



The Art of the Second Chance

a simple manifesto on changing your world
by Oli Lewington

About This Book

This eBook/manifesto/essay was written to help me focus my thoughts on exactly what I meant by the subtitle of my blog Smile Through It: The Art of the Second Chance.

It's about living the life you want to live, the way you want to live it.

It's not a self-help book, it's not a memoir, it's not a biography, nor a plan of action.

It is simply a few personal thoughts about how we can all make the most of the lives we've been given, especially second chances created for or by us.

Cover Photo: Nils Geylen, nilsgeylen.com

About Me

I'm a digital creative: a writer, filmmaker and photographer. I try to live my life with a smile on my face.

In 2007 I received a life-saving double-lung transplant, thanks to the gift of someone I'll never know nor be able to thank.

Smile Through It was originally intended to mark my journey to transplant and beyond and, over the last 7 years, it's become a document about finding your way in an often-confusing new life, new world and new way of existing; living the life you want, the way you want to.

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What is the Art of the Second Chance?

“Fate doesn’t hang on a
wrong or right choice,
Fortune depends on the
tone of your voice.”

The Divine Comedy

Second chances come in many guises. It’s what we do with them that counts.

It’s giving ourselves permission to do the things we love to do without feeling guilty.

It’s living a happy, healthy life.

It’s learning to enjoy the company of others as well as embracing solitude.

It’s knowing the world will support us if we are only willing to put in the work.

It’s learning to smile, no matter what.

It’s being the best version of ourselves.

Keep Smiling

If you can find one thing every day that makes you smile, you've won the smallest of victories over the world.

When I started my blog just over a year before my life was saved by transplant I chose a title to inspire me to concentrate on the good things in life.

I was surrounded by negativity: I was almost housebound, on oxygen 24 hours a day and needed a machine to help me breathe at night. I was on frequent courses of energy-sapping, high-dose antibiotics and enduring 2-week hospital stays every couple of months. Life was on pause.

I was on the verge of depression: not being able to enjoy any kind of life and not knowing if or when things might change. My whole life revolved around waiting for a phone call that may never come.

In a long conversation with myself one night I reasoned that if I could find one thing every day – no matter how small – that could bring a smile to my face, the day had been a good one.

Hence: Smile Through It.

Defining a Second Chance

“Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass; it’s about learning to dance in the rain.”

Anon

My personal second chance was wonderful: new lungs, new life, new horizons.

Some come from less positive events. How many times have you read of someone having a near-death experience or re-evaluating their lives in the aftermath of cancer or serious illness?

But, in truth, we don’t need something to happen to us (unfortunate or wonderful) to enable to us to kick-start our lives.

The reality is this: **second chances are about taking inspiration and turning it into action.**

Whatever your reasons for grasping and pursuing your second chance, it all boils down to that one thing.

The magical alchemy of second chances is simply:

Inspiration --> Action.

Size Doesn't Matter

Stop comparing yourself to others and find your own reasons for kickstarting your second chance. Everything is valid.

For years I've listened to people's problems, worries or stresses. Often they'll qualify their tales with, "But of course it's nothing compared to what you've been through."

If we want to make the most of our second chances, we need to stop comparing our experiences to others. What's hard for me may be easy for you and vice versa; there is nothing definitive about it.

Anything that inspires us to take action and start living our lives how we want is valuable, valid and vital.

There is no Top Trumps of reasons for relaunching your life or seizing control of your second chance. Whatever motivates you, whatever drives you, whatever the tipping point of your decision to make a change may be, it's 100% correct.

If you catch your toe on a corner and it makes you remember how much you loved to run and leads to you starting the habit again, that's just as valid a reason as defeating a near-fatal illness. *It's the action you take that matters most.*

Things To Do With Chance Number Two

Second chances are about happiness.

What you do with yours is entirely your choice.

Learn to ice skate, run a marathon, adopt a baby (or a rhino), bungee jump, sky-dive, walk across America, visit every country in the world, become an expert in tea, grow a beard, cut your hair, learn a sport, learn a musical instrument, pamper, grow or find yourself.

Nothing is impossible (and impossible is nothing).

“Nothing is withheld from us which we have conceived to do.”

Russell Kirsch

“If you’ve conceived something in your mind, decide to do it and are willing to put in the work – nothing can stop you.”

Joel Runyon

On Bucket Lists

If you do decide to make a bucket list, a list or infinite possibilities or any other kind of list, let me know; I'd love to read it.

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From books to blogs to TV shows, people are telling us all what they want to do and we should do before we die.

Here's my 2 cents:

Bucket lists are great. Any list is better. **But nothing is as good as what works for you.**

I have a List of Infinite Possibilities on my blog; it's a bucket list of sorts, a way to keep tabs on the things I most want to achieve, but it doesn't shape my life and it's not tied to a finite time-frame.

For me, writing it down helps focus my energies on the bigger goals and stay open-minded to achieving the little ones as and when the opportunity arises.

Whether or not a list works for you is very individual. Make a list, don't make a list: it's your call. Just commit to doing something wonderful that you'll love.

It's Not All About Changing The World

“If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know it when you find it.”

Steve Jobs

I think we all, secretly, want to be “famous” in the sense of being known and respected within our fields and – if we're honest – a little bit outside them, too.

I used to want to be famous. Like, really, globally famous. Then I realized it wasn't about fame for fame's sake; I wanted fame so I could change the world.

Finally, I realized the most important thing: second chances aren't all about changing the world or having a global impact. They're not necessarily about becoming the next ‘someone’.

Second chances are about changing *your* world, not *the* world.

The only thing that matters to me about my second chance is doing something that makes my donor proud.

It's All About Changing The World

“No one gets remembered for the things they didn't do.”

Frank Turner

If the thing you most want to do with your second chance is to change the world then don't let me (or anyone else) stop you. Go. Do it. Call me when you're there.

Second chances should be all about putting yourself out there and trying to achieve things that people say you can't.

It's about proving people wrong (including ourselves much of the time) and doing crazy, impossible things.

As long as you're pushing your boundaries, trying new things, seeking new ways to see the world around you, that's the crux of it.

Just be sure that whatever you choose is your goal and no one else's.

Our choices must belong to us and us alone.

Find Your Reason

“Many men meet their destiny on the road they took to avoid it.”

*Master Oogway,
Kung Fu Panda*

Just as a second chance can be anything you want, so can your motivation.

But knowing exactly what it is that drives you and keeping it at the front of your mind is crucial.

Everything I do is driven by my donor: the feeling that they are up there somewhere looking down on me and watching. I want to know that when I finally join them upstairs they will be able to say, “You deserved this.”

Motivation is as personal as the things you want to do, only you can truly know what drives you. Here’s a tip, though – negative motivations are harder than positive ones. **Don’t try to prove someone else wrong, prove yourself right.**

Find your inspiration, your motivation and your reason for doing what you do. Only then will you be able to push yourself hard enough to do the work and achieve your goals.

Universal Principles of the Second Chance

“Do one thing every day
that scares you.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

So, hopefully we're starting to understand more of what we can do to make the most of our second chance, to live the life we want to live in the way we want to live it. We know what we want to achieve and what we have to do to get it. We're driven and motivated. But what should be guiding our choices for our second chance at life?

Live Mindfully

There are hundreds of books, sites and blogs about mindfulness (my personal favourite is zenhabits.net), but a simple practice of awareness and gratitude for the things around you in your life can help form a sense of inner peace and calm. If nothing else, **do no harm.**

Live adventurously

'Adventure' isn't always about doing something physically challenging or scary: skydives or bungee jumps or the like. Living adventurously can simply be pushing your own boundaries. **Scaring yourself once in a while is a good thing;** you feel more alive and more capable of achieving anything.

“Laughter is the best medicine – unless you’re diabetic, then insulin comes pretty high on the list.”

Jasper Carrott

Live passionately

Passion drives so much of what we do, especially when we’re pushing ourselves to achieve new things. **Living a second chance is about finding and pursuing your passions.** I’m not one of those people who’s going to tell you to instantly quit your job, but if we’re not passionate about what we do day-in, day-out we need to find a way of pursuing our passions outside of work, making our second chance count by being able to say “I love what I’m doing right now.”

Live with laughter

Laughter may not be the solution to all of the world’s problems, but it would be a better place if we all laughed more. Procrastination experts will tell you that YouTube is a great way to waste a huge chunk of time, but if watching kittens being cute, a baby biting their brother or skaters accidentally straddling a handrail raises a chuckle for you then sometimes that’s OK. Learn to smile at least once a day and every day gets better.

The Art of the Second Chance

“For every minute you are angry you lose sixty seconds of happiness.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The art of the second chance is about one thing: happiness.

If we can all learn to smile, enjoy our lives, treasure each moment and understand that bad experiences can be as valuable to us as good ones, we can fight through anything.

Over the last 10 years, I've learned a huge amount from everything I've been through. I've learned the power of positivity, I've learned how to avoid letting things get on top of you and I've learned how to make the most of the good times when they roll around.

Grasping your second chance is about recognising the need to relaunch, understanding what you really want to achieve and motivating yourself to go and do it.

Don't wait for tragedy or opportunity to strike: get up and start living your second chance now.

It's yours for the taking.

More...

In November 2012 I published *Smile Through It: A Year on the Transplant List*, my first book. You can find it on Amazon wherever you are, in paperback and on Kindle.

You can follow my continued journey to make the most of my second chance and sign up for free updates at

SmileThroughIt.com

You can connect with me (I love meeting new people) at

twitter.com/olilewington

And if you liked (or hated) this eBook, please email me and let me know, I'd love to hear your thoughts.

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