

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me! This essay is in the rough draft phase, with lots to improve.

How you can help:

1. Any general feedback on your first impression?
2. Which parts resonated? Where should I double down?
 - a. How did the baseball portions read to you? I fear that I stripped out vital parts of the story to try to simplify and keep it under 1,000 words, disjointing
3. Anything that's redundant or worth removing?
4. CRIBS - was there anything that is confusing, repetitive, insightful, boring or surprising?

Hi all- here is a first draft exploring how our dopamine circuits are under attack.

I'd like this essay to serve as the foundation of "what's happening" broadly so in future essays, I can explore subtopics deeply around what we can do, and how health + tech are intertwined. I welcome all feedback, and listed 3 areas I'm curious about in the [third article draft](#):

Draft starts on page 2 

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2 things to incorporate

- 1) "When i get my shot, i'm going to be ready"- Senior year, not seeing the field the first 10 games, remaining patient to get my shot. Didn't realize it would be on the other side of the field
- 2) "Doubt had crept in"
- 3) 10.26.22 thoughts: include story telling about how I'd changed my identity in the past before college baseball, almost quit, and had to reinvent myself... and sucked for 2 years
 - a) The only real rejection I dealt with in my adolescent /teenage years was through the game of baseball. I was small. I was weak. I was feeble. I couldn't hit the ball out of the infield when we moved up to the big-kid fields.

Many people I chat with feel stuck in what they're doing, because they don't realize a secret that baseball taught me... your identity is completely malleable.

It's critical to accept that your identity is always changing, in order to grow and develop as a person. Embracing any type of change is scary - but it also leads to new experiences and opportunities.

Changing my identity in the game of baseball showed me I can change my identity in the game of life too.

I was a Freshman pitching back in the familiar Florida humidity in front of my family and a few hundred UCF fans. That night should have felt like a homecoming. Despite being back in my home state, I was far from comfortable.



It was a tight 1-run game in the 6th inning - my job was to keep it that way. That night, I failed to step into the identity of a reliable relief pitcher. I was erratic and unsure where each pitch was going.

“Saks, what the f*** was that?” my coach demanded in the dugout after we both processed what just happened.

My *identity* that night changed. The identity of a pitcher and player the entire team had known me to be. Saks the “strike thrower” was no more.

The Start of my “Command Issues”

My “command issues” persisted out of the bullpen for 2 years. At times, I was as precise as Picasso. Others, I was as erratic as the Nasdaq. I couldn’t emotionally regulate myself and strike the balance between *energetic*, *aggressive*, yet collected.

I couldn’t *consistently* find the pitcher I once was and knew I *could be*.

I had a 2 year identity crisis within the game of baseball. The sport and baseball diamond that once felt like home felt like a prison. When pitching in Summer leagues with a carefree mindset, the field was my playground. But when I pitched in the Northeastern climate during the college season with added pressure, the field was my prison.

Reflecting on my experiences as a baseball player, I see endless parallels to how embracing similar changes help create my most fulfilling new lives as a writer, community builder, digital marketer and social entrepreneur.

Identity Play-Doh

Identity is simply a series of patterns you’ve done time and time again. The smoker who a pack a day will admit to his doctor he’s a smoker. Most people walk around with a *reactionary* identity, molded by their environment and external factors. They haven’t taken the time to be the artist of their own life that works *with* their metaphorical identity play-doh.

Our identity is shaped by our choices and actions - we have the power to choose who we want to be. We’re not limited by our pasts - we can create a new identity at any point in time, every day. We can be whoever we aspire to be.



Accepting Identity as Ever-evolving

I learned this from reflecting on “my baseball identity crisis” which intensified my Junior year. I’d changed my pitching mechanics to become a “side-arm” sinkerballer, and I was inconsistent as ever.

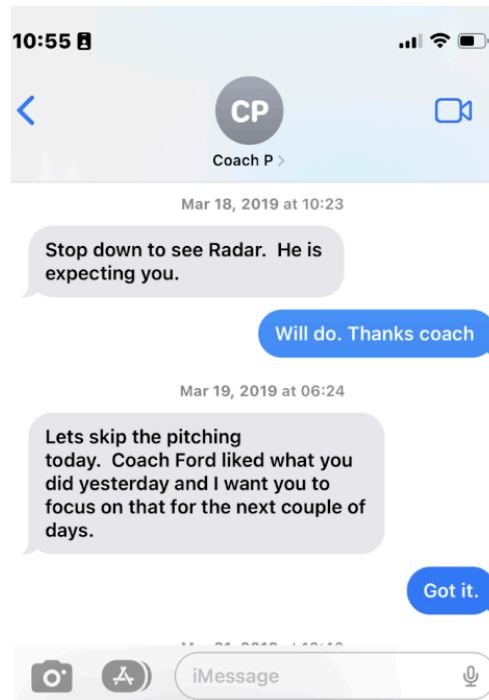
Sure, 95% of the time when my mechanics were “on”, the ball would beautifully release from my hand, creating aggressive, deceptive downward spin, causing hitters to swing and miss.



The other 5% could get ugly. The ball would fly nowhere near the catcher’s target. I had the borderline “[yips](#)” at times, which was always searing the back burner of my mind even when things were going well. Some teammates were *afraid* to hit off me in scrimmages because there was a decent chance I’d plunk them.

Changing my baseball identity:

Fast forward to my Senior Year, 10 weeks after getting Sports Hernia surgery. I got an opportunity to re-imagine my identity as a baseball player.



Caption: Our coach was desperate to create pressure on the other Outfielders who hadn't performed several series into the season

Despite not picking up a bat in 4 years, I knew this was my moment to imaginatively create my new identity for the remainder of the season.

I remember the exact moment when I had the epiphany. "Holy s***, I'm going to make this work" as I picked up my bat and helmet from our Equipment Manager. In my mind (before my play on the field proved it) *"I was a great Outfielder and Hitter"*.

This truth deeply resonated *within my body and shook my core*. My confined and cramped feelings finally burst into comfort and clarity - my world expanded and I felt lighter, almost buoyant.

Nobody, even my closest teammates believed in me, but I had the deepest self conviction. That season, I surprised my teammates. I surprised my coaches. But I didn't surprise myself when I led the team in several offensive categories.

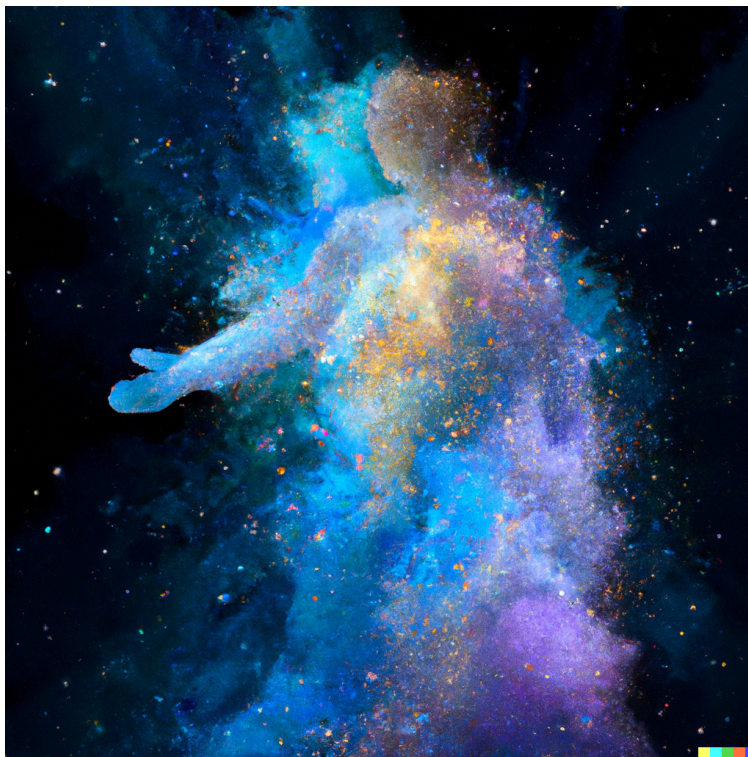
Be an artist with your play-doh

If you were to think about your identity as play-doh... What type of play-doh are you creating with? The old, stale play-doh that cracks, and can't be built with? Or the fresh kind, right out of the tub?



Both identity and play-doh are malleable. We should all be the metaphorical creators of our own lives, recognizing that we can mold and shape our identity over time.

While this secret was revealed to me through baseball, it's more importantly given me the confidence and courage to set and tackle new goals. It's enabled me to *become* a writer, to launch (and fail) several past ventures, and now step into my identity as an entrepreneur, building a [digital running community](#) for 1st-time runners. And I want to help you have that moment too.



An expressive oil painting of a person's identity that's malleable, depicted as an explosion of a nebula, abstract digital art.

Embracing change in who you are can create a more fulfilling life, as it allows us to grow and evolve as people. Regardless of what journey you're embarking on, embrace your inner child where identity (and play-doh) started.