Stop Saying You’re Fine
Discover a More Powerful You
by Mel Robbins

Get Out of Your Own Way
The Truth About What’s Holding You Back

QUICK OVERVIEW
You know you need to change. You may even really want to change. But actually changing something about your life is often more difficult than it sounds. In Stop Saying You’re Fine, life coach, radio host and relationship expert for A&E’s Monster In-Laws Mel Robbins explains the truth about why you keep stalling out just before you make a real change in your life. After identifying the problems, Robbins offers a step-by-step approach to getting what you want.

Robbins’ book closes with a seven-day challenge designed to help readers put what they’ve learned into practice. And here’s the kicker: If you botch one day, you start over.

Practical and down-to-earth, Stop Saying You’re Fine could help you push past the mental blocks and bad habits that are keeping you from getting what you really want.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE
If you’re not going after what you really want because it’s too unrealistic, too big, too scary or too out of the ordinary, Robbins’s advice is to start by admitting that the status quo isn’t cutting it—to come to terms with the fact that you’re not “fine.” Try this exercise:

Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper.
On the left side of the paper, write at the top, “What Bugs Me.” In that column, write down all the things that bother you about that area of your life—things that you want to fix. Don’t settle for fine anymore. You want more.

On the right side of the paper, write at the top, “My Excuses.” Underneath it, write down all the reasons you feel you can’t change that area of your life or are afraid to try.
Review your excuses and recognize them for what they are: negative emotions that fuel resistance. Post the paper where you’ll see it every day. Robbins encourages readers to become familiar with their excuses. “In the past, these excuses stopped you,” she writes. “Today, if you hear them coming to the surface, you will take aim and power right through.”

Deep down you probably have a pretty good sense of what you’d like to change about your life. You most likely consider it quite often. Not in a fixated, obsessed kind of way, but as a droopy resignation that crosses your mind during the quiet moments when you’re alone, drifting through the supermarket or riding home from work. You want to change, but you never seem to be able to follow through, or you don’t ever take the steps to really make it happen.

In fact, you’ve probably circled around the changes you want to make to your life the way a dog circles a tree full of squirrels: lose eighty pounds, start a business, stop smoking, build a house, meet someone, bank a million, find your passion. There’s no way you’re possibly going to make those changes happen any more than that dog will actually climb that tree, and you can list a hundred different reasons why, but you keep looking up and checking to see if those squirrels are still there.

Sometimes as you circle that tree, you might realize that you’re stuck in a loop. You want to change, but you never seem to be able to follow through, or you don’t ever take the steps to really make it happen. Or, you don’t have a clue what to do differently. You’ve probably tried several times to make a small change but have given up after a few strikeouts, or gotten sidetracked, or faced too much scorn and resistance from others. Or maybe you are just too intimidated by the prospect, because you know your own limits too well, so you don’t even bother.

What’s the biggest obstacle between you and the life you want? I’m sure money, time, experience, and circumstances come to mind. You’re wrong. The biggest obstacle you face is you. You’re in your own way.

You’ve adopted a rigid mindset that is preventing you from changing.

A mindset changes what you think and feel. Depending on your mindset, your ideas either take flight or fizzle into nothing. If you looked at the world through a more powerful mindset, you could take on and accomplish anything. But right now, you’ve got a negative mindset about change in place. It’s become so instinctual, you probably don’t even realize what you’re doing. Whenever you start thinking about changing something in your life or trying something new, you shade the idea with so much negativity, you kill it altogether.

Lauren Zander, who teaches The Handel Method™ for life change at MIT and Stanford business schools, boils it down to two mindsets: the chicken and the jerk. I love these two labels because they make it super-easy to spot which one you use to kill your dreams. Let me show you how this works.

Alison wants to be an actress. But when she is sitting at her desk and the thought rises in her head I should just Google “auditions Kansas City,” instead of being powerful and acting on the idea—she becomes a chicken. She starts thinking about stage fright and rejections, and convinces herself she’s not ready and puts off action, yet again. Alison is the biggest obstacle in her way. And you know what? You do the same thing.

When fear starts to creep in and you find yourself waging a campaign to delay action—WAKE UP!—you are being a chicken and pecking your dreams to death with “What Ifs.” You must turn on that power inside and take action regardless of how you feel.

Meet Brian. Brian wants to get out of the mortgage business. But when he sees an interesting franchise advertised in the back of a magazine, instead of calling the 800 number for more information—the jerk steps in. He feels annoyed about the money it would require and how much time he’s wasted in the mortgage industry, and then the dream becomes a “dumb idea” and disappears.

Guess what, you do the same thing.

When thinking about change just makes you more frustrated and annoyed about the situation you are currently in—WAKE UP!—you are being a jerk and stomping out all motivation to move forward and explore. You’ve got to turn on that power inside and take action even though you don’t feel like it!
It may sound a little simplistic or cheesy to you. But getting what you want in life really does boil down to these little moments when either your negative mindset takes control or the powerful you steps in and pushes forward.

**HOW YOUR BRAIN BETRAYS YOU**

At crucial moments throughout your day, your brain is putting the brake on your desire for action and inserting thoughts and feelings in order to keep you from moving forward. Your brain pits your feelings against your dreams. It sets your worries against your ambitions. And it tees up your frustrations against your future.

Your brain has made an art form out of doing nothing through “anti-actions.” Anti-actions are the actions you take in the place of the ones you need to take. You can find examples of anti-actions everywhere in your life.

- **You want a raise at work, but you convince yourself to put in the minimum amount of effort possible, telling yourself “no one cares about this thing anyway.” Putting in a minimum amount of effort is an anti-action. If you were more powerful, you’d go beyond just phoning it in and put yourself in a position to argue for the raise.**

- **You want to get back in shape, but every day you take anti-actions that waste the time you could have spent on training at the gym. You hit the snooze, surf the Web, take a little longer at lunch, or run an errand that isn’t really urgent. All these anti-actions create just enough of a squeeze on your time that you can convince yourself that you don’t have the time to hit the gym tonight.**

Your feelings and mindset are driving these anti-actions and interrupting the natural course of energy from thought to action, and keep you spinning in circles without growing or changing.

Many of our feelings are just a kind of sophisticated shorthand for all sorts of complex calculations that are constantly occurring in the back of your brain. Your feelings are a way of taking tons of incoming data and delivering it to your conscious mind as a kind of fuzzy sentiment to steer your decisions. In other words, your unconscious mind may be a lot less of a wizard behind the curtain, and a lot more like a bunch of very fast processors all working together, like the ones Wall Street traders use to make many decisions very quickly.

The problem we’re discovering with our minds, however, is that these unconscious automatic processors have some evolutionary shortcomings. They are impressively fast, and excellent tools for most kinds of decision making that involve survival, but they’re not so good at some of the subtleties of higher-level thinking. As a result, we are constantly making predictably irrational errors. For example, our brains have a terrible bias for “now” over “later,” because our automatic unconscious believes that survival depends on immediate satisfaction. We will gladly sacrifice true happiness later for a good time now.

**If you looked at the world through a more powerful mindset, you could take on and accomplish anything.**

To grow, you have to do the stuff that feels hard right now, not later. Getting what you really want is a constant battle between your game-changer thoughts (lose weight, start a business, find love) that want to upset the current order of your life, and the protective thoughts (I don’t feel like it today, what if I get hurt) that want to preserve order by keeping things the same. Your mind is always scouting all the incoming signs from the outside world, and trying to make predictions about what might happen next, all in order to maintain a high level of safety and a reduced level of risk. When it sees a threat of any kind, it finds a reason to retreat. It’s the wet-blanket theory of motivation. If your mind can kill a great idea by dampening it with emotional turmoil, it will.

Resistance is about never living in the moment. You’re always worried about the future and your predictions. It’s a deliberate interruption of what you’re feeling right now, and heightening the fear and anxiety levels due to what you think is coming up. You think about possible futures, and avoid them. As a result, you’re failing to live in the moment and missing out on capitalizing on opportunities right in front of your face.
Admit What You Want—Then Act Like You Have It

When you identify what you desire (rather than fixating on what’s broken and the obstacles to fixing it) you can now start to take action. Start by writing about a day in the life you imagine.

What time would you get up?

What is the morning routine like?

Write about what happens during the day. Detail what it would be like when you arrive home from work. Write out what the evening is like.

Put as much of it into the first person and describe what you see, feel, smell, and taste as you move through the day.

By focusing on what you want, instead of concentrating on what you have, you will be giving yourself a map to guide you in a new direction. Great, now be powerful: Spend one day pretending your life is as you imagined.

You can go for it today. Here’s how you start—you simply act as if you already have what you desire. Faking your confidence is powerful. That kind of investment in yourself that’s made when you take action (even though you are quaking inside) will boost your confidence and your attractiveness in ways that no cropped-just-right Match.com photo, spray tan, or teeth whitener ever could.

The trick to getting unstuck is giving the powerful you control of your actions so that the chicken, the jerk, and the wet-blanket predictions that your brain lays on you don’t take control and screw you over.

PUSH THROUGH THE MENTAL WALLS THAT BLOCK YOUR PATH

The work required to get what you want never ends. You might as well add it to your long list of things that will always need your attention: groceries, laundry, trimming various errant hairs, bathing, making your bed, dishes, toenails. Everything needs to be kept up—and so does your life.

If you ever feel stuck, bored, or broken it is a sign that you need to broaden and build some new experiences into your life. You’re just doing more of the same old stuff. When you get this signal, you take the same five steps of getting what you want:

1. Face the truth that something is missing from your life and you’ve been avoiding dealing with it because it is easier to do nothing.
2. Admit what you really want.
3. Go public, tell three people, and ask for advice.
4. Create a map. Identify the steps necessary to achieve your goal.
5. Lean toward what you want by taking the first small step.

Then lean in again.

That is the basic anatomy of going from feeling stuck to taking action. And you will repeat this process over and over again throughout your life. Tapping into the powerful you is what is required to stop feeling stuck.

But eventually small progress isn’t going to feel satisfying. You’ll get bored and discouraged. You’ll hit a mental wall. Without accelerating your pace, you will start slacking off and only doing the actions that “feel” the easiest. That won’t change your life.

Mental walls are just as dangerous as dead-ends in the real world, because they make you want to chuck it all. The worst thing you could do now that you’ve started rolling forward is give up. That sets into motion a whole series of additional mental hurdles that you create and need to overcome: embarrassment, failure, and resignation. You want to avoid those. There are five mental walls that you will hit as you try to get what you want. They are:

1. Feeling rejected
2. Feeling overwhelmed
3. Feeling unmotivated
4. Feeling like a fraud
5. Feeling discouraged

Let’s take a look at how to deal with each of these five mental walls.

Feeling Rejected

When you put a lot of time and energy into something and it doesn’t work out, the temptation is to just blow everything up again and move in an entirely new direction. But don’t move too fast.
To move forward in the face of rejection, you need to take a small step from where you are right now. Make a new map to move you one step (and then another) in the right direction. Then write three reasons why you desired that goal in the first place.

**Feeling Overwhelmed**

The days where everything just clicks tend to be the ones where you have a lot going on and a full plate of things to accomplish. Those are my favorite kind of days because they have a momentum and satisfaction all their own.

But there’s a flip side. Having so much to do can very easily turn from being empowering and exciting into being overwhelming.

Whether you are feeling overwhelmed because you’ve got too much going on, or because you have too many choices, there is a solution—do a brain dump. You must get it all out of your head and onto a piece of paper, and then start knocking it out by taking action.

**Feeling Unmotivated**

If you see yourself losing your edge, or allowing yourself to start to let your deadlines slide, or if you feel distracted or unfocused—a lack of motivation is kicking in. If you want to maintain your momentum, you need to remain vigilant against any kind of delay. Just like weeding a garden, you always need to be on the lookout for thoughts that would push you to delay. Delaying is one of the primary tools resistance uses to keep you stuck.

**Feeling Like a Fraud**

You’re trying your best, and things might even be going well on the surface, but inside you’re a mess. You’re trying to act confident in your new business, but truthfully you feel as if you have no clue what you’re doing. It happens to all of us, no matter how accomplished or successful we become.

The moment you start feeling like a fraud, you need to reconnect with some of your most positive and successful friends and let them know that you are having a hard time aligning your confidence level with your goals. Connecting with people lets you draft off their own personal momentum a little. All sorts of experiments show that social networks are actually agents that transfer behaviors. That means the people you hang out with and socialize with will have a significant influence on just how you feel and behave. So just by talking to the three most motivated, successful, and goal-oriented friends you have, their momentum will actually rub off and influence your behavior.

**Delaying is one of the primary tools resistance uses to keep you stuck.**

**Feeling Discouraged**

When you are building your personal power, you are walking a line between pushing yourself past your resistance and pushing yourself too hard into a ditch. You need to be constantly aware of how you feel, and balancing resistance against genuine pain. If there’s no pleasure in your breakthroughs, because they completely empty you out, you’ve got to lower the voltage. If it’s too radical, you can actually lose momentum.

The point of pushing through is to teach yourself the reason for doing it again and again, not frighten you away further.

**TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR LIFE**

Underlying all feelings of being stuck is a basic problem with ownership. If you don’t own, or accept, the everyday occurrences in your day, you will begin to feel a distance from your own life. Whatever degree you feel like the things that happen to you are outside your control, that’s exactly how much you’re going to feel like a stranger in your life.

Ownership of your life cuts straight to your own vision of the future. If you don’t assume control over major portions of your life, you’re going to feel like a passenger. You’ll have nothing to look forward to, except what life hands you.

That’s why you need to inhabit your life as if you own it. Owning your decisions, owning parts of your life even when they’re difficult, is what allows you to create a life and make it your own. “Personalize” it.
ACTION STEPS

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you’ve learned to your life. Here are a few questions and thoughts to get you started. Write down your responses and take action!

1. What do you want to change about your life? Where are you feeling stuck?

2. In what areas of your life are you being a chicken or a jerk?

3. List a few of your go-to anti-actions—things that you do to avoid something you know would bring about positive change. (For example, reading a book, watching TV, surfing the Internet, calling a friend.)

4. Tell three people what your major goal is for this year.

5. Ask three people for advice on how to achieve what you want. Talk to people who have accomplished what you want to accomplish.

6. Create a map. Identify the small steps that need to be completed in order to reach your goal.

7. Do a data dump. Write down all the things (to-dos, worries, etc.) that are overwhelming and distracting you from moving forward with your goal.

About the Author

Mel Robbins is a lawyer turned life coach. She hosts a daily syndicated radio talk show on which she dispenses advice to listeners about how to get out of their own way and create the life they want. Robbins is a blogger and columnist for SUCCESS magazine. She is also the relationship expert on A&E's Monster In-Laws. Robbins lives with her family in Massachusetts.

Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the summary of Stop Saying You’re Fine, you may also enjoy:

End Malaria
by Michael Bungay Stanier

Positive Energy: 10 Extraordinary Prescriptions
by Judith Orloff

Use What You’ve Got, and Other Business Lessons I Learned from My Mom
by Barbara Corcoran