

Anthony Gustin's Annual Review

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Welcome to my 2022 annual review and planning document! 🎉

To those of you who don't know me: I've done extensive annual reviews going on 10 years now that have been a pivotal process in switching careers three times (clinician > e-commerce entrepreneur > now farmer 🧑🌾) and crafting a life that has been unexpected and never easy, but richer than I could have imagined. I've used this evolving framework to reframe what is important to me and then to set and achieve many wild goals in different disciplines, like going from being a clinician with six locations within three years, e-commerce entrepreneur with my businesses making \$150mm+ with no funding in under four years, and then buying and building a farm.

Yes, this may seem like an excessive amount of work to do. Why? I don't think this is a normal or natural thing to do, but I do think it is an appropriate reaction to our always on, always connected, and always comparing modern lifestyle. If you're not overly intentional about how to navigate life and have systems to stay your own course, you're going to get swept up in the currents of what everyone else expects of you.

This is my process to reset, tune out all of the noise, and make sure I am going where I want in life and not where society or other people want me to be.

I hope that you enjoy this process and that it brings you a bit of self reflection and confidence moving into 2023. As cheesy as it sounds, it is true: you're only who you are right now and you get to fully choose your story moving forward.

Tips Before You Start:

- Don't try to do this in one day. Spread it out over a few days to make it most effective. Your brain only has so much output in a day and you want your best energy invested for the best outcome.
- Doing this in a place other than your usual workspace will help you think outside of the box. I'm doing it alone in the woods in a cabin in northern Wisconsin this year. The few hundred bucks you spend can alter your life direction – it is worth it if you can swing it.
- Turn off all devices, wifi, notifications, and make sure you have at least 3-4 hours at a time blocked off for these exercises. I typically do 2-3 deep focused chunks per day.
- Eat a moderately sized high-protein, high-fat meal before (or fast if you're experienced) so your brain works well and your blood sugar is stable.

- I recommend writing this out via pen and paper for maximal dot-connecting and brainstorming. I personally take back into [Notion/Things](#) (my life management/project management suite, alongside [Evernote](#), detailed below).
- The first answer in your head to these questions is usually the right one. In everything you review, ask yourself if it is your thought or a societal expectation. If you're not used to doing this type of thinking, you may need to literally ask this question several times. It helps to have someone else ask you in a conversation as well.
- I usually keep a running "2023 change/action items" sheet going from the very beginning as thinking through every step prompts how I want to improve going into the next year. This can be refined into goals later or can turn into one-off tasks you can complete.
- Have fun and don't put too much pressure on yourself! You don't have to get every detail perfect for this review to be transformational. Even if it is followed 50% you're likely doing more than 99% of people.

Step One: Housekeeping

Before you dive into deep reflections and planning, clearing up clutter can have a massive impact. I don't work well with physical (or digital) clutter. This section is all about cleaning the "workspace," closing out as many open loops, and having a clear slate to work from. I chip away at this daily for a week or so before my review.

- Clean out all emails on all accounts and get to inbox zero
- Go through any inbox system you may have (journals, apps, etc.) and get everything in organized place you may need (into Things/Notion/Evernote for me)
- Go through task management system (I personally use [Things](#))
- Go through any life management / longer term project management (I use [Notion](#))
- Go through any work or collaboration tools you need and close out any messages, projects, etc. (I use [Asana](#) and Slack for business management)
- Go through any note taking apps you use and delete/organize/add anything you need (hot take, but I still use the ever bloated [Evernote](#))
- Clean up your desktop, downloads, and any other folders that are a mess on your computer

Note: If you don't have any process here with any of these apps, check out [Building A Second Brain](#) with Tiago Forte or the many great videos by [Ali Abdaal](#). Also of note is David Allen's [Getting Things Done](#).

Step Two: Reflect on 2022

Reflecting on the past is a very important part of knowing what you should do more or less of in the future.

Look through all photos on your phone, events on your calendar, entries in your journals, social media posts, to-do/project management, or any other data sources you think are important.

1. What were my major milestones or moments? What accomplishments am I most proud of?
2. What are the people, events, habits, or tasks that I look back fondly, energized me the most, or made me feel the most expansive 2022?
 1. How can I do more of this in 2023?
3. What are the people, events, habits, or tasks that I dreaded, drained me the most, or made me feel the most contracted in 2022?
 1. How can I do less of this in 2023?
4. How did I grow as a person?
5. What were my favorite books, podcasts, articles, videos and how did they shape my thinking?
6. How could I have been better as a person? Friend? Manager? Parent? Etc.
7. What am I most grateful for in 2022?
8. What books did I read? Which ones were most impactful and why? What were the main takeaways?
9. What were the lessons adversity and life taught me?
10. What is currently stressing me out the most?
11. What are the skills that I acquired in 2022?

Step Three: Review 2022 Outcomes

Look at goals for 2022 if you set any and answer the following questions:

1. How many did I hit?
 - a. *Note:* If over 70%, make bigger goals for 2023
 - b. *Note:* If under 70% but none of them were inspiring enough to actually work on, make bigger goals for 2023
 - c. *Note:* If under 70% because you didn't have capacity for all of them, make fewer goals for 2023
2. Which three accomplishments in 2022 am I the proudest of and why?
 - a. *Note:* This could possibly not have been on your goal list. Bonus!
3. Why did I miss the mark on any of them?
4. Are these goals still important? If so, pull down to 2023 planning. If not, don't feel bad crossing them out and moving on.
5. What habits, people, routines, or environments supported me in reaching my goals?
 - a. How do I lean into these in 2023?
6. What habits, people, routines, or environments prevented me from reaching from my goals?
 - a. How do I remove these blockers in 2023?

Step Four: Where You Are Now

1. Daily Schedule Audit

Take out a piece of paper and label it vertically with the hours you're awake in the day. Write out

a typical daily routine in blocks from when you wake up until when you go to bed. I do a typical weekday as that's how most of our time is spent.

Now on another sheet paper do the same thing but write down what you *ideally* would do on an average day. *[If you don't know what ideal daily routines would be yet, feel free to do this part after the goal setting section]*

- a. Think about why there are discrepancies. How can you shift your goals, habits, routines, people you surround yourself with, etc. to change this.

2. Weekly Blocking Audit

Now do the same thing for the week. Write out a typical weekly routine in blocks and then write out what an ideal week looks like. *[If you don't know what ideal weekly blocks would be yet, feel free to do this part after the goal setting section]*

I do this on top of the daily list because I tend to work on different projects on different days and am always changing my focus. Ex. I podcast typically only on Thursday. I write my newsletter on Monday. I love to take Saturday off of devices (in a perfect world). My wife and I have a relationship check-in on Sundays for an hour. Etc.

- b. Think about why there are discrepancies. How can you shift your goals, habits, routines, people you surround yourself with, etc. to change this.

3. Save a bunch of time with Automate/Delegate/Eliminate

When you go through this exercise it will be clear how much time you are doing things you probably don't need to. Doing this routinely helps me focus on things that are actually additive to my life.

Write down all of the things you do that you can think of. Write absolutely everything, or split between personal and work. Make three columns on a landscape piece of paper with "automate, delegate, and eliminate" on each column. Now pull everything you possibly can into each column unless you love doing it.

If you still have an enormous amount of tasks left over here (before we even get to goal setting!) a few things I do to streamline this below:

Task Stacking

I will look through some of the remaining things that I do and try to see if there are any ways I can stack them. Most of them I enjoy and don't want to get rid of anyway and sometimes there are ways to make things more enjoyable by stacking.

Ex. If I have "do the dishes" and "listen to audiobooks" on there, I can easily do both of these at the same time.

Another example would be: “get time in nature” + “spend time with friends” + “workout” = play sports with friends outside.

Don't get too obsessive here. Life isn't about being the most efficient with everything, but getting creative here can help open up time if you're limited in it.

Optimize

I'll often find that I'm doing a lot of things only I can do, but doing them too frequently to distract myself in ways that aren't additive. If I can, I'll try to optimize and create rules around things that are sucking my attention away.

Ex. One that always comes up for me is responding to text messages. I'll get in the habit of doing this continuously throughout the day, which gets me on my phone, and cascades into me getting caught doing something else.

If I batch responding to all of my text messages when I'm on my laptop and just a few times a day, I feel less scatterbrained, can write better messages, and I don't feel the same amount of fomo trying to keep up with every conversation.

4. Change habits with Start/Stop/Continue

Make three columns on a landscape piece of paper with "start, stop, continue" on each column. Write everything here, or split between personal and work. Jot down anything you want to start doing, stop doing, or continue doing in each column.

Looking back at past journals it is eerie how much has changed by just writing this down and literally not doing anything else in my life. Just being aware of something and putting on paper can have an enormous benefit.

5. Define your purpose

What was I put on this planet to do?

Going through the purpose and vision exercises come easy to me because it has been part of my review for 10+ years. In the past I have gotten quite a few questions from people who get stuck at this part. Here's more info:

Defining your purpose, vision, and goals is the first step in creating a rock solid foundation. It works like this: Your purpose drives your vision, and your vision drives your goals. Without one, you can't build to the other.

Purpose = What impact you really want to have on the world.

If you don't have a clear purpose, you'll easily get distracted by meandering and unimportant goals. You'll end up doing things you're already good at, but that are unfulfilling. You'll get

trapped in distractions and comparing yourself to others' tasks or goals, rather than having the impact you really want to make.

Purpose Example: My purpose is to help people own the fundamentals of health to live life with the highest quality possible. This comes from my own struggles earlier in life with nutrition, movement, stress, and rest.

6. Define your Vision

What does my purpose practically look like day to day, year to year?

Vision = The way you are actually going to make that impact.

Your purpose will be the why, but the vision will be the how. The purpose will probably always be rock solid, but the vision will shift over time.

Vision Example: I envision myself being a leader in the education of other clinician's so they can scale their reach to help as many people as possible.

To stimulate these ideas further, you can ask yourself three questions popularized by Peter Thiel:

* *What is valuable?*

- *What can I uniquely do?*
- *What is nobody else doing?*

Step Five: What Do You Want?

Most people want to get straight to setting goals to achieving something or obtaining some material good. I personally think that's an awful foundation to start with. I've had the most satisfaction being in alignment with the *person* with the character I want to have far more than checking some arbitrary goal off a list.

You aren't going to get anywhere dramatically different in your life if you are the same person with a different goal. You literally need to change who you are to get different results. Yes, it sucks. But it's usually worth it.

1. Ask yourself “*what type of person do I want to be?*”

Don't worry about who you are now, it doesn't matter. We are planning for who you get to be. Take a moment to write down who you want to become. Focus on behaviors. How you work, your character, how you treat other people, your thought patterns. We will work on figuring out how to become this person shortly, so no need stressing out how to get there just yet.

2. Set themes for the upcoming year.

Having a set theme will help make each category of your life much clearer. Take everything you wrote for you who you want to be and find some themes. Stating themes in the positive have a much better effect rather than planning. Ex. “Practicing love and joy” is better than “avoiding hate and judgment.” What you *do* want, not what you don’t want.

Now that you have some direction on who you want to be, and themes on what that looks like, it’s time to figure out how to get there. The best way to do that is become clear on goals, and then build a system of actions you can do to achieve those goals.

Your goals effectively stretch you to become someone you aren’t today. If you were the person who could get the things you wanted and have the life you dreamed of, you’d have them already.

The best goals are well defined not in the material possessions you get once you achieve them, but intentionally set to help you form the habits, thoughts, relationships, and lifestyle that turn you into the person you want to be.

3. Set your goal areas

Setting arbitrary goals just to hit them is satisfying, but not lasting. You don’t want to end up chasing the checkmarks of achievement. Trust me on this one.

1. Bucket all areas of your life to be able to focus on each one. If you had to rank the following in terms of priority right now, what would they be?

Examples: Physical health, mental health, spirituality, creativity, relationships, learning, family, travel, fun, finances, work, or any other self-defined category.

2. Split work up into as many buckets as needed for multiple businesses or projects
 - a. *(I typically have 4-6 here, but also overload myself with unnecessary amounts of responsibility!)*
3. Write why the top three priorities are priorities for you so you can get clear. If you need, write why 3 or 5 more times to really drill down on the importance of these and order them correctly.
4. Do I currently live in alignment with my values and priorities of the top three areas of life? If not, where am I most out of alignment? (Ex. ranked high in physical, but eat garbage and sit all day)
5. Assess the health of each and rank them on a scale of 1-10. Especially look for those who are prioritized high that have low scores.

Sit with each category for a long time to come up with what is important, what you want, where you’re at, etc. Again, think about how you can set goals and what you want in each area and how that relates to who you will be if you can get it.

Example: If you complete a marathon but you don't run now, you will have had to become someone who is consistent and you will have had to become a runner. (This is actually a bad example as I ran a marathon without training this year to knock it off my bucket list – do not recommend!)

If struggling on thinking about what you want in each area, here are some questions to stimulate thinking about the focus categories.

Physical health (mostly related to nutrition, exercise, sleep)

What have I always wanted to do physically but never had the time for?

What is the most important use of my body right now? Longevity? Looks? Athletic performance?

What have I always admired in others' physical capacity?

What activities do I enjoy the most that adds to my physical health?

What goals can I set to help me create physical habits I need to have the life I want?

Mental health

What mindfulness practices do I do, or should I do?

What makes me the most stressed?

What relieves the most amount of stress?

What goals can I set that make sure I am being the most expansive version of myself regularly?

Spirituality

What is my current spiritual practice like?

Do I have a routine that reminds me of my purpose in life, and something greater than myself?

Do I have a community that helps reinforce my spirituality?

What rituals can I chart with frequency that help me in my spiritual practice?

Creativity

Where do I make new things with no outcome attached?

Where do I get lost while making something?

How can I create structure around creativity to make sure I do it when I don't "feel" like it?

How can I share my creativity with others?

How can I use community to be creative?

Relationships

Who should I reconnect with?

Do I want to expand my social network? Contract it?

Am I spending enough time with the people I care about?

Who should I make more time for?

Who is not supporting me that I should not try to please or make time for?

Who are the people who are most like how I want to be and how to do structure my life to spend more time with them?

Family

How much do I want to see my family this year?

How do I want to improve in my family dynamics?

How can I show up regularly as the brother/son/father that I want to be?

Travel

Where have I always wanted to travel to?

Where can I travel to enrich my life instead of escape from it?

What are focused ways I can travel to help me become more of the person I want to be?

Fun

What things do I do that I find myself losing time?

What do I do where I find myself laughing the most?

What can I do that I think is silly and outrageous and has nothing to do with accomplishment?

Finances

What does financial freedom look like to me and what can I get done in the next year to get closer to that?

Where can I use money to make my life easier?

Where am I spending money habitually that I don't need to?

What will it mean for me to have the net worth/income I think I want?

How can I make money that helps me create the habits I want to turn me into the person I want to be?

Work

What do I want out of my work? Impact? Income? Passive cash flow? Skill building? Purposeful work?

How much do I want to work on this business/project/etc?

If I could only work on one thing and income wasn't a factor, what would it be and why?

What are my unique skills and how can I give that gift to the world?

What is a community that I want to belong to that can flourish with my gifts?

4. Set your goals within your areas

1. Write 1-3 goals for each of the above categories or whichever categories you want.
 1. This should be outcome-driven and time-bound as possible. Look into [SMART goals](#) for more context if necessary.
 2. Notice "work" is only one of the ten categories above. It is totally fine to have the most important goal be "Go on 4 hiking trips >3 days with friends and without devices" and nothing to do with personal or professional development.

3. Conversely if you want to really focus on work this year, don't feel bad if it is more, but be aware of the balance trade offs you are making. I am going back into building mode and have six (!!!) work areas I am setting goals for this year. I am also fine with that since I took ~8 months off of work this last year.
4. Stacking the above makes them even more powerful. The above example could fall into physical health, mental health, relationships, travel, fun, spirituality...
2. What new habits or skills do I want to acquire? What habits do I want to break?
3. What do I want to learn about that I've been putting off?
4. Think about the following:
 - Why do I want this outcome?
 - What resources would I need to accomplish this?
 - How much time will this take?
 - Who can I ask for help who has done this before?
 - Can I use money to accelerate progress?
 - Can I hire a coach?
5. Write either the next action step, the frequency of inputs required to make sure this outcome gets done, or ideally both
6. What can I say no to that will make anything above easier while not sacrificing any goals or areas of improvement?
7. To make sure these are my goals and not anyone else's, take some or all and ask "why" 3 or more times.

If you're not used to writing goals in actionable ways, [Chris Sparks](#) publishes a great review set and I love his frame of goal setting to make sure you're actually in the process of doing something to reach your goal. The frame is: "By ___(taking this action)___ I expect to ___(outcome of goal)___"

You need to be thinking about what you need to actually do to get what you want instead of simply what you want otherwise you'll flail and never get it. My goals end up being very input based by nature as I've done this for so long but here's an example.

Ex. If you're an aspiring Twitter star, you should probably have the goal of "Write and publish X twitter threads" instead of "Reach 100k followers." This should hopefully come after noting past performance, or if you don't have that information *doing some actual research* to figure out expected outcome from writing threads. Maybe you know for each thread (*or looked at a couple resources and learned that*) you get ~1k new followers and you're at 30k followers. Great, your goal is now 70 threads to reach 100k followers.

It will be even better if you can clearly state "Why" after every goal as well. There will be many times you will want to quit and ditch your goal but if your why is strong you will keep soldiering on.

Fully written out could look like:

I'm going to write 70 high quality Twitter threads to reach 100k followers so I can educate the world about the importance of jelly beans because we are on an existential path to jelly beans becoming an irrelevant candy and the world needs to know how amazing and wonderful they actually are.

5. Write 3 crazy stretch goals.

Don't need to track these but set an intention on why and how much it would mean to you.
(interview X celebrity, y net worth, etc)

Note: I do a hodgepodge in-depth business review and questions here that are pulled from a lot of different books and resources and change dramatically with the state of the business and what we most need. Check out [Scaling Up](#), [Business Model Generation](#), and [Traction](#) for useful templates here if you've never done anything like this for your business. I've never really had a job so can't comment on a review for that.

Note: There's another in-depth personal financial review I do that accompanies this that isn't worth sharing again because of the individual complexities. If one wants financial freedom, I believe strongly in detailed yearly, quarterly, and monthly reviews and planning. What gets measured gets managed.

Step Six: 2023 Action and Plan

This is by far the most important part of the section. If you don't have a system, you'll end up in the graveyard of other "New Year's Resolutions" and get thrown back into the harsh currents of life, pulled wherever society, your friends, family, and bitter trolls on Twitter want you to go.

There are a million ways to skin the cat here, the most important thing is finding something that is sustainable for *you* that you actually enjoy doing. Maybe that's writing on notecards every day and reviewing your yearly goals monthly, maybe it is some unnecessarily overwhelming digital tracking system like mine. It doesn't matter. Spend as much time as you need in this section and feel absolutely confidence you can manage whatever system you build for yourself.

One of the first things I try to do before going forward here is literally making sure I have enough time to achieve the goals I set. Goal setting is like a buffet. Many people's eyes are much bigger than their stomachs and too much effort gets left on the plate.

Put what you want to do in an ideal day PLUS how much time it will realistically take you to achieve the goals you set. I created the template below to show that even if I had a *perfect* day with no interruptions, I'd be left with less than an hour of buffer time. That's a lot of commitments!



[\[Weekly Time Calculator Template\]](#)

If you literally don't have enough time to be able to do the things you want in life and get where you want to be, you need to start chopping items off the list. Revisit your purpose and vision section. Ask where you'd be okay sacrificing. I know, you're all excited and set all of these wild goals you're going to achieve and now you realize that you can only do 20% of them. This part is probably the most painful of the entire process, but it will ensure you *actually* achieve your goals.

Now that you know you can actually humanly do what you want to do, on to planning your actual systems.

1. What is my system going to be to make sure you stick to these goals/habits/inputs?
2. What software or processes am I going to use to manage my life moving forward?
3. How will I review and complete the next action step for each goal I've set? How often?
4. How will I track the regular inputs needed to progress towards the outcomes you want?
5. What habits, behaviors, or people are most likely to support me in achieving my goals above?
6. What habits, behaviors, people, or obstacles are most likely to get in my way in achieving the above?
7. How can I change my home and/or work environments to help me better achieve my goals?

My current life tracking system utilizes Things 3, Notion, Evernote, and Asana in detailed daily, weekly, monthly, and annual tracking, project management, note taking, resource database, and to-do management. Overkill for some, but without it I get distracted and off track easily. As per request from last year, below are videos detailing my systems with Notion templates I made if you want to copy them:

-  [Daily Tracker](#) [TEMPLATE]
-  [Weekly Review](#) [TEMPLATE]
-  [Monthly Review/Goals](#) [TEMPLATE]
-  [Yearly Goals](#) [TEMPLATE]

If you have any more questions about my systems, feel free to ping me directly with a DM on [Twitter](#) or [IG](#), or at ag@dranthonygustin.com

Make three columns on a landscape piece of paper with "progress, maintenance, free" on each column. The progress column is for tasks that get things done and move the needle forward, maintenance for things you need to do to keep things where they are (*laundry, emails, etc.*), and free things you just enjoy doing to recharge.

Review the current daily and weekly schedules from above. Now given the plan for 2023, what would an ideal day or ideal week look like? Do you have time for everything? Be honest here and try not to overcommit. If you don't have time, reduce the number of goals you have and add them in later in the year if you have time clear up. If you try to do too much, you'll never get

anything done. Go back to your priorities if you need, the themes on who you want to be, and choose wisely.

Again, it is *critical* that you have a system you can follow here.

Show your goals, system of check-ins, and explain how you're going to get things done to three people. Could be colleagues, family, friends, lovers, etc. Schedule a check-in on your calendar weekly for the next six weeks to review your system and make sure that it is still working for you. Whatever you need to do to make this work for you.

Without actions and changing of habits, you're going to be the same person in a year from now. Could be okay for some people, but I'm assuming if you've made it this far in this review, that's not what you want.

Congrats on taking the time to create a better life for yourself. Don't get hung up on perfection. Even a little bit of awareness is better than none. Now get to work, enjoy the process, and have an amazing year!

FAQ:

Feel free to comment on this page, send me a DM on [Twitter/IG](#), or email at ag@dranthonygustin.com and I'll add more FAQs here.

- ***Why only for one year? What do you think about goal setting for the next five years?***
 - I don't really believe in planning for multi-year goals as what I want now versus what I thought was possible five years ago is completely different. It works for some people though, so if that sounds great to you, then go right ahead!
 - I have more fun in my life when I follow my rapidly changing interests and adapt to the always evolving world around me than trying to force my will endlessly.
 - I tend to think after you do any decent purpose/vision setting exercises (covered briefly in step four), what you want out of life gets pretty set and doesn't need to change that often anyway.
 - Ex. My purpose is to help other people live healthier lives. My vision in how that gets done has looked very different year to year. It used to be as a clinician, then it was through content and physical products, now it is producing food and working on some other super secret things.
- ***Do you have any other reflection based questions that can help stimulate some thinking on personal/work?***

Here are some miscellaneous questions to ask to get the juices flowing.

Personal

- How would I spend my time if I knew I was going to die in 30 days?

- How would I spend my time if I knew I was going to die in one year?
- What if I saw my work, social media, website, etc. as someone I admire? Would I be proud or embarrassed?
- What type of people do I want to attract into my life? How can I show up online to plant a flag to attract those people?
- Where can I hire coaches to accelerate my skill acquisition so I can reach goals 10x faster?
- Who can I mentor?
- What would I regret on my deathbed? How can I make sure to do the opposite of that?
- Where are there clear communities of the people who have the same values as mine? How can be as helpful as possible to that community?
- What fundamentals in life can I revisit? (Can be skills, workouts/movement, learning, etc.)

Work

- What would I do if I could only work on one thing for the rest of my life?
- What would I do if I could only work 2 hours per day?
- What would I do if I could only work 2 hours per week?
- What would I do if I had to take six months off with no communication from the team starting one week from today?
- How would I know the health of my business if I could only use one number?
- How would I know the health of my business if I could only use three numbers?