

The Subtle Art to
Wake
the **F UP**

*Upgrade Your Life
To A "WHOLE" New Level*

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FORWORD

If you're reading this, it's a sign you're ready to grow and move beyond your current circumstances, for the better. Embracing change is natural and essential, mirroring the constant evolution in our environment and within ourselves. Namely, did you know that the cells that make up your body today are completely different from those a year ago, having been replaced, renewed, and potentially improved through a healthy lifestyle?

If the term "self-development" is new to you, don't worry—you're in the perfect place to begin crafting a better version of yourself, possibly from the ground up. By the time you finish this book, you'll be equipped with essential strategies, frameworks, and tips designed to transform your life into one that's not only wealthier in terms of money and lifestyle, but also more fulfilling.

On the other hand, you might already be familiar with some foundational elements of personal growth, popular in Western culture, which often include insights from celebrated figures like Tony Robbins, Jay Shetty, Brian Tracy, Robin Sharma, and Tim Ferriss. These influential motivational speakers, life coaches, and Instagram influencers play a significant role in shaping the landscape of the self-improvement industry. You might find yourself reading their books, consuming hours of their videos and podcasts, or even attending their seminars. This was my starting point on the path

to personal development as well. However, as my journey progressed, I encountered three significant challenges that are not often discussed, challenges that reshaped my approach to personal growth.

First, the business model behind many celebrated self-improvement figures thrives on continuous engagement, similar to social media platforms or pharmaceutical companies. If you “actually” grow and feel better, you will stop buying their content, thus negatively impacting their revenues. I’m not suggesting that all of them deliberately aim to increase your expenses—though it seems that might be the case for some. The critical issue is the dopamine rush associated with consuming new motivational materials, whether it’s the latest video, book, or online course. This experience can become as addictive as a drug or excessive smartphone use. In my early twenties, I experienced such a tendency first-hand, albeit briefly for a year, by mistaking the consumption of self-help content for actual self-development.

Looking back, beyond the addictive nature of self-development content previously discussed, I’ve found that many coaches and gurus spend little time justifying the reasons for embarking on this challenging journey. In other words, they seldom address the complexities and hardships involved in striving for a better version of oneself, leaving the “raison d’être” of such pursuit somewhat undefined. Using Simon Sinek’s renowned principle of “Start with Why” (refer to Figure 1), I’d argue that historically, much of the self-help content disproportionately focuses on the *How* and the “What” of personal development—allocating a marginal share to truly exploring the *Why*. This foundational

question

is crucial for understanding the purpose behind our efforts to enhance our capabilities, and thus motivating us on the long run.

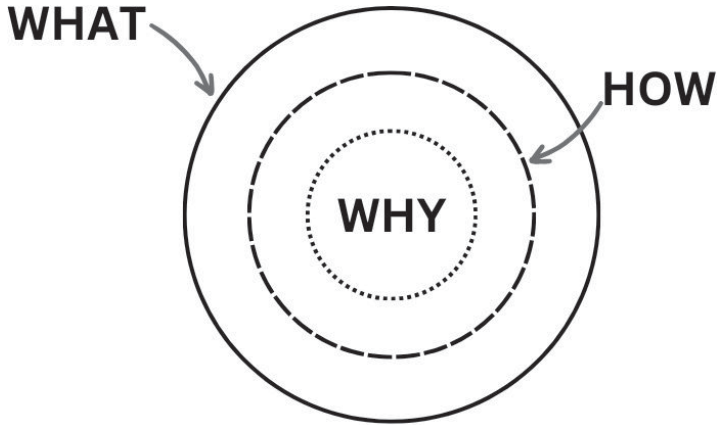


Figure 1: The “WHY” framework by Simon Sinek

Lastly, my own journey of expanding consciousness and building a diverse internal database—through reading works by authors of varied styles, traveling globally, and connecting with people across a spectrum of backgrounds and ideologies, from North Africa to South America, from Europe to East Asia—highlighted the narrowness of the Western approach to personal development. The socio-economic advancements post the first Industrial Revolution in the UK, coupled with the resilience shown through two World Wars, have led Europe and North America to somewhat steer away from the spiritual aspects of existence. This shift favored a reliance on materialistic philosophies, scientific breakthroughs, and the belief in controlling individual and collective destinies through well-tested strategies and meticulous planning. I intend to delve deeper into this discussion later in the book.

The essence of my observation is that in the West or most developed countries, there's a tendency to undervalue the role of chance and the practice of "letting go" in the journey of personal growth. This perspective often leads to sacrificing the present for a future we believe can be meticulously shaped and controlled by us, and only us. "You can do it!", "Just do it!" or "You are the captain of your fate", are a few western mantras you've probably heard many times.

Don't get me wrong! I deeply value the positive energy and invaluable teachings offered by many life coaches and self-development gurus. Their insights have significantly supported my own journey of growth. My intention is not to diminish their contributions but to shed light on some critical gaps that deserve attention in this book. Therefore, the latter is not merely a self-help manual but a pedagogical companion for the journey you are on or may embark upon soon—a journey undeniably marked by challenges, yet one that promises to be the most rewarding endeavor of your life. And I speak from experience, not just theory.

In fact, describing who I was a decade ago feels like narrating the life of someone else—a stranger, not my own autobiography. Indeed, my engineering background instilled in me logical thinking and discipline, virtues nurtured by my parents, who were middle-class teachers dedicated to my scientific education. Yet, back then, it felt as though I was marching towards a goal that wasn't truly mine, chosen without the depth of maturity and analysis I now possess. In Morocco, where I grew up, it simply seemed NORMAL to study diligently to elevate my family's standard of living, to set a positive example

for my younger sisters, and to lay the groundwork for my future children. But if there's one thing I've learned so far, it's to always question what's considered NORMAL!

Besides my nerdy studies and a slight tendency towards social withdrawal at my early twenties, other aspects of my life were in disarray, if not entirely absent. My physical health was not a priority, evidenced by my weight of barely 55kg at a height of 177cm, placing me well below the average fitness level. My social interactions were limited and not actively chosen, arising more from a sense of neediness than genuine connection. Romantic relationships were non-existent. Even in my native languages, French and Moroccan Darija, my ability to communicate outside my field of expertise was less developed than that of a 10-year-old kid. Fortunately, my academic evaluations were primarily written, catering to my introverted and bookish nature. All that not being enough, completing my university studies meant the end of my scholarship, leaving me nearly broke. I found myself trying to make ends meet with minimal savings and help from my parents, all while living in one of the world's most expensive cities: Paris.

Faced with limited options—or so it seemed at the time—and with my French residence permit nearing expiration, I reluctantly accepted the first job offer that came my way: a position in a financial auditing firm. The monotony and demands of the job were more than I could bear, and I lasted only six months before feeling compelled to move on.

My next venture was into management consulting, driven by a desire to avoid returning near the parental

nest and to maintain my geographic freedom. This role offered slightly more insight into various industries than my previous position, but it was still marked by long hours and the unpredictability of working with either cooperative or challenging managers and clients. After enduring this for three years and having secured my French citizenship—which freed me from the stress of having to leave Europe—I decided it was time for a change. At 27, I chose to leave my job, take a break, and reflect on my next steps.

Just six years after making a decision that felt daunting at the time, here I am, penning these words from the comfort of my cozy van, nestled in the serene beauty of the French Alps. My husky dog frolics nearby, chasing the unseen in this amazing wilderness. My work now spans several remote jobs, including writing this book—a task so engaging I seldom watch the clock, often working until my eyes demand rest. My current lifestyle affords me not just geographical freedom but financial comfort as well. While I'm not managing a vast empire, my annual six-figure income provides ample benefits without the pressures of a high-stakes startup, a demanding job, or daily commutes.

But the transformation extends beyond finances. My physical health and fitness are better than ever; I can run 10 kilometers non-stop, swim in the sea during winter, and hike all day like a husky. My social circle is richer and diverse. Having traveled to over 50 countries, I've encountered people from every corner of the globe, worked with individuals from various cultures, and forged friendships that span continents—from Thailand

to Chile, Australia to South Africa. This journey of growth and discovery is far from over.

In wrapping up this introduction to my transformation journey, it's important to mention a recent pivotal achievement: the incorporation of spirituality (not religion!) into my life's foundation. My understanding of God has evolved from a purely intellectual and cultural concept to a profound, experiential realization. This deepened spiritual connection is the primary motivation behind writing the book you are now reading—not financial gain nor social acclaim, which no longer hold the same value for me. My focus now is on contributing to others' lives, teaching, writing, creating content on social media (@wakethefup22) and through other creative means.

As we move forward, remember, my intention is not to boast or suggest my life as the ultimate model. Diversity is a bliss. My story is shared to establish credibility. Advising you from a position of unresolved personal struggles would be a waste of both our times. I would just like to serve as a tangible example of the self-growth principles we'll be exploring here. After spending a significant part of my life in what felt like shadowed ignorance of our true existential purpose, I poured my heart into this book aiming to enlighten yours.

So I invite you, fellow seeker of growth, to engage with this narrative not solely with your intellect but with an open heart as well. The mind can sometimes lead us astray. Embrace new possibilities and perspectives on what self-development truly encompasses, beyond mere

physical endurance, the pursuit of resilience, or the superficial race to “keep up with the Joneses.” Open your heart and eyes to what lies beyond.

I’ll be engaging your imagination to make your reading journey more intuitive. Like on my Instagram, we’ll be using three colors: Red, Green, and Blue (RGB). Each color symbolizes what I’ll refer to as a Node or a Subsystem—a cohesive area encompassing various facets of life enhancement. Whenever you encounter Red, for example, allow the red color to illuminate the background of your thoughts, aiding in the retention and recall of the lessons shared.

The first half of this book is devoted to exploring the *WHY* and *HOW* of personal growth. In other words, it paints a detailed picture of the philosophy and approach that I’ve embraced in my own transformation journey of *Waking The F Up*, which I’ve since distilled into a shareable life strategy. The latter half focuses on the *WHAT*, offering a practical blueprint and actionable advice to elevate your life 360°, to a *WHOLE* new level.

May the universe be on your side.

THE WHY

Why Do I Need to Wake The F Up

Unlike many self-help books that immediately dive into tactics for increasing your income, finding the perfect partner, or globe-trotting, I believe it's crucial to first explore the reasons why embarking on such a transformative journey is essential for everyone. Each person's journey is inherently unique, tailored to their individual life and circumstances. However, the core motivations—the WHYS behind our actions—are often shared and universal. Therefore, in this chapter, we delve into these foundational principles. Understanding your own *Why* is critical. If you're merely adopting someone else's reasons without question, or if your motivations aren't compelling enough, you're more likely to falter at the first sign of difficulty on this challenging years' long path.

The Western WHY *Individual Freedom + More Is Better*

The rationale for self-development in the West, and the drive towards improving one's circumstances, is deeply intertwined with the history of Europe and subsequently North America, though this connection is seldom examined or discussed. *The Renaissance*, spanning from the 14th to the 17th century, serves as a pivotal era in this narrative. It was a time of profound cultural and intellectual revival in Europe, marking a significant shift from the medieval age's stagnation to a rekindled interest in the classical wisdom of Ancient Greece and Rome. This period represented a break from the communal and religious focus of earlier times, spotlighting the individual and their untapped potential.

At the heart of the Renaissance was *Humanism*, a philosophy that esteemed human interests, capabilities, and worth above all. Humanists such as Petrarch and Erasmus championed an educational model that embraced a broad spectrum of subjects— encompassing literature, history, philosophy, and the arts. This comprehensive approach to education highlighted the belief in the individual's capacity to excel across various domains, starkly contrasting with the medieval era's emphasis on narrow specialization in specific trades or crafts.

The Renaissance was not only a period of artistic and scientific flourish but also a testament to the spirit of individual exploration and achievement. Leonardo da Vinci, often celebrated as the quintessential "Renaissance

Man,” embodies this era’s ideals. His work transcended the boundaries of painting to include engineering, science, and invention, showcasing an insatiable quest for knowledge and personal growth. Michelangelo, too, with his diverse talents in sculpture, painting, and architecture, epitomized the period’s pursuit of multi- disciplinary excellence.

This era also revolutionized literature and its accessibility. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-15th century dramatically expanded access to books, making knowledge and education more democratic than ever before. The literary contributions of this time, including those of Shakespeare, delved into the complexities of human emotions and experiences, enriching the understanding of oneself and the broader human condition.

Following the Renaissance, *the Enlightenment* further advanced these concepts, emphasizing reason, individualism, and a skepticism of traditional institutions. Unfolded during the 17th and 18th centuries, this era was also a transformative intellectual and philosophical movement that spread throughout Europe and North America. It championed reason, scientific inquiry, and the rights of the individual, marking a profound shift away from the then-prevailing reliance on religious doctrine and monarchical rule. This paradigm shift encouraged people to challenge established authorities and to think for themselves. René Descartes, with his pivotal assertion “I think, therefore I am,” became a symbol of this newfound trust in human reason and intellectual prowess.

Moreover, the Enlightenment era advanced notions of individual rights and the role of education in personal development. Philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire called for educational reforms and the cultivation of personal freedom, proposing that education should not only impart knowledge but also encourage critical thinking and ethical discernment. This view of education as a means of personal empowerment and development is a key pillar of contemporary self-improvement frameworks.

Simultaneously, the Scientific Revolution, with luminaries like Isaac Newton and Galileo Galilei, expanded the boundaries of knowledge about the natural world. This blend of scientific discovery and philosophical inquiry reinforced the conviction that human progress is achievable through scientific knowledge, rational action and a continuous self-improvement through learning and exploration.

The United States Declaration of Independence, adopted on July 4, 1776, stands as a pivotal moment in history. Authored by Thomas Jefferson, it was among the earliest declarations by a nation's people to assert their right to select their own government. The declaration's proclamation of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" perfectly captures the Enlightenment's influence, stressing the significance of individual rights, freedom, and the opportunity for personal fulfillment. This groundbreaking document not only ignited the American Revolution but also established a global benchmark for the value of self-determination and personal growth, which soon later spread to Europe and the rest of the world. Namely, in France, the Declaration

of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, adopted in 1789 during the French Revolution, served as a cornerstone for the rights of French citizens.

In essence, Western self-development is grounded in principles that echo those established during the eras of Ancient Greece, the Enlightenment, and the Human Rights movements. These principles articulate, in myriad ways and through diverse languages, the idea that individuals are at liberty to determine their own destinies. They assert that neither divine entities, such as God or Jesus, nor monarchical or governmental powers have the authority to mandate a person's beliefs or life path, except through democratic consensus to prevent conflicts of interest. Furthermore, it is emphasized that individuals possess the capacity to learn, evolve, and extend their abilities far beyond initial perceptions of possibility, reaching for "self-actualization".

You are a human being X or Y

So, you are free by birth

Free to do what you want

to be who you want¹

Aligned with these foundational principles, capitalism emerged in the 18th century in the USA and Europe, notably championed by figures such as Adam Smith. This economic model advocated for freeing markets from state intervention, proposing that "an invisible hand" could more efficiently

¹ *within legally and socially agreed-upon boundaries*

foster economic growth and minimize inefficiencies. Within this capitalistic framework, individuals are rewarded for their efforts, proactivity, and innovation, free from the constraints and directives of public entities. Such environment catalyzed an entrepreneurial surge, indirectly triggering the succession of economic revolutions—from the steam engine in the UK, to Edison’s electric bulb, to Zuckerberg’s Facebook, and now to the Data and AI revolution that is unfolding before our eyes. Capitalism holds the promise that with the right idea, resources, and efficient action, anyone can attain prestigious social status and substantial wealth. This is the essence of “The American Dream,” a concept that has been adapted in various shapes across Europe and beyond.

Capitalism’s foundational principle, centered around financial freedom, champions the rights to private property and the unrestricted exchange of goods and resources. However, there is a more Americanized interpretation of capitalism: *Economic Growth*. This relentless pursuit of profit, often likened to the “pursuit of happiness” mentioned in the American Declaration of Independence, has profoundly shaped the personal growth movement worldwide. The focus increasingly leans towards acquiring “more and more”—more wealth, more physical prowess, more possessions, more relationships—without a defined purpose beyond mere accumulation.

You are a citizen of a capitalistic country

So, you are free to work in any job

Start any business²

Aim for the riches

Because you deserve to be happy!

So, when you next encounter Shia LaBeouf 's motivational "Just Do It" speech or dive into a book by a Western self-development guru urging you to take risks, push your limits, or envision a brighter future, you'll have a clearer understanding of the origins of such ideologies.

2 *within legally and socially agreed-upon boundaries*

The Eastern WHY *Letting Go of The Illusion of Self*

In the world of self-help or personal growth, especially in places like Europe and North America, people often draw a thick line between Western ways of improving oneself and Eastern philosophies. In the West, the focus is usually on setting goals, chasing dreams, and planning for future successes. On the other hand, Eastern traditions—like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism—are seen (if ever seen) as focusing more on living in the present moment and finding inner peace.

Nowadays, such a differentiating line is sort of hard to spot in real life. The world became globalized and mostly westernized. So, even countries like Japan and South Korea, which have strong ties to Zen Buddhism and Shinto, have picked up the fast pace of life. They've gradually moved from a laid-back, take-each-day-as-it-comes approach to a more Western focus on the future, planning, and productivity. This change has definitely brought economic success, but it's also led to more stress and sadly, a higher depression and suicide rate. But remember, just because the old slower ways of living might seem odd to you, it doesn't mean they're worthless or the opposite of western self-improvement.

Have you ever met those rich folks with their fancy cars, huge houses, and model partners, but somehow, they just don't seem happy? They might stress over every little expense or blow their bank accounts on big parties and unjustified fun just to feel good. Then, there's the other side. Have you been to less developed places or temples where people, with no bank account

at all, seem truly happy for no reason, full of love and kindness for everyone? I've experienced both. That's why it's important to think about this crucial Eastern part of real, lasting growth.

Wearing my "Digital Project Manager" hat, the truth is, no matter how logical we are or how hard we try to manage risks (like operational, financial, or others), there's always a chance, even if it's tiny, that your next project might not succeed. For instance, looking at some numbers, although they can change depending on the country and year, about 9 out of 10 startups don't make it past their third or fourth year. Also, one in every two couples either breaks up or faces serious issues after a few years into the relationship. And there are plenty of other examples that show just how uncertain the future can be, especially in our fast-moving capitalistic and digital world.

Yesterday is a memory

Tomorrow is a mystery

And NOW is all we have

Instead of putting all our efforts into an uncertain future, as many Western self-help coaches suggest, it might be wise to "diversify" our efforts around across time (to borrow a term from finance). This is more than just a rational move; it reflects a deeper understanding of how unpredictable life can be nowadays.

This isn't to say that personal development isn't valued in Eastern cultures; it's just viewed differently. After moving away from the Catholic Church and

embracing secularism during the Renaissance, followed by the Protestant Reformation and later the Scientific Revolution, the Western world shifted its focus. It moved from religious beliefs and untested ideas to a focus on materialism and the scientific method. In this view, for something to be considered “real,” it must be provable and reproducible with statistically significant results. With globalization, led by the USA and Europe and propelled by advancements in transportation and telecommunications, many countries have adopted not just the pursuit of economic prosperity through science and technology but also the ideals of control, materialism, and an emphasis on the *Self* or *Ego*.

Given the intricate nature of this topic, I’ll delve deeper into the spirituality aspect of growth later. For now, here’s a simpler explanation.

All spiritual masters, from Jesus to Buddha, from Laozi to Mohammed, have shared a fundamental yet profound truth: the notion of the *Self*, as we understand it, doesn’t truly exist. Drawing from my IT engineering background, the Ego is akin to a dataset—a compilation of genetic codes from our evolutionary history and our ancestors before birth, and post-birth, what’s often termed as *Social Conditioning*. This narrative, which we piece together and call our “identity,” is, in reality, just a story we’ve convinced ourselves is us. This narrative has been recognized under various names across cultures and philosophies: as The Illusion or Maya in Buddhism and Hinduism, as Al Hayat Donya (the lower life) in Islam, and even as The Matrix in contemporary mystical thought. The underlying message across these teachings is consistent: if there is no tangible *Self* at the core, then

traditional self-development as we know it doesn't really matter. Instead, the authentic journey of growth is about breaking away from this illusion and venturing into a new realm of boundless, eternal magnificence, call it God, higher Self, consciousness, or the universe.

The Why of Ancient wisdom

Is not about a better future

The Why is beyond space & time

The Why is all there is

A Balanced WHY *Dancing with Life*

Having immersed myself in both Western and Eastern philosophies of growth through reading hundreds of books and personally experimenting with each approach—beginning with conventional self-improvement techniques and later embracing spiritual practices—I’ve decided to forge my own *Why*, by integrating insights from both sides. My decision is grounded in the renowned psychological framework known as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which I discussed in detail in my previous book, *The Innovative Animal (See Figure 2)*. This model, illustrating a pyramid of human needs, offers a comprehensive understanding of our motivations, from the most basic physiological needs to the pinnacle of self-actualization. By combining the actionable, goal-oriented strategies of the West with the introspective, spiritual wisdom of the East, I aim to pursue a balanced path towards fulfilling these needs and achieving a holistic sense of growth. This path I refer to as *Waking The F Up!*

