieve anything" is kind of an overly broad, vague promise, anyway. "anything" is made up of an infinite set of specific somethings. I would start with trying to achieve one specific something. I guess that's part of the joke/setup, that people with wealth and privilege are allegedly so unaware of what it's like to operate with constraints, that they talk about reality as if there are no constraints.

Children born into wealth, particularly, since people who earned their wealth (yea, yea, I know) typically have to have *some* understanding of constraints, in order to manage them effectively. This is a bit of a segue but: there's a thing that's like a "universal wisdom fallacy", a version of the halo effect, where people assume that wealthy people must be broadly wise, when mostly they just need to have exploited a massive opportunity very well.

People are often surprised that kanye texts like a typical annoying dude, or that elon stumbles over his words, and jack ma seem(ed?) incapable of being a good conversationalist. the assumption is that if you're successful in one area, you must be ~broadly~ competent. v wrong erm i'm drifting.

the thing is to
- stay alive
- try to understand your situation accurately
- be sensitive to openings & opportunities
- do what prep you can for ^
- maintain and nourish a belief that you can make a difference in small domains where you have limited control
- 

You have to [keep some kind of spark alive](#). you cannot let the spark die, because when the spark dies then emotionally, spiritually, psychologically, you "die" too, and it becomes *much* harder to come back from that. Even if you're broke, in debt, etc. like… have a song that you sing that lifts your spirits. The hardest thing about hard things is managing your psychology.

## *Giving a shit*

**Substack post about this: [Are you serious?](#)**

The secret ingredient to almost everything good is simply giving a shit.

There is some complexity where, to properly give a shit about X, you might have to learn to not give a shit about Y...

But you have to give a shit in general in order to take the trouble to learn the specifics.

if you obsess about the game at the expense of your health, this eventually disrupts your ability to further obsess about the game. this is short-term unsustainable shit-giving. zoom out, see the bigger picture, play the long game

lately I've been trying to work through my feelings about how, I have a tendency to have uncharitable feelings in my heart towards people who I witness being unstrategic, doing unsustainable things. if I'm not careful, it's something that can make me snap at people and be unkind

maybe, in a beautiful, perfect world, nobody needs to be strategic, and nobody needs to be sustainable. just do whatever you feel like doing and nothing bad happens ever. and we don't need militaries and infinite bountiful resources are allocated perfectly and everyone is happy

unfortunately, we do not live in that world, I'm not sure such a world is even theoretically possible, any attempt to implement it will probably result in unforeseen negative outcomes

so. we have limited resources. which necessitates strategy.

I'm talking about things like, "how do I give a shit about my wife for 80 years"? This is something that you have to be strategic about! you can't just count on the good feelings you had on your wedding day. you have to actively work at your relationships!

"visa why are you talking about marriage like it's Starcraft, that's so unromantic"

no, unromantic is when your relationship fails because of preventable/avoidable errors– ack, see. this is tough. how do I talk about this without sounding mean. I don't want to hurt anybody...

I want to be careful to avoid hurting people while talking about how to avoid avoidable pain (some pain is not!) I can't lecture and preach at people into taking better care of themselves. I can only take great care of myself and the people around me and demonstrate by example. If

you think you care about X, I think it's worthwhile to ask yourself, "how will I commit to continue to care about X for the rest of my life?"

To understand (not to justify), I think part of why I feel the impulse to be harsh with people who are unstrategic is that questionable-integrity promises from unstrategic actors lower the perceived integrity of *everyone's* promises. but I might be overestimating this effect. It might be downstream of some personal trauma on my part – it troubled me deeply as a kid how hardly anybody took me seriously when I was being absolutely serious.

and even if I am estimating the effect correctly (which I am probably not), I doubt that being harsh/unkind is a useful disincentive. I mean, it doesn't work well in any other domain, why would it work in this one?

What I'd like to swap in is, kindly ask people to elaborate. I think that's probably the best approach. if a person makes a questionable-integrity promise, ask them how they intend to keep it. Best case, they think about it, and either come up with a good answer, or work at it Worst case, bad or no answer, but at least the Q was asked.

——————

No tool has yet given a shit https://twitter.com/visakanv/status/1568529684169916417

## *Ecological thinking*

I think a thing that I internalized early on, which made a big difference to every part of my life, that I'd like to teach other people if it helps (which it should), is an awareness of something like "expanded complex problem space" (ew, lol)

or maybe more elegantly, "ecological thinking". the understanding that everything is connected in a myriad of ways that can be hard to perceive or even conceive of. everything from your health to relationships to state of mind to career etc it's all connected

when I internalized this one of the things I set out to do was to journal as much as possible from as many different perspectives as possible, in as many different states of mind as possible, about as many different things as possible. Just raw exposure

it's very hard to convey simply how powerful this is. you develop an intimate sense of all the ways you have been wrong before, all the false assumptions you made, all the missing details, misplaced emphasis… it all adds up to a kind of mastery, dexterity, dynamism

the thing that prompted this thread for me was noticing a couple of questions on Twitter- "how do I stop being addicted to my phone" and "how do I focus when I have adhd" – and noticing my response to those questions. I might say, "these questions are insufficiently ecological"

and this is where having volumes of self-reported data about your behaviour, feelings, experiences, etc is really helpful. when are you at most focused? when are you not? Why is that, you think? when's the longest you went without anxiously reaching for your phone? How come?

this is not merely intellectual entertainment for me (although it's certainly fun and interesting). I first picked up smoking regularly/heavily around 2007. By ~2015 a part of me wanted to quit. It took me 7 more years to know the ecology of it all enough to manipulate it

there's the mechanical stuff, and there's the emotional stuff, and the emotional stuff is the real hard part

in a way both of my books are about this- Introspect is about an ecological approach to the self, FAN is abt an ecological approach to relating to the 🌍. But that doesn't quite feel right to say. just as how "Warfare is either asymmetrical or stupid", thinking is either ecological…

(btw: for ADHD, 📄 constructive adhd by @visakanv , for addictions, 📄 uninstalling copes: vv's notes on addiction )

## Good reply game

[goodreplygame](goodreplygame)

Might call this the foundation of social strategy. I suppose technically it's tactics. Strategy is more about figuring out what kind of people you want in your life and then positioning yourself in ways that make it easy for them to say yes

## It's seldom worth telling people they're wrong

*This is more of my personal approach to things rather than some kind of claim about how the world works, or even how it should work. It's how I like to do things.*

I'm always kind of surprised when I see someone telling someone else that they're wrong on the Internet. Not because it's surprising that people make mistakes – we all make mistakes – but because, in my personal experience, telling someone that they're wrong is a really ineffective conversational tactic.

Of course, here we have to ask ourselves what the goal is. If your goal is to create some kind of spectacle, then yes – being disagreeable creates conflict, which is a source of drama. And most people love drama.

But if your goal is to persuade someone else of their errors, saying "you're wrong" (again, in my experience) is one of the most ineffective ways to do it. Saying "that's wrong" is slightly better, but most people will often simply interpret that to be "you're wrong" with an extra step. A better turn of phrase – which does take more effort – is "I don't think that's correct". Now attention is directed not at a mistake in the person, or their utterance, but in the space between. And here we can have an interesting conversation, especially if you follow up with something else.

For the most part, in the abstract sense, I don't think there's anything wrong with being wrong. How can we learn if we're not allowed to make mistakes? There are some contexts where caution and sensitivity are particularly warranted, but it's not always clear what those contexts are in advance until you've accumulated some life experience.

Some people will read something like this and respond, "That's so tedious. I'll just say what I think, which is YOU'RE WRONG." Well, in what sense? What do you think I'm saying here? What do you think I'm trying to achieve?

It's almost always more interesting to draw out the conversation and look for points of agreement (it's productive, too, because you build relationships that way) than to just attack people, which maybe gives you a temporary smug feeling of superiority. If you're really unlucky, you may even become popular for being a jerk to people – then you'll have a bloodthirsty audience that demands greater and more vicious attacks, and they'll likely turn on you when they eventually find you unsatisfactory.

## Logistics quotes

## Military Logistic Quotes

"The war has been variously termed a war of production and a war of machines. Whatever else it is, so far as the United States is concerned, it is a war of logistics."
Fleet ADM Ernest J. King, in a 1946 report to the Secretary of the Navy

"… in its relationship to strategy, logistics assumes the character of a dynamic force, without which the strategic conception is simply a paper plan."
CDR C. Theo Vogelsang, USN

"The essence of flexibility is in the mind of the commander; the substance of flexibility is in logistics."
RADM Henry Eccles, U.S. Navy

"Forget logistics, you lose."
Lt. Gen. Fredrick Franks, USA, 7th Corps Commander, Desert Storm

"The tactics...no, amateurs discuss tactics,.... Professional soldiers study logistics."
Tom Clancy

"Amateurs talk about tactics, but professionals study logistics."
Gen. Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Commandant of the Marine Corps) noted in 1980

"Behind every great leader there was an even greater logistician."
- M. Cox

"I am tempted to make a slightly exaggerated statement: that logistics is all of war-making, except shooting the guns, releasing the bombs, and firing the torpedoes."
ADM Lynde D. McCormick, USN

## *Social strategy?*

(thread) "Do my friends secretly hate me" this is a problem that can be solved a bit of thinking and strategizing. If you wanna solve it. Some people just want to believe their friends hate them.

If you want to solve it though the first step is to diversify your friend groups. Don't rely on any one single group for all your social needs. Make some new friends. Reach out to old ones. You can even experiment with presenting different versions of yourself in diff groups.

The second step is to have as many 1-1 conversations with people as possible. Ideally in person if possible so you can really get a sense of their facial & body language. You could even show them this meme and laugh about it together and ask them about their experiences

if you present yourself as someone who is genuinely earnest, curious, open to listening, non-judgemental, etc, people tend to share their thoughts and feelings. If you make an effort to perform little acts of service, encouragement, support, people will love you

Not *everyone* will tho. That's something you just gotta make your peace with. You can be perfect and some people will hate you precisely for being perfect, lol. You can never win everyone. So focus on winning the people you respect and admire

ok so looking at it closer it's "thinking and strategizing and doing the work". Doing the work does require that you have the minimum amount of faith/hope that it's worth doing at all. IME the way to reboot this is to focus hard on the stories that move you most deeply

## *"If you're so smart why aren't you rich"*

"If you're so smart why aren't you rich" is in fact a fascinating trap of a question — if you're really smart in the way that matters, you'll realize that being ~rich~ isn't necessary and you can just focus on whatever it is that you were hoping money would buy you

I'd reframe the question to something like "If you're so smart, why aren't you happy", (happiness including things like pleasure, purpose, kinship, joy) and the bottleneck there for most smart people is courage

systemic issues run in parallel to this, are intertwined with this. Procedural intelligence – the ability to use your mind to alter and modify reality. some call this executive function. you could also frame it as project management. at the core of it is managing your own psychology, which involves storytelling.

worrying about being smart at all can also be kind of a trap. If you subconsciously buy into a hierarchical model of the world where smart people are on top, deserving praise, and fools are below, deserving mockery... often you will police/bully yourself and be miserable for it.

some people are chronically ill, sick, poor, etc, this thread is not about them, this thread is mostly for the bored and depressed upper middle class dudes who DM me all the time

## *Thread about mckinsey*

([thread](#)) this is a wonderful example of well-intentioned misdirection, because the reason mckinsey makes $500,000/presentation has very little to do with the quality of their presentations (it has to meet a min threshold, of course) and everything to do with solving for distribution.

the value of a thing is what you can negotiate for it. so like, the same bit of relationship advice might be worth $500 to a casual fella but literally maybe $50 million dollars to a billionaire. but the question is how you gonna get the billionaire's ear? and negotiate that $?

the real lessons to learn from/about McKinsey imo is how did they get into that position in the first place? how did this professor of accounting get his first clients? he died at 48, by the way, so be wary of what you emulate, too

"in 1922 he published his first major work, entitled Budgetary Control" – I haven't dug deeper yet but this is a common thing I've noticed. Creating some media product – writing a book, or even a well-respected blogpost, essay, youtube vid, whatever – helps with getting clients

There's very little detail in the wiki about the most critical early days, none of it is particularly helpful. It's similar to talking about how google's culture has all sorts of interesting quirks – cool, but not really pointing out it's funded by search engine monopoly $. on mck's site itself, suspiciously little information about the first 10 years. this strikes me as likely narrativizing. kinda like how online platforms might start out as a place for selling drugs and sex work etc before chasing them out to sell ads. not saying mck did this…
by the time you get to a "royal client" like the US Presidency, you're basically set, and everything after that doesn't really interest me. Alfred Dunhill similarly made it big after receiving a royal warrant to be tobacconist for Edward VIII, but how do you get there? I'm watching a vid...
"expert in mgmt accounting... began advising companies locally... opened up offices in major urban hubs... by 1950s it was assisting the white house" COME ON!!! where's all the detail from step 1 to 2?

its like, "small filmmaker... then worked for Marvel..."

Ok so [this](#) is some relevant detail and it makes sense why they would leave it out for narrative sake. mckinsey were a bunch of numbers guys who were at the right place at the right time at an explosion of hypergrowth during the industrial revolution. parallels with guys like hamilton and napoleon re: revolutions.

so yeah, part of how you make $500k/presentation is sort of like how a bastard kid becomes treasury secretary, or emperor of france. you gotta be smart and good at what you do, sure, and you have to be in a very right place at a very right time in a matter of weeks vs centuries.

"management engineers and accountants" is also an interesting detail, like how apple has to start as apple computer. a lot of people trying to emulate success, emulate the tail end, which is learning the wrong lessons / premature over-optimization

you can be smarter than mckinsey and bower were, doesn't matter if you don't have a fckn global industrial revolution blowing steam under your wings. we have to be honest about the truths of these things if we're serious about making progress.

this is another good and actionable detail that's left out of Jasper's presentation framework. it's about class, it's about priesthood, it's about status.

There are a bunch of really simple questions to ask when analyzing anything, that somehow very people seem to be rigorous about. What are the resources? What are the constraints? Where is the money coming from? Who is paying? Why?

## Conversation trees

(source) you can be the exception to the rule someone has made up in their mind, and they will talk past you right in front of your face. this seems ridiculous if you're taller than them and they say "nobody taller than me exists", but people do do this for less visible/concrete things
you can game out the rest of the interaction chains. they might dig in, or they might backpedal – something like "well okay maybe not everyone but most..." and depending on what your goal is in the conversation this might take anywhere from 3 to say ~100 more steps
so okay you play this out with a few hundred people over a few years and now you have some sense of the distribution of possible paths on the conversation tree. you then wanna be mindful of the amount of time and effort you're expending on each conversation, the opportunity cost
i'm not saying "become a smug asshole who dismisses anybody who want to talk", that's an extreme position, and there's a whole spectrum from that to the other extreme of "let your attention get hijacked by any random person who asks"
as you start triaging these you may find that, while you can theoretically make a difference to someone doing X, it might be less than ideal compared to if you did Y instead. some military analogies work here. it's worth losing some battles to win the war.
and in practice the war is much bigger than a human lifetime, may never be won, and so it's more like "it's worth losing some battles to keep fighting the good fight, whatever that means to you"

## Riffs from twitter, perhaps to be expanded into sections:

I spent like the first decade of my intellectual life arguing with smart people that they could be more earnest, and it took me a lot of wasted effort to realize that it's much more effective to teach earnest people to be more thoughtful and strategic. you can't teach hunger.

although funnily enough you then do find that there's a substantial % of earnest people who are very averse to any kind of strategic thinking.

✱

some of my friends tweet about X every day and find that X people increasingly follow them. I tweet about Y every day and find that Y people increasingly follow me. The magic of twitter is you get what you talk about, so be thoughtful and strategic about what you want to receive.

You can't just tweet "cash money dolla dolla bills fuck yea" and get money that way. It's like a slightly mischievous genie who wants to mess with you. You'll just get *other* "cash money" guys in your mentions. See how it works?

I saw a friend tweet "all of you have lost your minds", and everyone in the replies went on to make good on the implicit proposal in that tweet. An inverse tweet might be something like "I enjoy hearing from sane, thoughtful voices." Either way, you receive more of what you summon.

✱

you can actually speedrun having ~1,000 fights with people about all of the topics you like to fight about. you can do this in about 2-3 years or so. get it out of your system in your late teens, early 20s, realize it's incredibly unproductive, and then start being strategic

10,000 fights, even. take notes. keep score. keep tabs on the people you've valiantly defeated with your powerful rhetoric. notice how little of a difference it makes. analyze. rethink your approach. figure out the intersection of what you actually want <> what is achievable

you'll find then that about a dozen conversations with strategic friends can help you achieve much greater outcomes than 1,000 arguments

✱

It seems to me that exposure to a strategic actor can make someone more strategic via proxy/imitation, even *without* them being conscious of it. I used to think of strategy as something that required explicit, conscientious effort, but it seems like implicit strategizing is also a thing. Perhaps it's even possible to strategize in your sleep.

It might be that you witness someone who seems to be consistently more successful at something when they think ahead, and you kinda just follow some version of that without realising you picked it up... idk i might be more confused than when I started thinking about this

I must be underestimating how much people can think/know/do without "Knowing" what they're doing - implicit (inexplicit?) knowledge can take people even further than I thought - and I'm someone who's generally quite a big fan of the idea of implicit knowledge to begin with

I think a significant part of it is witnessing how someone's attention is directed, what questions they ask, where they're looking. Watching an expert play a video game you're familiar with can make you better at the game, just by watching, because you see for yourself how they handle situations more skillfully than you, and it's not too hard to sense/feel how you could bridge the gap between the two of you

✳

Slingshot theory
Lady Gaga thread
Sunny Leone thread
Marie Kondo thread

✳

how do we properly manage and navigate information asymmetry, where a few  people know a lot, some people know a bit, and most people don't know anything? over a long time + high social intercourse?

kinda boringly I think the status quo here is pretty close to optimal for the system: most people don't want to put in a ton of effort into things, so the retransmitters be retransmitting, and so the 0.1% experts get to be like "do not cite the buzzwords at me witch"

still I do think being aware of the big picture dynamic and having a sort of cheeky cheerful sense of humor about it lets you persist and enjoy the game longer.

and: imo, never waste an opportunity to recruit a high-effort/serious/strategic/"live" player

I learned this from a bunch of the best educators – Mr Rogers, Carl Sagan, Victor Wooten, etc – while it's completely understandable to blow off some steam from dealing with intro 101 noobs, no judgement there – the power move is to "yes, and" them to 102. This *is* extra credit. "How do you know who to move up and who to not bother wasting your time on?" you look at their output

and while it's admittedly a lot of effort at the start, you can remarkably reduce the amount of effort required to identify and deliver the right nudges to people, which for me has been really fulfilling – not the nudging itself, but seeing people really flourish from it

if you're really serious about anything substantial you will likely have to persist for decades in repeating your talking points and enduring them being repeated back to you without letting it diminish your spirit

(show up, don't die, don't quit)

circling back to like, the psychology of it-

there's an impulse especially for creative types to always be seeking novelty. this isn't necessarily good or bad- it's tricky business bc it *is* possible to become a sort of calcified Talking Point Repeater stripped of nuance…

Steve Jobs spoke about it elegantly: "they can be really successful to the outside world but not really be successful to themselves". (And to most other people this looks like victory!)

"always be taking some risks" seems like a good heuristic here, if you have an artist's heart

but note that this is after some measure of success. if you're always seeking novelty without ever sticking with anything long enough for it to bear fruit, then in a way you're ironically trapped in an overfamiliar cycle of cheap hits and you never experience the thrill of growth

;;;

Sword guy thread https://twitter.com/visakanv/status/1652157250990145536

**✳**

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### LessUnstrategic: militaries and war (march2019)
Clausewitz was supposed to be some sort of famous military mind, respected and studied by anybody who's serious about getting good at war-making. War-mongering?
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_von_Clausewitz
He had a quote that went something like, "War is politics continued through other means".

I have a bookmark with a list of books about war. There's something to the idea that war is a fundamental element of human history. Violence. We seem to be violent creatures who make a great deal of effort to pretend that we're not. Of course, you can't reduce all of humanity to war, but it does seem like an important lens. Human history could be thought of as a history of wars. So much of technological development was shaped by war. So much of our language uses metaphors and images from war.

What is strategy, again? https://hbr.org/2015/05/what-is-strategy-again

Sea power: http://thediplomat.com/2011/01/garbage-in-garbage-out/

Orwell's thoughts on military strategy: http://thediplomat.com/2013/03/george-orwell-strategic-genius/

when war comes, friendships end: https://twitter.com/Rrrrnessa/status/825786027411439616 "Sitting with mom and she just told me the most chilling story about how her group of friends ended when Milosevic came into power."

It's been so long since World War 2 that it can sometimes seem like war is gone. Like it was a distant nightmare from ancient times. But there's always a war going on somewhere, still. We live in an age of occupations and terrorist attacks. "INFO WARS DOT COM". Warring ideologies, perspectives, belief systems. If you want to understand humanity you have to understand war. You have to know war. I live in Singapore, and Singapore still lives in the shadow of the Japanese Occupation of WW2, whether we like it or not. There are still some living survivors of the occupation. Singapore's birth as an independent island-nation-city-state was in the aftermath of war. We were desperate to have a standing army to defend ourselves with. Today, some 60-70 years later, it's tempting and easy for some people to say, "Oh, we don't need soldiers any more. We don't need to spend much money on the military. Let's just get rid of it all." But historically, that sort of move has always ultimately proved to be very unwise. I'm not saying that I know what the balance is, and I do think it's important to be wary of military overspending, overreach. Every military advisor is going to ask for more budget from his civilian counterparts, invoking threats and boogeymen, real and imagined.

✳

if you're even moderately smart you can pretty much sit down and think for a bit about where everything is headed, what recurring patterns and cycles are going to happen. Strangely few people do this

✳

Some people are serious about growth, progress, learning. Some are not. People are so predictable and unstrategic. Maybe being strategic is a sort of trauma response

✳

something about patient long-cycle persistence is very compelling to people, contrasted with needy pushiness

This is about annoying people who are pushy about favours

✳

Draft for a post on wisdom:

- I believe we you can become wiser, and it annoys me that we pretend otherwise. do i presently want to become wiser? I would like to make better decisions. before i lecture anybody else about wisdom i should strive to be the wisest version of myself. what's the best decision I could make right now?
    - i believe it's possible to become wise. when you suggest this, people often immediately offer criticisms about why it's not possible. the move here is to integrate all of those criticisms into the play.
    - quotes and links
        - Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything. Between these two banks the river of my life flows. – Nisargadatta Maharaj
        - ***As Paul Graham asked, is it worth it being wise? Do I want to be wise? Is wisdom something worth aspiring towards, or is it something that happens by itself? How do you know when you're being unwise?***
        - Washington: http://www.foundationsmag.com/civility.html
        - Teddy Roosevelt: http://www.foundationsmag.com/tr-character.html
        - http://paulgraham.com/wisdom.html
        - Seneca
        - http://lesswrong.com/lw/2pv/intellectual_hipsters_and_metacontrarianism/
    - what else is there to say about this though? does this go in... LessUnstrategic? yea do people actually desire wisdom? or do they just desire to be less unwise? sometimes double negatives are better, like "be not not-yourself" is better than "be yourself"

## *Relevant youtube videos:*

## *Appendix & notes*

Patio11's thread on agency https://twitter.com/patio11/status/1739801838386336007
Emmett agency https://twitter.com/eshear/status/1740059667982873069

https://www.strategynotes.co/p/john-boyds-greatest-lesson-wasnt
https://www.ooda.com/quotes/
https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/38568-boyd-the-fighter-pilot-who-changed-the-art-of-war

Dunhill
Alan watts

## *Further reading*

You can buy my ebooks FRIENDLY AMBITIOUS NERD and INTROSPECT (this is the better one).

I also have a public draft for another book titled CONSTRUCTIVE ADHD.

I'd love it if you subscribed to my youtube channel. I'm trying to cultivate the most thoughtful comments section on the Internet.

Oh, and I have a Substack and I'd love it if you subscribed to that too!

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**the difference between strategic and unstrategic actors is tremendous.** It makes me want to teach strategy to everyone. But it turns out a lot of people don't want it, they're either unwilling or unable So
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its slightly weird how right i was about almost everything almost all of the time when i was a child, but it's less weird when you realize that i was reading a LOT and synthesizing all of that and applying it to my experience, which almost nobody seriously believed that a child could or would do

one of the things that i offer as supporting evidence for this is that i have now been 10+ years happily married to my first girlfriend who i started dating when i was 14. loads of people always say "you got lucky".
idk how many domains i will have to get lucky at before people start considering that maybe i know what i am talking about, lol

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Writing prompt re: long games / thinking in dominos: "Any actually decent resources out there on this type of long term planning? Something better than yr bog standard self help book?"
https://twitter.com/visakanv/status/1612719362145910785

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my ability to do this well is actually what lets me "outperform" people who are smarter, more creative, etc:
https://twitter.com/visakanv/status/1224388967216205827
LessUnstrategic: all my life people told me all sorts of things weren't possible. and I was like, but surely if you think about it properly and figure it out it'll be possible? just reverse-engineer the success? and they were like "yeah right"

Thread about failed HN entrepreneur https://twitter.com/visakanv/status/1750300080496898540

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if there's a thing that reliably annoys you, that recurringly happens, it may be possible to actually come up with a canned psychological response that neuters the annoyance

eg if you get annoyed by bad replies you can decide in advance to simply ignore them

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it's funny to me how many people who have a problem have never tried sitting down with a pen and paper for 30 minutes to write down what the problem actually is and what some solutions might look like

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(26jun2023) I've been thinking about allocating attention and resources… and how from the outside it looks like people in aggregate are (over the years, at a civilizational sort of level), opportunity-seeking, but from the inside day-to-day it doesn't always feel that way. In fact even now I often feel like I'm being very unstrategic. Every single day I feel slightly haunted by all the actions I'm not taking, even simple low-cost unscary ones that i think I know + believe would have relatively immediate payoffs for me.
(There's obviously something I'm missing when I'm standing at this particular vantage point looking through this particular lens at this particular thing. I suspect I actually already have a picture of the missing thing somewhere, have written about it already, even, but I haven't yet synthesized the two– I haven't yet discerned how electricity and magnetism are the same thing.)

When I was younger and I hadn't yet achieved any measure of success or anything to be proud of, I would beat myself up over this sort of thing- being unstrategic, being slow, being indecisive, deferring action. but now that I have some of the good stuff, and having reflected and journaled and read and talked about it with people, and just having accumulated some life experience, I think I'm able to observe this whole muddle with a more neutral lens. This isn't necessarily bad, it's just what it is, and I'd like to understand it.

I don't think I feel imposter syndrome relative to my peers. I can see quite easily how each person is struggling with their own thing. And I don't see any living person who's quite exactly doing what I'm doing. And those that are doing similar enough things, I'm delighted to find, encounter, collaborate with

It'll be clearer if we talk in terms of the actions.

I have books. I know that those books contain good, valuable information. I know that I am particularly well-suited to read and synthesize and share that information. So why haven't I done it, or why don't I begin on a process to do it? Indecision. Procrastination. Is there something I'm afraid of? Doesn't seem like it. I've just been lingering in the comfort of familiarity.

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