



Journey to a
Better Life!

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

Tim Brownson

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

Introduction - April 2011

It seems to me that most people like to sink their teeth into a great quote. I don't think I appreciated how much so until I wrote a post on A Daring Adventure entitled "The 20 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time".

The post went viral and at the time of writing has had over 20,000 page views, which is huge for my blog.

I wasn't quite sure why it went viral. There are hundreds of websites dedicated to quotations and it's not difficult to find as many as you want on Google in a matter of seconds. I concluded that it might have something to do with the fact that I explained why I believed they are great quotes rather than simply rehashing a list of quotes in isolation.

With that in mind I decided to expand that list and also expand my explanations and make a rather cool eBook that I could give away to people like yourself that are kind enough to subscribe to my newsletter.

The quotes are in random order. I did have an idea to list them 1 - 50 in order of their awesomeness, but soon realized that would be an impossible and thankless task. Dealing with e-mails telling me I'm a complete idiot for having X quote above Y would soon have got tiresome.

I'd suggest you dip into this from time to time rather than just reading it as you would a normal book and then leaving it alone. If you have a day when things aren't going quite according to plan or you feel less than inspired, open this up and I'm sure you'll spot a quote in no time that will get you back on track.

I really hope you enjoy it and feel free to forward on to any friends or family members you think may get some benefit.

Cheers

Tim

PS If you like my style of writing you can check out my other books by [clicking here](#)

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

1. *“Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything”* – George Bernard Shaw

Apparently it's statesmanlike to stand firm and not change your mind. It's also idiotic to ignore new evidence and refuse to admit you may have been wrong with your first conclusion.

I remember when John Kerry ran against George Bush for President The Republicans discovered Kerry had changed his stance on the war in Iraq in light of new information that had been made available.

He was pilloried by the Republicans for being a flip-flopper rather than commended for being honest enough to accept he was wrong.

Your brain actually hates to be wrong and it sets off a series of chemical responses that don't feel good at all. It takes courage to ignore those feelings and admit your mistake.

We all get stuff wrong, just admit it when you do and move on with your newfound insight.

2. *“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.*

All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way.

Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.” – William H Murray

This is often mistakenly attributed to Goethe when it really just came from a Goethe couplet and is presumed to have been said in full by Scottish Mountaineer, W H Murray, although that is not 100% certain.

Is there are greater quote on the importance of commitment? I doubt it.

3. *"Always do what you are afraid to do."* – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Presuming you don't take this too literally and decide to strip naked, rub yourself down with fish guts and go teasing Grizzly Bears in mating season, this is a fantastic quote. The reality is public speaking scares me, but I still do it and boy am I glad every time I do, that I didn't succumb to my fears.

Fear is ok, it's just an emotion and you're unlikely to die from being scared, but every time you do something that scares you, you widen your comfort zone and it's less likely to scare you as much less time. If you do have issues with fears, check out one of my previous books, ['Don't Panic'](#)

4. *"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit"* – Aristotle

Malcolm Gladwell in his brilliant book ['Outliers'](#) talked about the growing realization in science that few people are born gifted. That it takes time (thought to be about 10,000 hours) and persistence to be world class at anything. It seems Aristotle beat Gladwell to the punch by about 2,000 years or so. You can be brilliant, you just have to stick with whatever it is you want to be brilliant at.

5. *"A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has"* – Margaret Mead

Another oft cited quote and one that inspires people (or at least should do) to believe they really do have more power than they could ever imagine. Don't *ever* think you are powerless because you're not.

6. *"What you think of yourself is much more important than what others think of you"* – Seneca

If only you knew how often I try to impress this belief on clients. So many people get wrapped up in trying to make other people like them, that they forget to like themselves. In other words, they give away their personal power and their happiness is then dependent on the good opinion of others.

It shouldn't be.

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

7. *“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm” – Winston Churchill*

There are so many quotes regarding the importance of failure in being successful, but imho, this is the best. We ALL fail from time to time and the more you fail the more likely you are to succeed.

As long that is, you don't drag your bottom lip around on the floor all the time bemoaning the fact that things aren't going your way. Suck it up and move on.

8. *“You must be the change you wish to see in the world” – Gandhi*

I almost left this out because it's been done to death and it possibly the most well known quote in the universe. But there's a good reason for that, and that's because it's stunningly brilliant.

You cannot ever change anybody else; you can only change yourself and hope you inspire other people to do the same.

9. *“Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up” – Thomas Edison*

Three years ago I had a client that I knew was really close to making a huge breakthrough when she lost her nerve. The fact that I'm telling you about it now demonstrates how frustrated as a Life Coach I was. There is a time for giving up and a time for pushing through, even though the latter can sometimes be scary.

10. *‘Man can alter his life by altering his thinking’ – William James*

There is an amazing, if possibly apocryphal story about the father of modern psychology. Apparently he agreed to be the keynote speaker at a major conference on psychology. This was a rare event and people travelled from all over the country looking forward to hearing the great man deliver his pearls of wisdom.

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

At the appointed time he walked up to the lectern, stood for a moment surveying the audience and then said *"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes"* He then apparently walked off stage, out of the building and back home, leaving everybody confused and pretty much pissed off.

He was right though and to if you are not inspired to know that you can improve the quality of your life by improving the quality of your thinking, then you're reading the wrong eBook.

11. *"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing"* – George Bernard Shaw

I hit 50 in 2012 and it seems incomprehensible to me. I still get hyper excited about work, I still laugh my ass off at juvenile humor and as I type this I have loud dance music playing in the background.

Don't stop being young because your birth certificate tells you too.

12. *"If I gave people what they wanted I'd have designed a faster horse"* – Henry Ford

This may well never have actually been said by Ford, it may just be an apocryphal quote, but we don't care, do we, because it makes a brilliant point?

Sometimes you have to step outside the box and take chances that don't necessarily sit with conventional wisdom.

13. *"You will not be punished for your anger; you will be punished by your anger"* – Buddha

Is there any need to explain this? Probably not because we all know how shit we feel when we're angry. So let it go and don't feel shit.

14. *"Happiness depends more on the inward disposition of mind than on outward circumstances"* – Benjamin Franklin

You know that money and material things don't make you happy for any length of time. That's because they are extrinsic, and just because the Declaration of Independence got it wrong by suggesting we need to pursue happiness, thus suggesting it's external, doesn't mean you have to too.

Happiness is intrinsic, meaning it's always within you. People have a predisposition to be more happy or unhappy through genetics, but that only makes up about 50% of the story, the rest is about your determination to be happy.

15. *"Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans"* – John Lennon

Doesn't that sum up many people you know, maybe even yourself? Are you so busy planning what's next, that you forget that now is already here? Planning is crucial of course, but so is enjoying the only time you ever have; now.

16. *"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent"* – Eleanor Roosevelt

Every feeling you have is generated internally as a reaction (usually) to external events. It is your interpretation of events that gives them meaning, not the events themselves. How liberating is that? To know that people can only hurt you if you allow them to.

Of course, you have to believe it first.

17. *"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines, Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream"* – Mark Twain

Yes, yes, and thrice yes. So many people try to avoid disappointment by reigning in their hopes and dreams. It certainly can help avoid any short-term failure, but it pretty much guarantees a lifetime of "what ifs" and that's not something I would wish on anybody.

18. *“A ship is safe in harbor, but that is not what a ship was built for”*
– William H Shedd

Another quote that may not be attributed to the right person, but who cares who said it, it's still brilliant.

You can hide yourself away from the world, you can avoid doing anything risky or out there, but that's not what you were put on this earth to do. You were put here to be the best person you can be and that means taking risks by hauling anchor and sailing out into the uncharted open sea from time to time.

19. *“Watch your thoughts, they become words. Watch your words, they become actions. Watch your actions, they become habits. Watch your habits, they become your character. Watch your character, it becomes your destiny”* – Author unknown although sometimes attributed to Frank Outlaw.

I don't think this needs any explanation other than you become what you think about, so be careful what you think about.

20. *“Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers”* –
Voltaire

The quality of your life is dictated by the quality of questions you ask not just others, but yourself too. Questions like “Why do I suck?” will not improve the quality of your life. Ask great questions and prepare yourself for some great answers!

21. *“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it”* – Aristotle

Most people I know like to think they are open-minded. Yet if you cannot entertain thoughts that contradict your belief system, how open-minded can you truly claim to be?

22. *“What the thinker thinks, the prover proves”*

– Robert Anton Wilson

Taken from the absolutely brilliant book 'Prometheus Rising' Wilson sums up in a sentence something we *all* do, which is to look for evidence to support the beliefs we already hold rather than questioning them.

23. *“Nothing is impossible, the word itself says ‘I’m possible’!”*

– Audrey Hepburn

How awesomely cool is that? Next time you tell yourself something is impossible, try using this and see if you think differently because, physical limitations notwithstanding, pretty much everything is possible.

24. *“There is no how it is, only how it is for you”* – Tim Brownson

Holy crap, can you believe the audacity of the man to include one of his own quotes? Does his arrogance know no bounds!!!

Seriously though, I absolutely love it because it gets to the heart of self-development. Too many gurus want to tell you there way is the way. They're wrong, don't listen to them.

If getting up at 5.00am in the morning doesn't suit you, don't do it. If goal setting leaves you feeling deflated, don't set any, and if reading eBooks with inspiring quotes in it doesn't inspire you, stop reading right now!

Find out what works best for you and then do it! Better still [hire a Life Coach](#) and get help doing it!

25. *“People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing – that's why we recommend it daily”* – Zig Ziglar

Zig nails it with this one. Self-development is like going to the gym. Nobody gets fit by going to the gym once; it's a daily or weekly ritual. Self-development is the same, you have to work on it, if that is, you really want to master it.

26. *"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take"* – Wayne Gretzky

Guess what? If you don't launch that eBook you have been thinking of, you have failed. If you don't start that new business you have dreamed of, you have failed. And if you don't ask for that date for fear of rejection, you have failed.

Failure isn't missing, failure is never trying.

27. *"I am the greatest, I said that even before I knew I was"* – Muhammad Ali

That is a classic fake it till you make it or as it is sometimes called the 'act as if frame' quote. Your brain struggles to tell the difference between fact and fiction, which is why visualization is such a powerful tool.

Telling yourself you can do something and truly getting behind that belief can lift you to heights you previously thought of as being unattainable.

Note of caution: Be judicious with this. Do not pretend to be a brain surgeon when you've never been to medical school, and don't tell yourself you'll win American Idol by a landslide if you have the voice that would shame a frog. That's being delusional.

28. *"Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one."* – Albert Einstein

Look if the great man himself says reality isn't real, who are you to argue?

Go and set your own reality and don't allow other people (including the media) to impose theirs upon you, because they will, if you let them.

29. *"You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine"* – John C. Maxwell

Small incremental change, or Kaizen as the Japanese call it is the way to go. Small change really does add up and the saying that people over estimate what

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

they can achieve in a week and underestimate what they can achieve in a year, is so true.

One of my favorite authors Graham Greene wrote a lot of books, but did you know he only ever wrote 500 words per day. No more, no less, he would even stop mid sentence. He seemed to do ok for himself, so what could you introduce into your daily regime that will make you glad you did in a years time?

30. *"This to shall pass" – Anon*

This possible came from the Sufi poets but nobody really knows for sure and it doesn't really matter.

The way of life is change. Good times come and good times go. Bad times come and bad times go. If we can remain relaxed in the knowledge that we'll deal with the change that comes our way, so much the better. If you are going through tough times at the moment, know that they wont go on forever.

31. *"I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it" – Pablo Picasso*

Nobody strides onto the first tee and drives a ball 300 yards down the middle of the fairway the first time they ever play golf. Nobody reads a book on a foreign language and becomes instantly fluent. And nobody picks up a Violin for the first time and knocks out a flawless rendition of Paganini's 'Caprices'.

Go and do stuff that you can't do because that is the only true way of pushing yourself to the limits and eventually you will be able to it and I guarantee you'll be proud of yourself.

32. *"I visualize things in my mind before I do them. It's like having a mental workshop" – Jack Youngblood*

Jack wasn't just a brilliant football player for my beloved Rams, he was also deceptively wise. We know for a fact visualization improves performance, but we also know very few people utilize it.

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

If you want to know the mechanics behind visualization go and grab yourself a copy of [How To Be Rich and Happy](#) because I explain it in there.

33. *“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.*

We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” – Marianne Williamson

More like an eBook in its own right than a quote, but it's stunningly brilliant nevertheless.

Taken from her book [A Return To Love](#) that was based on the ancient script, A Course In Miracles, if that quote doesn't inspire you, you may very well be dead

34. *“Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right.”*
– Henry Ford

Belief in yourself is so important and often the determiner in how successful you are in life.

Believe in yourself because you're absolutely brilliant!

35. *“One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is to believe that ones works is terribly important” – Bertrand Russell*

Think of what you do for a living. How important is it in the great scheme of things? How important is it compared to your family, your health, and your happiness?

I'd guess it's not even close, unless that is, you are His Holiness The Dalai Lama in which case I give you permission to ignore this quote.

36. *“There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so” – Shakespeare (from Hamlet)*

Another quote that brilliantly sums up the fact that we determine our own reality by how we decide to view things. Things, people and events aren't good or bad in and of themselves. It's the meaning we attach to them through thought that makes them so.

Was Billy Shakespeare the world's first reframer?

37. *“Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic” – John Henry Jowett*

Did you know it's almost impossible to be feeling down and grateful at the same time? That the moment you shift your attention on to what you have rather than what you don't have, your body responds accordingly.

Imagine I asked you to throw your birth certificate into a very big hat that contains the birth certificate of every other person on the planet. Then once you had done that and I'd given them a good mix you had to pull out a birth certificate at random, would you want to?

My guess is no, and as such that tells me you have stuff to be grateful about!

38. *"It's not hard to make decisions when you know what you're values are"* – Roy Disney

Woo-baby! Walt's brother knew a thing or two and he nailed this one. If you have read much of my blog or have worked with me, you will know my absolute conviction that if we don't know our own values we cannot truly know ourselves.

Your values drive every aspect of your life and your life is always going to be a tad hit or miss until you fully understand them. Do you?

39. *"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow"* – Mary-Anne Rademacher

One failure is all many people need to give up. One 'no', one set back, one missed target, one rejection. The courageous and determined push through though with belief and commitment.

40. *"As long as your going to be thinking anyway, think big"* – Donald Trump

I have to confess to not being much of a fan of the strangely coiffured one, but I think this is a brilliant quote. Too many people reign in their thinking because they just want to be 'realistic' and to avoid the disappointment of aiming high and missing.

Unfortunately about the only thing that approaches guarantees is a lifetime of unfulfilled dreams and long-term disappointment that is exponentially worse than that of a short-term failure.

Momentary dopamine crash notwithstanding, aiming for 20 and getting to 18 is better than aiming for 5 and hitting it!

41. *"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing"* – Helen Keller

How could I not include the quote that spawned the name of my business? This is one of my favorite quotes because of its simplicity. If you aren't pushing yourself, scaring yourself and testing yourself then you really aren't living to your potential and there's a good chance you are going to feel unfulfilled.

How amazing would your life be if you could see it as a daring adventure each and every day?

42. *"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."* – Thomas Edison

I love reframing and this quote is the greatest reframe in history in my opinion. Reframing is possibly the single best skill I can teach any client because it then gives them complete control over their lives and the ability to see things how they want to.

43. *"A man can fail many times. but he isn't a failure until he begins to blame somebody else"* – John Burroughs

At the heart of self-development is the willingness to take control of our lives and to admit responsibility if things aren't going according to plan. This does NOT mean beating yourself up, but it does mean refusing to be a victim by blaming your situation on outside forces.

44. *"To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing"* – Elbert Hubbard

Many people are terrified of criticism and will often keep their head down and go with the flow for fear of being on the receiving end of it. The world doesn't need that; speak your mind more often. If people don't like you for being you, then why would you want to please them by pretending to be somebody else?

45. *"If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one"*

– Mother Theresa

Have you ever heard the story about the little girl throwing starfish into the sea?

There has been a huge storm and the beach is covered with thousands of the stranded little fellas. The girl is approached by a man who inquires as to what she is doing? She explains she is throwing them back and when the guy aghast at her naiveté and pointing to the endless stretch of starfish says, "You can't possibly make a difference" With that the girl tosses one back into the ocean and says, "Well I made a difference to that one"

Then I think the guy pushed her over for being so precocious and she crushed several starfish on her fall and badly cut her knee. I'm not totally sure about that last bit, but I reckon that's probably what happened.

You too can make a difference; if that is, you want to.

46. *"There is no comparison between that which is lost by not succeeding and that which is lost by not trying"* – Francis Bacon

I know this is similar in tone to a couple of other quotes, but I don't care because I'm ramming the failure is not a big deal message down your throat.

47. *"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."* – Antoine de St-Exupéry

This is really a values based quote because it refers to intrinsic motivation. Most people try to motivate themselves using extrinsic motivation like earning more money, gaining a job promotion or buying a new house etc. There's nothing wrong with that, as long as it isn't to the detriment of what really drives you from deep inside.

If you manage people, take this quote to heart. Don't wave huge bonuses at people if you want to get the best out of them, find out what really drives them at a core level and you will much greater results.

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

48. *"We can never judge the lives of others, because each person knows only their own path and renunciation. It's one thing to think you are on the right path, but it's another to think that yours is the only path"* – Paulo Coelho

If everybody adopted this quote do you realize there would be no judging, no arrogant people, no evangelicalism, no hatred and no wars. It would lead to more understanding and the realization that we are all merely a product of our genes and upbringing and as such, no better nor worse than anybody else. Not bad for one little quote, eh?

49. *"Procrastination is opportunities assassin"* – Victor Kiam

How many people have had great ideas and then failed to act on them immediately? Amazingly enough I have no idea, but my guess is that it's somewhere between a boat load and a shit load, and that's a lot of people.

Everybody procrastinates from time to time, but if you're going to do that, do it about emptying the dishwasher and not about launching that brilliant idea or starting that business that you know just can't fail.

50. *"Be curious always, because knowledge will not acquire you, you must acquire it"* – Sudie Beck

I was following an ambulance through North London one time and I was weaving in and out of traffic trying to stay with the speeding vehicle and receiving a lot of abuse from other motorists, some of whom even tried to block my path.

Not one of them knew my dad had just had a stroke he was to never recover from, and he was in the back of that ambulance. Equally, none of them knew I had no knowledge of that area of London and had no idea where the hospital was.

Imagine if those drivers had been curious as to why this nut job was following an ambulance so closely, rather than immediately presuming I was trying to save myself some time.

The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes Of All Time - And Why?

Do you think they'd have acted like they did? I suspect not/

Curiosity is an amazing state to be in. You can't be judging and curious and you probably can't be miserable as sin and be curious. Unless I guess you are curious as to why you are as miserable as sin.

Be more curious!

I hope you have enjoyed this eBook and equally I hope you will [drop by my blog](#) and say hello from time to time! Also, as I said at the beginning, please feel free to forward it on to somebody whose day it may brighten up.

Full Disclosure: There are some affiliate links in this eBook and they do net me an amazing 6% from Amazon if you buy any of the books I linked to. There's some new law or something that means I have to tell you how fabulously rich I'm going to get. Wouldn't the time setting that law have been better used to ban School Bus Drivers in Florida from texting whilst driving a bus full of kids?