



Jake 00:10

Thank you, Kevin, for coming on. And joining me on the podcast today, I've been looking forward to this conversation for quite a while now. You are the Founding Executive Editor. Now senior Maverick at Wired Magazine. You've written many books, including the best seller, the inevitable and most recently, excellent advice for living, which is what we're going to focus on mostly today. You also do a weekly podcast called Cool Tools, done a lot of writing and speaking over the years, sort of like what we're doing now, although not so many podcasts, I hope and hopefully, we can change something up a little bit and give listeners and some of your true fans some, you know, unique information that they haven't been able to get elsewhere. But it's great to have you on, I think the best place to start would be for those who don't know you, or don't know you well, to just hear your story from as early as you're willing to start to where you are today and talk about, you know, some of the decisions you made along the way.

Kevin Kelly 01:06

Well, thanks for having me, I really appreciate this opportunity to share my life and what I know and maybe even some bits of advice. I grew up in New Jersey, northern New Jersey suburb of New York City, a town called Westfield, New Jersey for those who are counting, and that is I spend most of my childhood in suburban areas. But it was you know, it was in the 50s and 60s, and it's really hard to understand how parochial life was back then how substances isolated we were from the rest of the world, you know, and how impoverished we were in terms of information. Whilst we were a middle class family, it was really hard to find out anything to learn anything. And I was very interested in learning, I gravitated to a local library where I had my first job with a local library being the page. The that was the person who kind of went down to the basement to get the old magazines or shelved books and but even that library was huge compared to what we know now or what we can know is was just like a desert, very, very little information. And so all my life I was making things I was a maker as a kid, made rare always made later on me that nature Museum, that with exhibits and all kinds of demonstrations of Natural History and ultraviolet, blowing rocks and all kinds of stuff that I had people helping me collect kids in the neighborhood collecting stuff. And



eventually went on to make a chemistry lab and really got into science in high school. So I was always making things but it was so hard to learn, and you'll find out or to find things or I didn't have any money to buy things. And that was even more of a problem. But there was compared again, to what even ordinary person with that much money if you have a phone, what you can learn was it was mind boggling. And we would have I would just been in total euphoric heaven if it had been like that when I was growing up. So that was the thing that I remember the most, in retrospect, was my my constant need for I was for, for information for, for tapping friends about how to do things and looking for books on how to do things in writing away for catalogs and learning how to do things and make it having been so difficult to do that. And that kind of played a little bit of a part of our life later on where I became involved in disseminating that kind of information with the Whole Earth Catalog and later with the online world and later with wired and the websites and today with my newsletters, where we give out information for free, sign up for it and you can get this and so this kind of packaging of ideas and sharing is sort of what I was interested always as a as a kid, I made newsletters. I had we had a band that didn't play music, and I made a music video and newsletter for for the band. And so my first job overseas was working for a company doing a company newsletter. So I've always kind of been interested in this sharing of information and distributing information and helping people learn stuff. And of course, this book right now of advice is in that same vein of trying to be helpful, trying to tell you something that might it'll be helpful, because I remember a time when getting any kind of information was so, so difficult.

Jake 05:08

Yeah, it's interesting you talk on, on other podcasts I've listened to and sort of get at it from a few different angles in the book, how, you know, it's important to define success for yourself, and to create your own success metrics. You had a quote in the book, don't measure your life with someone else's ruler. And someone had asked you sort of like, what was your definition of success for yourself. And I think you said something along the lines of like, it's all oriented around what you're saying this theme of what you're saying, learning yourself, and sort of facilitating collective learning for the world,



things like that. And, to your point, the, you know, the world has changed quite a bit since you were growing up in terms of the availability of information and the cost to access it and things like this. And not only have you been able to observe that from like, a unique point of view, and a very interested point of view, sort of craving that as a kid, and then getting more and more of it, you know, as you've grown older, but you've also been at sort of the very center of it, as it's been developing, like you said, Whole Earth Catalog, wired, etc. Doing the newsletter for free, everything like that. How have you sort of how have you viewed? Have you like, what's your observations of the evolution of this, because it didn't just go from sort of zero to one in terms of like, there's no information, it's a total desert to, you know, chat GPT. Obviously, there's like a lot in between, where there are inflection points that you can recall, from, you know, from your life, basically, where, you know, Google came out. And that was like a big one mobile became the big thing. Were there certain inflection points that were big, or was it just this gradual, sort of, you know, inch by inch progress over the course of your life that has gotten from sort of zero to one where we are today.

Kevin Kelly 07:03

We're me, I think the first hint that there was an acceleration of new information was in my encounters, or after high school of the whole earth catalog, which, for the first time, was directly trying to address this poverty of information at large, and particularly the how to instructional kinds of things to self help do it yourself. And that's what it was, it was a kind of a Bible for do it yourselfers not because actually had the information in it. It was primarily a catalogue of the other books that you could buy by mail order. That will tell you this kind of information about how to build your house yourself. But how to do homeschooling for your kids, by how to become a beekeeper by how to start a business. All these things that your local library did not have, and your local bookstore certainly did not have. Were available by mail, using this catalog, and then they have the books and other tools, you could just order by mail. And there was a you know, there was a whole interesting called mail order catalogs, which we don't really pay much attention to anymore. But that was the thing, you send away a postcard, you got to catalog. And then you could order from the catalog and it would be sent to you by mail. So



this was the whole earth catalog was sort of the catalog of the catalogs. It was telling you, it was a kind of Uber clearinghouse of where all the stuff was hiding, so to speak. And then it would also kind of run articles about inventing your life and kind of a ways in which you could take control over your own destiny and do amazing things you didn't think you could do. And I eventually got roped into it because I was traveling later on and I wanted to write for them. And the only thing I knew anything about the other people didn't know about budget traveling. Not like a tourist but like a real hardcore traveler. You know, who kind of takes local third class buses and sleeps in dorms and eats whatever the locals are eating. And I became an expert at that. So I started writing for the whole earth catalog about travel, how to how to travel, how to travel the Himalayas, for for very little money traveling in that way. And that was the first instance I saw where there was a hope for the future and you hit could find information. And later on Steve Jobs and other people notice that it was sort of like the internet on newsprint because all the information in these catalogs were sent in by readers. So the yours was sending, a lot of readers were sent in, and then they would publish it and you would come back, you subscribe to it without advertising. And it was get better and better as more people saw it and contributed their own little tiny bit, they might know one little thing and they added it to the mix. So it was kind of a user generated content, like the internet was. So that was the first hint that this was possible. And it was always in the mind of the Creator, Stuart Brand that it'd be done electronically, that ideally, it wouldn't be just printed on a book, it would be kind of a, of a service, he could maybe call up with on a phone or, because that's all we had a time. And you, you get the information that way. When the same group of people I worked then at the place, I liked it so much. And I worked with Stuart, we started the first public access to the internet, which was very, very, very recent and very, very young, to facilitate this to kind of make this information exchange possible. And that was the second I guess, epiphany that I saw was we made these bulletin boards and people could post anything, it was asynchronous, meaning you would post when you could and someone else would come back and read it later and maybe reply to it. And it would kind of hang there until the next person replied, That was a thread that was totally novel at the time, there was no other metaphor, there was nothing else really like it.



And I just thought that the the encouragement, the help, the exchange of information. And the potential for this was just enormous, even though a lot of people at the time didn't believe it was going to be very mainstream. And they were right until the web came along. And again, that's maybe the third epiphany, seeing what websites could be in the amount of information that you could put up and anybody could put up and then anybody could find. It's like, Okay, now we're talking now we have the real Library of Alexandria, from what from modern times. It's not like CD ROMs, which were kind of interesting, but not really what we wanted, but this web thing was the real deal. And wired was actually involved in basically inventing the web web development, we invented the click through ad banner for the web, there was just lots of things that were being invented to, again, facilitate this democratization, this decentralization and the spread of any kind of information you needed. And we're still we're still benefiting from that. And then I guess the fourth the fourth bit in this prong is the invention of YouTube, which I think is really underrated in terms of being able to convey that. And now my big book collection that had from home worth of all the How To books are basically completely superseded by YouTube, you can find much better, more recent and easier to find information on YouTube than you can be fine in my whole two story library here of how to books. And finally, you mentioned AI Yeah, AI is going to trance form this, this again, once more with things like the chat bots, where you can use the conversational interface and ask and kind of query closely have a conversation with and find out whatever you need. And I think we're headed into like this, you know, this, from my from my point of view, the fifth, the fifth level of as information dissemination of being able to find out and do things on your own. It's just, I don't think we really appreciate how, how important it is, and how fast this is accelerating change and learning in the world at large, just the degree to which being able to learn something and then disseminate it and have it reached the people who are interested. And then within days, they've taken that and improved now they've posted it. And that's that cycle, which should take years of people waiting to write books that had to be copy edited, and then printed up and distributed years later the information would be now it's days if not hours later, and that has really sped up the collective learning of our civilization.



Jake 14:49

Well, that's a really interesting answer and I appreciate you sharing it in in such a sort of comprehensive way each step of the way. It's, you know, obviously I'm, I'm a bit younger, I haven't like witnessed all Have these inflection points and myself, and to hear your perspective being very much a part of each visit, each step of it is just really interesting. But obviously, with all of the information that there now is at your fingertips, YouTube, whatever else it might be, the challenge, I think, you know, for me and and a lot of others is focus and, you know, filtering out what you want to pay attention to, versus what you want to ignore. You're just constantly sort of bombarded whether it's social media, or recommended recommended videos on YouTube, or whatever it might be with stuff that may be kind of interesting. But like, it's not really where you want to spend your time. And somehow, you have to be able to like, just focus on all of this. And everything seems to be sort of like short term attention span, and not everything. Podcasts are an example of like a longer form thing, but tweets and tiktoks. And whatever else it might be. You talked a bit in your book about the importance of focus. Have you found ways as this world has changed around you to hone in on your focus and improve it over time? Has it been sort of tested with these new tools in ways that like I'm talking about, or how do you think about focus overall, and and just practical, you know, tools that you've found to be able to enhance it?

Kevin Kelly 16:25

Yeah, I think, as we make your world with more and more opportunities, and options, more and more different things that we're interested in as a, as a society, and the more stuff that we produce, we're certainly expanding the options of where we can give our attention, which is the one scarcity that remains, were the billionaire still have exactly the same amount of time as you do, they can't buy any more time really. And so, that is the scarcity, and is being spread, so to speak, or back in by an increasing number of different different options and avenues, but we, you know, are limited in it. So we want to, to use this precious resource of attention in a wise way, and I find the focus is not so much a matter of what's the word I want. excluding everything else. There are periods of time when you when you do need to do that, but I find that the best way to harness this



precious resources is not necessarily in the sense of, of kind of like focus, as we're heads down, I have earphones on, I'm not hearing anything, I'm only thinking about my eyes, just, you know, straight ahead, that kind of a focus. I think another way of focusing the I like to do is this idea of returning to something over and over over again, like a habit like a like a daily thing, will you do it on a ongoing basis. And the writer is talking about writing 500 words a day, which may only take you an hour. But this idea that if you do an hour a day, over a year, you can write a book, in a variety of focus that I find useful in this today's world, it's not as if you are going to lock yourself in a cell and not come out until a year later when you produce the book. It doesn't work that way. It's just that just that's just not even the best way to do it. And so, so that so focusing, I think is made best, most practical, in kind of a more of a habitual sense than it is by an isolation sense. Where you are not doing anything. I do think that part of focus is learning how to say no, politely and gently and firmly and maybe having some understanding of an appreciation of saying no of learning to do it often and well. Which is a very difficult thing when you're starting out. And in fact, you do probably want to say yes to things a lot when you're starting out. There's a great YouTube channel called yes theory, which is this idea of people saying yes to as many things as you can. And I think when you're starting that is a, that's a better profile. But as you gain some traction, and you want to begin to learn how to say no, as well as Yes, and then you actually eventually want to be able to say no mostly and saying no is now you not so much the distractions is that the little like procrastination distractions, that's, that's, that's not the problem. The problem is that you're going to be offered many opportunities, of serious stuff, that's good that you like doing that you would enjoy doing that may even pay you. But they're not the thing that you should be doing, because someone else could do that. And so that is the distraction, that you that you aren't focused on the main thing, which is trying to truly become yourself.

Jake 20:58

Yeah, that's a really interesting perspective. And I wouldn't have predicted focus going in that direction. But it's really interesting to go there. I think probably my single favorite part from the book, maybe it was because I saw it highlighted before I even read the book.



But then after reading the whole thing, I was like, yep, that's still, my favorite part was, don't be the best be the only. And, you know, I wrote a blog post that included this among other sort of pieces of advice that I found relevant just a couple of weeks ago. Again, that was actually before I read the book. And, you know, I'm curious how you discovered that a lot of people, you know, want to be great at something, some established path of some sort, you know, your parents or doctors encouraging you to be a doctor, you want to be a doctor, you go to the best med school, you can be the best doctor, you can, etc. This applies across many different disciplines and everything like that. But especially sort of, in the modern world, with the internet, and all the unique different types of things that you can do. That seems to be a much longer list of many harder to define things than used to maybe exist, it seems that this opportunity to be the only and truly find something that you are capable of doing better than anyone else in the world, because of sort of a combination of your passions and interests and natural skills and gifts, if you want to call them whatever it might be. All of these things combined who you are sort of combined to allow you to excel at something, at least have the potential to excel at something that just no one else can do. You know, was this something that you realized at some point in life? Or did you sort of reflect and realize that this was what you were doing all along? Or did you see and others I'm just curious to sort of elaborate and expand on this point that I think is super important. And I'm certainly focused pretty heavily on it at this stage of my life. Personally.

Kevin Kelly 23:23

I think it is one of those bits, to us the subtitle of my book, wisdom that I wish I had known earlier. So I came kind of late to this understanding. And I came through it curiously, through editing wired, the magazine that we co founded, and the whole we'd have story meetings, at least once a month. And we were always pitching stories. And the best stories were ones that we the editors would come up with an idea and then we try to find a writer to write, to do the writing to go out and do the reporting and the writing to you know, they'd have an assignment. And what I what I observed was there were several times when I had a what I thought was a great idea that nobody else thought was very good at all. It was like I didn't like it didn't



think it was important, or that it would work or whatever, they were just, nope, get no traction whatsoever. And so I say to myself, Well, okay, must have been a very good idea to get more ideas. And then we go on, I put it aside kind of like, kill it. And then oftentimes that officer but sometimes, a year later, the idea would come back was like, you know, that was a good idea. I really think we should do it. But it would also again, sometimes not get any traction any anybody else agreeing with the idea that it was a good idea, and I would have to then kind of again, try and get rid of it like okay, it doesn't work. work, you got to stop thinking about this, and then might occasionally come back for a third time. And I would try to attempt to sell it again. And then, when that happened, one of the ones I kind of suddenly realized that well, if I think it's such a great idea, what do I have to write? What do I write it, this is a, this is an idea that I need to write. And those were often turned out to be my best pieces. And it was this realization that it was my only it was, it was working, because nobody else could read it, or they didn't think it was important enough, or they didn't, weren't capable of it, or they weren't interested. But for whatever reason, this was the only I've been trying to give it away and couldn't give it away. And so when I was writing it, it was easy. Because something I found easy, other people found hard, and there was no competition. I've been trying to give it away for a long time. So there was nobody else, I didn't have to look over my shoulder to be concerned about. And so I've learned from that experience, that that's truly what I want need to be doing in my life as a whole is not just doing the things that I could do, that I would enjoy doing, that I'm good at doing, that I get paid to do. But all those need to be true. And I should be working on the things that only I could do the only things that I would do. And that was a really important turning point. And again, I wished I had known earlier. Of course, the problem with that is that the young, including myself, have great difficulty figuring out what it is that we're good at. We don't really know what we can do that others can't, we don't know what we find easy and others find hard. But that's one of the reasons why when you're young, you want to try lots of different things said, you're on a search to see and discover about yourself what it is that you your talents and abilities and life experiences are pointing to. So you have to keep doing different things. And that's and that's why when you're young, you you're your life should



be kind of a meandering patchwork of things as you try different kinds of stuff. As you test different things, you do want to try to work to have some mastery of something that gives you a platform to kind of keep moving in different directions, whether it's doctoring or whether it's whether it's you know, being able to fix stuff, whether it's writing, whether it's cooking some some skill that you become really, really expert at. And with deliberate practice that gives you that enables you, that gives you a little platform to stand on to try these other things. So, so I Yeah, so that was my story of how I came to understand that you don't really want to aim to be the best because that's a very limited position that can only be number one, the number one best cough player, or trombone player in the world, and you're not always going to be one you can be displaced very easily to number two, or three or whatever. And so rather than aim for the best, which is someone else's definition of success is someone else's movie, it's a well defined, half. You went ahead and the other direction towards the unknown at some senses towards somewhere that's closer to what you can do and others can or what you find easy now that's fine, hard. And well, there's more of a chance of you kind of finding that, that role, where people find what you do interesting or valuable. And it's it's not a destination, you won't arrive there. I haven't arrived there. I'm on my way. I mean, I'm in the right direction. I'm in the vicinity. But it'll take most of your life to get there. You don't ever really arrive. You're just constantly moving in that direction.

Jake 29:24

Yeah, it's interesting. Again, I couldn't have predicted that answer at all. It's very surprising, I guess to hear that that realization came out of coming up with ideas for articles at Wired and not you know, basically having a difficult time convincing anyone it's interesting enough to write about and the specific piece that you sort of drew from that about you know, obviously you want to do something that you're you're good at and you're interested in and everything like that, but I didn't think of it says specifically as like, one sort of flag or signal that you could be in an area of something that you know you can be the only one doing is is literally like disinterest of others like you tell people when you tell people when you tell people and no one seems to care or think it's a good idea at all, right, is that that's a reasonable signal you thank you. Yeah,



Kevin Kelly 30:25

I mean, that's another piece of advice. In the book, my excellent advice for living is, when you're young, especially trying to work on somewhere where there's no name for what it is that you're doing, there's no title, there's no occupation, there's no words, maybe there may take you, as you say, a long time to explain to somebody else what it is that you're actually up to, and they may not even understand. And that's actually a good sign. Because that's that's indicating that you won, you're more likely to be kind of on your path to being the only versus like, if you're on a career path. Everybody knows what the accountant looks like. But you're headed to becoming like 15 years ago to be like a podcaster. You couldn't explain that to your, to your mom, what it was that now it's like something in AI, your prompt engineer, whatever it is, you don't even have good names for it. And that's a good sign that you might be at a frontier as well, with the beginning of something that will be important later on, eventually, the names and the language will catch up. So yeah, you want to head out and as much as possible, invent your definition of success. I mean, that's the problem with with those other proven career paths, there's someone else's successes, they've been proven by other people. And it's very unlikely that you were going to fit into that mold. And you're kind of trying to squeeze your life into someone else's definition of success, you're more likely to have success and achieve that, and maybe contentment and happiness, if you are trying to invent your own definition of success. Brian Eno, somebody that we have correspondence with, likes to talk about this idea of. Instead of like trying to trying to aim your life like you're an arrow and arrive in the bulls, the bulls ring the inner circle, the bullseye, he says it's much better to plant your plant your arrows where you are, and then draw the circle around, redefine your success, according to your own terms. And so I think it's a little bit like that where, where you don't want to get hung up on others other people's definition of success, which often I think, unfortunately, entails lots of money, you don't really want to have a billion dollars. And so you want to redefine success in a way. And if you're really lucky, you'll be able to have a definition of success that nobody else has. It might include, you know, whether it's, for me includes time, having the having control of my time, is far more important than having lots of



money. It's just even nuts. The problem with having extreme versions of wealth is that it's imprisoning. It's binding it becomes it takes over their lives. And they actually don't have the time that I have. And so when I'm surrounded by billionaires, I like to joke that I'm the wealthiest person in the group because I have total control over my time. Which they don't, because because they have responsibilities with that level of the money kind of takes over your life. So I'm just saying you can define your life in different ways. And you can define success. And that should be something that you're working on is what is your definition of a successful life? And how and having it reflect your own abilities and experiences and conditions? You'll be a lot closer to achieving that success. Yeah,

Jake 34:37

it's interesting the time and money relationship. It seems like there's this default in the world where the assumption for not everyone but a lot of people is there's like a roughly set number of hours that one should work every week and you know, take a couple of weeks off for vacation and then it's certain number of hours every year and then you do it for So many years and you retire, and, you know, it's just relatively like, a set number of hours, and you sort of make as much money as you can, it's kind of the goal, the default goal, I think, for a lot of people. And an interesting way to flip it that I've thought about is like, you know, you kind of want to, because I totally agree with you, and I don't think it's like, correct, necessarily, or anything like that, but I just prioritize very similarly to how you're talking about that. I care much more about having the freedom and control over my time and being able to do you know, what I want to do when I want to do it, where I want to do it, etc. And so the goal really is like, or at least part of the goal for me is like, you know, I want to be able to earn as much money as I need or like a little bit more than that with some buffer or something like that, while protecting the maximum amount of time that I can have control over of my own time. So it's like, rather than a set amount of time that you're working and maximizing money. With that time, it's like, How much money do you need, and then maximizing time, and trying to minimize the time it takes to earn that amount of money or whatever. And obviously, you know, seeking financial freedom and stuff isn't a very unique objective, a lot of people want to get there. But



I just think it's an interesting sort of way to, to flip it. And, you know, going back to your point about sort of thinking about, you know, measuring success with your own ruler, and not following an existing one that's out there. I think, you know, people talk a lot about, like, you know, what's the meaning of life? What's my purpose, things like this. And I've been somewhat skeptical of questions like that, I think they can be a little bit like language, riddles, or something like that, where there's like, you know, certain applications that I don't know, it's just like a very difficult question, to answer, because of the way that it is, like too abstract or something like that. But a few years ago, someone convinced me to, like, just as an exercise, try to define my purpose. And so I did that. And it was like, hugely productive, actually. Because I sort of started to think like, well, let's just give the benefit of the doubt yet to the idea that I do have a purpose. And I think this is within the realm of like, what's your ruler? And, you know, what can you be the only, and things like this. So I defined that. And then what I realized was like, a year and a half, two years later, what I had written, which resonated very strongly for a while, and like, helped drive me to do what I was doing, I'd become pretty stale, and not because like, it wasn't great when I wrote it, but the circumstances of my life, and my priorities had changed. And so I realized I sort of needed to like rewrite it. And then it took a while to like, actually summon up the you no desire or whatever to actually do it again, like I didn't know what to write, and then sort of eventually, I crafted a new lawn. And sure enough, it was like fresh and sort of resonated again, and it had a lot of themes of the old one still, but it it just sort of iterated and so I'm curious, like you mentioned, you know, you're never gonna get there for like having your, you know, the goal is like, when you die, you'd have sort of like, fully become yourself at that point. So it's sort of an indefinite goal that you're driving towards, but of you over the course of your life. Maybe you don't call it purpose, maybe you call it your definition of success or something otherwise, but have you found that you've iterated on it, over time have certain themes sort of maintained and others fallen away as it changed completely from like, you know, being in your 20s to like being a father things like that? I'm curious how it's evolved for you personally over time.



Kevin Kelly 38:57

Yeah, I'm often think of my hanging around the Amish a little bit. I was studying how they use or, and decide to use or not to use technology. And one of the things is that they have kind of a very, very strongly held criteria for evaluating success in their own lives. And that is, their goal for most of them is to spend every meal with their children until they leave home. That means breakfast, lunch and dinner. So they construct their lives, their school things around so they have breakfast together as a family, lunch together as a family dinner together to the family every day. And that's was sort of reminded me of some of our, my goals with my kids with my three kids was to maximize success again. success was defining about maximum have seen a number of meals, with my family together without screens. And so you know, that was sort of what I would use as one of the definitions of of success was being able to do that on a very regular and consistent basis. We weren't like the Amish when having every meal, particularly lunch. That's the hard one, but the Amish would, would make that work, too. I had a thought, for your question about time, I wanted to kind of follow up because there's another bit of advice in the book, which was related, which is that we often miss understand a lot of productivity, productivity hacks, people who are trying to maximize their output for by the minimum amount of time, so they will kind of like say, you know, they'll want to reduce the amount of time that they spend on a task to make it more productive. And then you were talking about, you know, calculating the number of hours you have to work. And most of the people are trying to reduce the number of hours that they work. And I think, excuse me, a better way to kind of construct your life is to aim for things where you want to increase the number of hours that you spend doing it. projects where you are not trying to minimize amount of time is but where you're trying to spend as much time doing them. Like say your say you're a painter, you want to keep maximizing changing your life so that you can maximize the number of hours that you spent painting, because it's so rewarding, so good. And for me, that's somewhat what, again, my definition of success is, this is having tasks, having projects, having assignments, where I am, where I want to spend as much time as possible doing them. Rather than reducing it, it's like that is for me, the definition of success is when you're working on something and you, you want to spend more time doing it rather than



less. Another big piece of advice from the book is the way the reward for work is more work. You know, it's like, Yes, I'm doing what I'm doing as well, then the reward for this is I should be able to continue doing it. And that's a that's a flip that, you know, and not that many people think about, but I for me, it's one of the definitions of success.

Jake 42:50

Yeah, it's, um, you know, talking about optimizing, I think that's a, an interesting reframe on it. And it makes me think about, you know, like you, I think a lot of people you don't want to live under like someone's else's arbitrary rules that you don't get to choose. And like, sometimes they may benefit you. But at the extremes, obviously, you have, like, sort of no freedom, and no one wants that. But I think, you know, in my experience, and I think a lot of people is like, rules can be extremely helpful, if they're good rules, or if they are maybe rules that you set for yourself. Like you've had these, you know, you talked about focus earlier, and part of your reframe on focus is doing something every day or doing it sort of consistently as a habit. And over time, you know, you do something over and over again. It'll, you know, that is focus. It's not the, you know, version where you're tuning out all distractions. But clearly, if you're doing something over a long time, you've been focused on that thing. And, you know, in some sense, that's kind of like a rule that you've made for yourself, like I'm going to do, you know, you do like the cool tools podcast, you release an episode, once a week, you blog daily for a very long time. And you sort of have these consistent cadence is that you set for yourself, where at the macro level, like, you've, you have complete control, you pick that cadence, and committed to that cadence. But at the micro level, day to day, you have some things that you've sort of committed to and signed up for that you've sort of are compelled to do. And again, you are the one who sort of like compelled yourself to do it. But nonetheless, like if you wanted to, on that day, you just woke up and felt like doing something like totally different. You might have sort of like these commitments you've set out for yourself. I guess the question I have is like so when I think about that, you you want like those pieces of work that you're doing, whether it's the podcast or the writing, they're things that you want to be doing. But on a given day, you may or may not want to, and you



may sort of have to by virtue of committing to that thing does anything, what I'm saying kind of make sense at all, or, I'm just trying to get out, like, when I talked about minimizing the time that you have, that's income generating, like, basically, to sufficient needs, to a sufficient level, I think what I was getting at a little bit is to not feel like you absolutely have to do a certain thing. Even if it's something that like you chose to do in the first place to minimize the amount that you actually have to do. If one day you sort of wake up and change your mind. Because, you know, to use the Amish example, like, your kids aren't around anymore. And so you know, you're not going to have three meals a day, these Amish people with your kids, and so your priorities change, and maybe, you know, having these meals with your kids led you to wanting to, you know, create art at night or something. And with them gone, you're like, Well, I'm not so into the art anymore, or something like that, and you want to change, but you kind of can't, because that's how you're making your living. So have you been able to, I guess, just trust in what you've done throughout your life, that following your work, and doubling down on your interests and things like that, that you don't have to worry about, sort of which pieces are generating income and, and things like that, that it all just sort of has worked itself out.

Kevin Kelly 46:38

Yeah, I went to a New York College and dropped out and there was this 1971 That was a very, fairly radical thing to do at that time, because the distinction between your life as a college graduate and not was much more severe and stark than it is now. And but when I did, I was sort of, I felt, well, I'm signing up for a life where I will basically always be poor. But I was really interested in kind of the hippie vision of self sufficiency. And so having control of my time was definitely what I thought I was signing up for, where I may not have very much money, but to have a lot of time, and time is of the too much more powerful to have. And so, um, you know, there are, we're all born with different circumstances, different amounts of luck, we have unfair advantages and disadvantages at birth, depending on where we are gender, all these other issues. But I also know from just hanging around the poorest people on the planet, when I was traveling Asia that were literally had no cash whatsoever. To to know that this is true, no matter where you were born, which is that it's better to



have a lot of time and a lot of money if you're trying to be trying to construct a life. That's interesting and remarkable. Because most of the most of the hurdles, and what you want to do, are not because of money, it's because of other things, because of your belief in whether they're possible because of your description of it. Because whether you have collaborators or as you're trying to do by yourself, there's just so many issues. And this is why most of the real breakthroughs in the world come from young people and outside on the edges not from the incumbents in the rich in the billionaires they're not. They're not they're not continuing to make all the the great new things because they tend to want to try to buy these things with the money and money is that what's needed you ingenuity, grit, determination, perseverance, you know, friends, all these things in which the young and the poor half and so So the advantage is the I can be pretty clear. I've been saying this a long time that the next big thing is not going to come from Google, Microsoft. Although, you know, GM, whatever and it came from something like open AI. It was a new startup that's they're the ones driving the AI revolution right now and other contenders coming along. We're also going to be outside the big the big companies because they don't have the resources. And that isn't kind of a weird kind of an advantage when you are trying to do the new innovation, the new things and new successes. So, so I signed up for that by dropping out of college and my expectation was kind of like it was Walt Disney who said, We don't make movies to make money, we make money to make movies. And so in a kind of a weird, weird way, money is, you know, it's sort of a byproduct of doing the other things well, and, and right. It's like, if you're, after the money, you want the money first to do the thing, it doesn't usually work. You want to do the thing, and then the money will come to help you keep doing the thing. It's like, my friend, Tim Ray calls a gasoline it says, Yeah, you need the gas in the car to go on the trip. But the trip is not visiting gas stations trying to see how much gas you get. This is like, no, no, no. So the the, you you do the thing. And doing the thing well can produce the money that will continue to allow you to keep doing the thing. But if you kind of say, Well, the thing is to make as much money as possible, so I can do the thing. That rarely works. Sometimes it works, but it rarely works. It's like there's a great movie, I think it's Wall Street Warriors or something where the hero is saying, Look, I'm gonna walk, I'm gonna work on Wall Street,



I'm gonna make a lot of money, and then I'm gonna retire so I can buy a motorcycle driver costs. China, and anybody who all the travelers in the world like myself is laugh. That's hilarious. Because you can work at McDonald's for six months to earn enough money to buy a motorcycle to ride across China. Right? Like, it's like that's so backwards. Yeah, so to do the thing, ride your bike, ride your motorcycle across China. And you know, I know that will come something amazing. That will help you continue to do things to enable you to ride across China twice or backwards or the next or India, whatever. So that's my my shtick is that. aim, aim for the thing. And the byproduct of the thing would be the success that you want.

Jake 52:42

Awesome. Well, thank you, Kevin. I know we're coming up on time. So we'll wrap it up here. But this has been a very helpful conversation for me personally, and hopefully it is for others as well. Reading the book in the first place was super helpful for me at this point in my life, and I'd encourage other people to go read it as well, you could get it on Amazon. Again, it's called Excellent advice for living. And then you can go and follow Kevin on Twitter, at Kevin, to Kelly. That's the number two in between his name Kevin Kelly. And yeah, thanks again, Kevin. I really appreciate it. I'm looking forward, even to just listening to this back myself, because there's a lot of deep advice in there. And sometimes you got to hear it twice to fully process.

Kevin Kelly 53:32

Yeah, that's what these, this little book is very easy to read, because there's just 450 Little proverbs. And they're kind of more like reminders, a lot of it's ancient wisdom. It's been channeled and re channeled over the ages. And I'm just putting into contemporary words and tweetable form. But there may be stuff that you've heard before, maybe not it, but the stuff that you have heard is serving as a little tiny, memorable reminder, we need reminding of these. I do too, just to kind of help make habits out of them. So I really appreciate and grateful for this opportunity to share my little bits of advice. I appreciate your great questions, and the thought that you've given to it and I wish you best success as you define it in your own life. Thank you. Thank you

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