

THE SEVEN-LEAGUE BOOTS,

a guidebook to

The Greatest Frienemy You've Always Had

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Use What You Got

I'm sorry, but who *doesn't* want their very own pair of Seven-League Boots? This magical product of some unknown cobbler (probably a fairy godmother, we are after all real good when it comes to shoes) will get you to your destination in 1/7th of the time with 1/7th of all the muss-n-fuss. Thing is, we each of us possess our own such pair of boots, we're just too busy tripping ourselves up to see it.

Thus, this guidebook. Taken straight from *31 Days of Narratemes, a guided journal for questing the cup out of your daily life*, this guide includes:

- an Introduction to rethinking your relationship to your fear and your subconscious mind in general;
- seven lessons on how you're subconscious is trying to help and how you can guide it to do just that; and,
- journaling exercises which — when done as analog as possible — will help you to rewire your brain to get questing on the regular.

You already possess your very own pair of Seven-League Boots. Isn't it about time you learned to let them do their thing?

Obviously if you have a physiological condition that prevents you from putting pen to paper, I don't want you to do anything that could cause you to hurt yourself. I just want you to be as "hands-on" with the journaling exercises as possible to activate as many parts of your brain as possible so that you can see the best results possible.

So if there *aren't* any long-standing recommendations *not* to journal from your doctor, you're gonna need to put to paper. So get yourself a journal, your journey begins now!

Introduction

Here's an idea, Freud's id/ego/superego view of the human mind is more representative of societal norms than psychological. He positioned the id/animal instincts as the lowest of the low, the ego/conscious thought as our next step in growth, and the superego/peaceful conformity for the greater good as our ultimate ideal. His seemingly interconnected view of the brain's functions, is more of a ladder of progress leading us from selfish animal to selfless saint. It warns against giving ourselves an unrealistic ideal to aspire to, even as it describes an unrealistic ideal to which we should aspire.

In all fairness, his view gave us an amazing jumping off point for understanding why we do what we do, but it's due for an adjustment reflective of what current research is revealing more and more each day.

First, that societal norms and psychological norms are not the same so every effort should be made to discern when the one is influencing the other. Second, that when a "ladder of success" is being presented as an interconnected thing, we need to lay that ladder on its side and actually look at its rungs as interconnected principles.

Here's some science, recent studies of brain activity show that about 97% of our brain's processing power is utilized by the subconscious for all of our survival needs (heart rate, breathing, immune system, flash-analysis of incoming stimuli from our various senses, etc.) leaving the remaining 3% for our conscious mind where we make conscious decisions and distract ourselves and generally exert/exhaust our daily allotment of willpower.

Here's my theory, our conscious mind has been allotted only 3% of our brain's processing power because its job is to fill in the gaps of subconscious brain function which is predominantly automated and limited in its communicative abilities. Just as our subconscious mind automates certain bodily functions for our survival (heart rate, breathing while asleep, the immune system) so, too, does it strive to automate how we function in the world for our survival. This influence on our behavior comprises all of our survival instincts, which –

influence on our behavior comprises all of our survival instincts, which – though interconnected – can be divided into three subgroups:

1. Physical survival instincts (those things we do to avoid being hit by a bus or mauled by a bobcat),
2. Social survival instincts (those things we do to ensure that others continue to care about us or in the hopes that someone will like us in the near-future), and
3. Procreative survival instincts (those things we do to make a name for ourselves or otherwise extend some aspect of our existence into the unseeable future).

Recent discussions about the subconscious mind will refer to any effect it has on our behavior as “resistance” or “fear” because maintaining the status quo behaviors of our day-to-day lives is the “surest” way to survive. The logic of resistance being that if we’re still alive, then we don’t need to change.

But this is only half of how the subconscious affects our behavior to help us survive physically and maintain our current level of social success. There is another half to the subconscious equation, our drive to connect with more/new people we meet and the drive to do something that will move us toward the new/uncertain.

Our three sets of survival instincts altogether result in a dance between reactive behaviors (those which make us seek the comfort of what we already know how to do) and radical behaviors (those which make us seek a different way of viewing and or doing things). We default to avoiding whichever is most uncomfortable, being uncertain or being bored.

Our conscious mind, which contains willpower and therefore free will, has the ability to override the default and choose not to avoid the most uncomfortable of our options. A choice which can lead to more learning, assuming it’s the right choice. And just wondering whether we’re making the right choice can exhaust our reserve of willpower, an event which researchers recently named decision fatigue.

So folks come up with productivity hacks and life hacks and things we can do to help automate our decisions toward the life we want. Meanwhile, these life hackers are still tripping over themselves by talk of “pushing through resistance” and “punching fear in the face” which is just going to fatigue your resolve, thereby limiting the efficacy of whatever “hack” they wanted you to follow.

I don't want you to punch your fear in the face. If fear is your subconscious at work, that would be equivalent to 1 person punching 31 other people plus a 32nd person who's only landing 2 punches for 3 everybody else is landing which is still twice as many as you which are all dispersed among these 30+ people and that's assuming a consistent rate of punches landed by everyone including you but not the 32nd guy. In case those numbers make zero sense, I'm trying to illustrate a fist-fight between the 3% of your brainpower making up your conscious mind, and the 97% making up your subconscious mind.

Guess who's going to pass out from exhaustion first. Also, your fear is a part of you, so punching it in the face successfully without getting punched back would be like punching 97% of your own face (or 48.5% of your face assuming an equal distribution of reactive and radical default behaviors, which is still about half of your face).

Why are we listening to advice that says we should beat ourselves to such a pulp? What does it achieve?

Motivation?

Studies have shown that the rate at which we exhaust ourselves doing something we *want* to do versus something we *don't* want to do, we tire ourselves at a slower rate. The right motivation, the right drive, keeps us going and doing for a longer period of time and, oftentimes, with greater intensity.

Because we aren't working against ourselves. If we can stop othering the vast majority of our own brains, we can lean into the strength of our subconscious and its automations to make going after what we want so much easier and so much more enjoyable.

More of what we want and less punching ourselves in the face.

That's what these first seven lessons and accompanying exercises are all about. We're going to check in with our subconscious minds, getting clear about how it most often tries to communicate with our conscious minds to sway our behavior, and we're going to show it why we're the boss and it's okay to do the scary things.

So, are you ready to meet the greatest frienemy you've ever had?

01: Absentation

In this first narrateme, someone or something goes missing.

It's the hole that needs filling, the question that needs answering, the reason the hero goes questing.

So, what will you be questing after? What hole in your life needs filling?

If you have lots of quests you want to go on, great! List all those out in no particular order. Got more than 10? Congrats, you're officially more heroic Hercules.

Now, snap out of it!

Hercules was the son of a *god*. One or both of your parents may view themselves as a god, but that is far and away a very different thing.

Also, even with those 10 (two were considered cheating so he had to do 2 more hence the 12 Labors), Hercules could still only get all his labors done one at a time.

And if Hercules can't get it all done at the same time without any help whatsoever, then neither can you.

Look at your list of possible quests. *Pick one*. You can come back to the others later, they're not really going anywhere.

For now, just pick the one that - having been completed - will give you the most breathing room. Whether that's because it's the most important (not urgent) or because it will set up so many of your future quests to be successful. Pick it because you want it the most, because it seems the easiest and yet (for some *unknown* reason) you just haven't figured out how to do this one friggin' thing *and your sick of it not being done*.

Make a list. Make a wish. That's all.

02: Interdiction

The interdiction is a warning not to do what you want to do.

Filling that hole isn't your job.

You don't want the answer to that question.

Let someone else go on the quest.

How it relates to questing the crap out of your daily life is this: the interdiction is your inner critic bringing up all the doubts and worries and frustrations that always tend to come up when you want to move forward.

These will most likely be issues of being too much of one thing or not enough of another. And you're going to list every single one that comes to mind as you think about your chosen quest, your great big wish from the last exercise.

I'm too stubborn.

I'm not smart enough.

I have too many things on my plate.

I don't have enough experience.

Physically write out a list of all the Too Muches and Not Enoughs that come to mind when you think about this quest. Go as deep and specific as possible. I suggest journaling this as a two-column spread.

The point of this exercise is to acknowledge your inner critic/subconscious mind. You're the one in charge here, would you want someone in charge of you who didn't at least acknowledge your contributions?

And trust me, having this list will come in handy soon enough.

03: Violation of the Interdiction

The name of this narrateme (like so many others) is a little misleading, and arguably unfortunate.

This violation of the interdiction/your inner critic is you deciding to go on your chosen quest even though you have doubts and worries and fears.

You aren't telling your fear to f*ck off. You're telling your fear:

Thank you for looking out for me. I hear what you're saying, and I think it will be good for both of us to go ahead with this quest.

So, you're journaling prompt is to go point-by-point through your lists of Too Much & Not Enough, re-writing each interdiction's opposite as a Possible Win for your quest.

I will be more flexible.

I will learn as I go.

I will put aside non-priorities.

I will gain experience by doing.

This is *critical*. Your conscious mind makes use of about 3% of your brain's total processing power, leaving the other 97% to your subconscious mind. The more surface area your conscious processing power covers, the more your subconscious will take note and work to support your efforts.

So first you journal to acknowledge what your subconscious mind's concerns, and then you journal how your quest will address those concerns. Think of journaling as taking your subconscious by the hand as though you were helping a child to cross the street.

Take care of your subconscious and it will take care of you.

04: Reconnaissance

When you violate the interdiction, acknowledging your inner critic and deciding to go questing anyway, you are asking for trouble. You are inviting villainy into your story.

This is a good thing.

Think of every book and movie and show you've ever enjoyed, you wouldn't have enjoyed it nearly as much if there hadn't been some sort of conflict. There needs to be some sort of opposition or obstacle between Point A and Point B in order to help illustrate the value of reaching the intended destination.

In questing, the villain does not wish the hero to succeed. In our questing, our subconscious throws its weight around so that we will abide by tried-and-true patterns.

So, for this narrateme, we're going to turn the tables on our subconscious and “play” at being the villain. We are going to make use of what we know about our subconscious. Because it may try to play its cards close to the vest, but we're the ones wearing the vest.

Which means it is time to make use of the journaling you've already done, and do some more by putting your recent journaling to use:

1. **Quest of Choice / Wish List** — Look over the list of quests you made before you decided on the one. Maybe it was a tough choice, maybe it was the clear winner, maybe it was the only thing you wanted to quest out. How do you want to feel about that choice? Write it down in one sentence.
I want to feel _____ about [insert choice of quest].
2. **Too Much / Not Enough**— Take your list of concerns about going on this quest and list out - in no particular order - little things you can challenge yourself to do on your way to fulfilling your quest. List things you're going to have to do anyway in order to complete your quest.
3. **Possible Winnings**— Compare the possible wins for going on your quest with the list you've just made. Can each of the possible wins be paid out by one or more of the tasks you've listed? Are any of the wins not attachable to any of the tasks? To increase your chances of winning, add tasks specific to the unaccounted for win(s) to your current list.

Grand Finale:

1. Arrange your list of tasks with each task in its own square on a bingo/tic-tac-toe style grid.
2. Make sure the grid has as many squares as the number of tasks you've listed. Or create multiple boards to accommodate them all.
3. Keep your QUEST board(s) of tasks somewhere you will see often so that it can remind you to get cracking.
4. Use whatever method you prefer for marking off the squares. X / stickers / coloring / pictures. Go the inverse with post-its or some-such and remove tasks from the board to reveal an image underneath.

Whatever you do for this board, make it as analog as possible. That way your subconscious knows you mean business.

05: Delivery

Remember how, in the last narrateme, I mentioned that our subconscious is always in a state of reconnaissance? Well, no matter how proactive we are (marking the squares in our grid, learning new info/patterns to put our subconscious at ease) that never stops.

When we go against the norms — as perceived by our subconscious / inner critic / villain — our subconscious goes on high alert looking for danger. We are in "new territory" and so it believes it needs to be on guard.

So while we are moving forward on our quest in whatever way we can, it is important to remember that our subconscious is looking for reasons to retreat. It is looking for that one piece of the puzzle it can use to hijack our quest, putting

is looking for that one piece of the puzzle it can use to hijack our quest, putting us off course or stopping our quest altogether.

The moment it finds this information is known in this narrateme as delivery. It was hoping for an antidote to this questing thing, and it has finally got it!

This means that, in our questing, we have to be on our guard, consciously as well. We have to be on the lookout for whether an action we are taking is one of our choosing or that of our subconscious.

Because our subconscious is primarily concerned with issues of survival, we must consciously direct our vigilance based on our three sets of survival instincts:

1. physical: please don't let me die
2. social: please don't let my current relationships end with no hope of ever rebuilding or creating new relationships
3. procreative: please don't let me live my life without having done anything

Based on these three survival instincts, we can ask ourselves three questions about the outcome to any action we take in order to help ensure we are proactively headed in the right direction:

1. If I do this, will I still be alive afterward?
2. If I do this, will there still be someone somewhere who cares about me afterward?
3. If I do this, will I be any closer to fulfilling my quest?

If you answered YES to all three questions, do the thing that needs doing. However, if you answered YES but are still hesitating, make a list of individual people you can reach out to and talk to about your quest who bolster your confidence.

Now is not the time to list people who will give you any reasons not to keep going on your quest (well-meanies, I like to call them). Now is the time to list your Faces in the Crowd, the people you look for when all you want is a little encouragement. Not advice for or against, just cheerleading.

Question your hesitation, and look for your Faces in the Crowd.

06: Trickery

This is a tricky thing. Hence the name of this narrateme: trickery. Your subconscious wants to trick you into going back to your old patterns, and it does this by relying on certain patterns of its own.

First, there's perfection. You get the idea that if you can't do it right from the very beginning then you shouldn't start at all. Or if there's a chance your ducks aren't all lined up perfectly straight you shouldn't pull the trigger.

If you've been doing the journaling exercises, then you've already helped "weaken" this particular angle. That's what the tic-tac-toe/Bingo board is for. Rather than having a long list of items you must do in a particular order (or the *appearance* of a particular order) that you shouldn't skip around even if it's actually easier to do so because you might confuse yourself or miss something, you have a board of tasks to complete in whatever order makes sense just so long as you get them done.

Second, there's forgetfulness. This is more than just losing your keys. This is about taking the moving parts of your quest for granted.

It's easy to skip around this guidebook and say "I know this already." It's easy to brush off advice from someone wiser than you because you've "heard it already." It's easy to avoid putting in the work because you or someone you know has "done it already."

Forgetfulness. Taking someone or something for granted. Being dismissive of that which is familiar.

Your subconscious will use certain instances of familiarity to misdirect you and send you off course and headed back to your old ways. Because everyone falls back into their old patterns when they aren't paying attention.

Pay attention.

The answer to both of these tricks is the same. Ask yourself: What can I learn from this?

If you're waiting for the perfect circumstances to take your next step, can you learn to take chances and be willing to make mistakes?

If you're ignoring the obvious because it's obvious, can you make a note of what exactly is obvious so you can compare it to the work you're doing?

Ooh, journaling exercise! Make two columns on a page with Column A titled "Obvious" and Column B titled "Nuance" and be on the lookout for things you

might have otherwise taken for granted. Put what you find in the “Obvious” column, and then re-write it in your own words according to your personal philosophies in the “Nuance” column in order to help tease out a learning experience for your subconscious mind.

Slow down. Pay attention. Learn something.

Anything. Even if you've learned it before. Learn it again.

It helps make it stick.

07: Complicity

Sometimes, your subconscious is going to get the best of you. You're going to get off track. This is called complicity.

Fear took you for a ride, and you went along.

It happens. It's instinct. It's willpower showing its finite colors.

This step in your questing is a kind of road sign saying: Rest Area Ahead.

It's a reminder that throughout your questing you're going to need to take breaks from time to time. You're going to need a breather. And there is *nothing* wrong with that.

The root of this guidebook, and indeed all holistic storytelling, is self-care. Take a little time to take care of you, and you will be better able to take care of whatever tasks lay ahead of you on the journey.

So, journaling time, make a list of simple tasks that make you feel good. Things you do just for you that each take anywhere from 5 seconds to 25 minutes to do right and get done.

Challenge yourself to fill a page with such tasks.

*I hope you've enjoyed this guidebook.
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