

THREE THINGS TO DO FOR A BETTER LIFE

Take control one day at a time through gratitude, health and food.

By Tony Teolis of



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Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. Seneca

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover. Mark Twain

Introduction

The premise of this book is that having a successful and happy life is partially dependent on three things: being grateful for what you have, maintaining good health and producing your own food. Success does not equal happiness. I used to think it would. When I was young I was easily influenced by music and in particular the music my older brother left behind when he went to college. I was fortunate he had the taste in music that influenced my outlook on life. He left behind 8-tracks of The Beatles' White Album and the years 1967-70. Another he left behind was Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Having 8-tracks should give you an idea of how old I am. No I'm not a grandfather.

Of all the music I reveled in as a youth The Beatles All You Need Is Love has stood the test of time as my favorite. I remember watching a film of The Beatles performing All You Need Is Love live for the Queen of England and a bunch of hippies sitting and grooving on the floor. [Watch this cool video here.](#)

At only the age of fifteen I was lucky to be naïve enough to really believe that all you needed was love to be happy. Over the next few years I got lost as my life's directional finder was severely impaired due to the desire to have fun above all things. It wasn't until after basic training in the US Army that I gained new direction and desire to live a better life.

Back then, a better life for me implied successful completion of my military service followed by successful completion of college. Prior to graduation I was driven to find a job in Japan while living in Pittsburgh. I did and credited my success to hard work and perseverance. Then I spent the next eight and a half years living and working in Japan all the while driven to become a successful businessperson.

I did all these things but deriving true happiness from my successes was elusive. It might have been in part thinking that the grass is greener on the other side of the hill and more money equals a better lifestyle. It turned out that The Beatles were right. All I needed was love and I found that with the woman who has been my wife for fourteen years.

What I realized through my wife was that happiness equals success not the other way around as society implies. Now that I am in my mid forties, I do not have time for the melancholy and depression that too many people suffer from. Being in my mid forties is great! I'm in between four generations and know that I have pretty much hit life's half way mark. The pain of having an older body is regular and the need for caring for people above and below me in age takes precedence. I have probably hit or am close to peak income earning. I also know that because of that I am vulnerable. More than anything else though I am happy and I have a better life than the one I started with. Moving along this path I aim for improvement and to not be caught unaware of the changes the wind is blowing our way.

Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone. G.B. Stern

Practice Gratitude

There's an old saying that as long as you have your health you should be grateful. But life has so much to be grateful for that I feel compelled to share with you this first of "Three Things To Do For A Better Life". This is the act of remembering and reminding myself that I am a success because of the things that make me happy. When I am happy my brain releases dopamine which causes pleasant sensations throughout my body and a smile on my face. Once I have a little dopamine rush I want a little more and a little more and a little more. I want to feel the pleasantness all the time. When dopamine floods the system it turns on all learning centers in the brain. Dopamine allows me to adapt to the world in a different way. With this knowledge in hand it has become possible for me to train my brain to become more positive.

People all over the world want to feel this pleasantness too. So much so that too many humans seek out scary and dangerous methods for managing dopamine lifts. I want to introduce you to a little exercise that you can do every day and not just for the recommended 21 days but for every day for the rest of your life. That is exercising your brain to focus on the positive in your life, releasing dopamine and feeling happy as a result. This is truly amazing stuff and I do not know why it is not on the evening news and in all other media. Drug cartels around the world could start going out of business tomorrow if everyone practiced a little positive reinforcement. Governments and political leaders would fail with

their attempts to stoke fear and submission due to the realizations of the uselessness of their efforts once people realized that they control their happiness anytime anywhere. People everywhere would quickly start living better once green pieces of paper are replaced with Heaven's only currency, love. A dream you say. How dare I question 10,000 years of humanity's progress. Nature is cruel and that is the nature of the world you say. Well I am only suggesting that a little positive reinforcement could lead to a larger movement of really living a better life. Here's how.

I like to watch the talks on [Ted.com](https://www.ted.com) because they are better than watching the news. Watching the news disgusts me because of the lies, uselessness and fear mongering it perpetuates. Most importantly, news and mainstream media disgust me because they fail to empower people. Outside of lying to people every election cycle that they have the power mainstream media seems to only desire constant marketing of things we do not need in order to live a better life that we will never have. My wife made me stop watching the evening news back in 2004 because I would always swear at the newscasters for not being truthful or for only sharing half-truths. It was wise she made me stop. Since then I try to limit what I take in from the mainstream media and I turn to the [Daily Show](https://www.nbc.com/the-daily-show) for my news intake. Over the past eight years I have found many others sources of information to tell me what is going on in the world.

One I found and particular like because of the eye opening experiences it causes in me is [Technology, Entertainment, Design \(TED\)](https://www.ted.com). TED is a nonprofit devoted to Ideas "Worth Spreading". It started out in 1984 as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, Design. I was viewing TED.com one day and came across an amazing presentation by [Shawn Achor author](https://www.ted.com/speakers/shawn-achor) of The Happiness Advantage. [In his presentation Mr. Achor proposed the radical idea](https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happiness_advantage) that I could rewire and train my brain to look for the abundant positiveness in the world that never seems to make it to main stream media.

As a result of my efforts Mr. Achor promised I would be rewarded with a dopamine release. I am middle aged and by right skeptical of such stuff but also wise enough to know to be a better listener than I was when I was young.

Mr. Achor proposed that if I just spent 2 minutes a day for 21 days working on one of the following activities I could be rewarded. He gave some suggestions on what to do to trigger happiness and explained the reasons why the dopamine would be released. It was fascinating because it made sense, I had heard such things before but they were never explained in a scientific manner as Mr. Achor did. He insisted that if I wrote three gratitudes, journaled, meditated, exercised (two minutes wouldn't be enough), or conducted a daily random act of kindness that dopamine would flow, I would feel happiness and my life would be better. It all sounded too good to be true but my role in life as a leader requires me to continuously improve myself and work with others for self improvement and I must keep an open mind and try new things to fulfill those responsibilities.

I have a commute in the morning that requires a bicycle, a bus and a train. It is an hour from my front door to my office door and I leave the driving up to others. But there are still too many cars just at the one major intersection I cross and I start the day in a very defensive mode. In one sense that is great

because primitive safety and survival instincts are still alive and well within me. However, being on the defensive at 6 AM every morning makes for a less than positive outlook. Then there are the crowds of people to move between in order to get a seat on the bus or train and sometimes waiting for Metro in the rain and cold can really suck because that is when they seem to slow the system down. It's not nearly as crowded as Japan and everyone is civilized but there is a lot of crime on Metro and being aware of my surroundings should never be taken for granted. It is worse if I drive because then I have to contend with other drivers and they are much less friendly than the people I meet on public transportation. So either way I could easily get to work with a brain programmed to be defensive and on the lookout for negativity.

This happens to everyone unless they show up in a positive frame of mind. I guess that is why we all ask each other "How are you?" even though we do not have the time to really find out. It must be some ancient human conditioning effect that demands we greet others and put them in a positive frame of mind without thinking about it. Most people reply "I'm fine and you?". This is positive and automatically gets the brain to say something positive "I'm fine". It reaffirms people that in the grand scheme of things someone else has asked about their particular existence to which they can say they are glad to be a part of it. A person in a bad mood could be on the way to their office and when greeted with a "Good morning. How are you?" our culture requires them to say something nice which helps to motivate the positiveness of the brain. It's like we want to give each other a dopamine lift by making them feel good and letting them know you feel good too. But of course they will be some people who have dark clouds over them and will not reply or say something nice about their existence or yours or anyone else's. With a little training however there is hope.

Defensiveness and negativity do not make a good combination for being a productive member of society let alone for the job I do. If my brain is in a positive mode I perform better than I do with neutral or negative emotions. When I am positive my intelligence, creativity and energy all rise to higher levels and it is infectious amongst the people I associate with. It has been proven [that a positive brain is 31% more productive](#). Studies are showing that you can rewire yourself to be happier by doing happy things. A better brain for me allows for better success at my jobs, superior productivity, great ability to handle adversity and greater productivity. Most importantly, if I have a better brain and I am happy I am also more fun to be with.

The science has been theorized and tested and found to be sound. Doing good things trigger dopamine releases. My body likes dopamine and so does yours. So much so that I do not know about you but I would like to feel good more often and as a result I seek out good things to do to trigger that feel good release. Thus, I decided to take on the activity of writing three things for which I am grateful each day for 21 days and as soon as I tried it I was hooked. The reason I love this exercise is because it trains my brain to scan the world for the positive not the negative. Since I watched Shawn Achor's TED.com presentation I began listing my three daily gratitudes in a little book on the bus ride. I have been doing this much longer than 21 days and I have yet to run out of things to write my gratitudes. I never repeat them and it humbles me to know they are currently over 250 things for which my gratitude has been asserted. I have only been doing this for three months.

That amazes me because it is so easy to wake up, turn on the news and or get stuck in traffic and then be disappointed in the whole thing. That never has to happen again. The act of writing the gratitudes does more than just release a little dopamine to make you happy and help you live longer. It helps to motivate you to want to share your gratitude and make others happy. For that is part of why you are on planet earth.

My experiment with writing three gratitudes a day has turned into a regular routine for me versus prayer but it is very similar to prayer. With this exercise you seek out the positive things in life which is also the aim of prayer. The specific plan mentioned in the video is to write down three things that you are grateful for, once per day, for 21 days in a row. That will begin the self-reinforcing training that can get you hooked on being happy.

Here's How: For the next 21 days list three gratitudes a day without repeating any. Go ahead, write down three things you are grateful for. Think about what makes you happy. If this is difficult then that is an indication you need this exercise. Try starting with the [Grateful Dead](#) if nothing comes to mind. You are going to train your brain to look for the positive. Keep the gratitudes in a little notebook making them as long or as short as necessary. Do not skip any days. If you like this exercise then you don't have to stop after the 21st day. Keep going like I have. Hell, go ahead make a blog about it. You will be surprised by what happens next.

If this exercise is not for you then try one of these (do for 21 days to start):

- **Keep a journal:** Everyday write about a positive experience over the past 24 hours. This will allow your brain to relive the experience.
- **Get in shape:** Exercise teaches your brain that your behavior and care of your body matters.
- **Meditate:** Overcome the rush of the daily routine you have built. This allows the brain to focus one thing or task at hand or nothing at all (the hardest and my favorite).
- **Conduct a daily random act of kindness:** Do something nice for someone and in the way they want. Make the world go around a little easier by spreading smiles.

If you have decided this is not for you, it won't work, it is working great, or you are getting stuck. Sharing will help to get others involved in a truly positive outcome. I can be contacted at TonyTeolis@ToDoListHome.com Good luck!

In theory, practice and theory are the same. In practice they are not. Yogi Berra

Greet The Sun

DISCLAIMER: I am not a yoga expert nor am I a trainer or associated with any company or website referenced in this book. However, I am a practitioner of things to do for a better life and let me tell you that doing yoga makes life better.

CAUTION: If you have asthma, serious heart or respiratory problems, do not hold your breath. Inhale or exhale again as you feel the need to.

Most people are awake in the morning by either some sound cue or by the natural rhythm of their own bodies. Regardless of the manner in which we awake, the morning is not uniformly greeted with gratefulness and glee. Instead as the body ages the morning is at times greeted with aches and pains. Each awakening is an opportunity to move past the pain and turn the sunshine on. As living, thinking beings on this planet it is imperative we recognize that which gives us life. This life source for our planet is the sun. This is not some fancy new age propaganda just simple scientific fact. The sun is at the center of our solar system and provides the energy our planet requires to support life. Thus, it is only fitting that when we awaken we do so with a greeting to the sun to warm our bodies and minds. Doing a morning greeting through yoga practice makes life better.

Yoga is a physical, mental, and spiritual discipline, originating in ancient India. In relation to people of this modern age it still makes for good feelings in body, mind and soul. The goal of yoga, or of the person practicing yoga, is the attainment of a state of perfect spiritual insight and tranquility while meditating on the Hindu concept of divinity. I came to practice yoga as a means to deal with low back pain. Almost everyone will experience low back pain at some point in their lives and I started to experience when I was thirty eight years old.

A common cause of low back pain is lumbar spinal stenosis and that is what I have. As we age, our spines change. The normal wear and tear effects of aging can lead to narrowing of the spinal canal. My pain began to become acute in 2004 and I went to my physician only to learn that back pain was going to be something I would have to learn to live with. He was kind enough to refer me to a pain clinic and I did experience three spinal injections of cortisone which kept my back pain free for a month at a time. But there's a limit to how much of that a body can take and I had to turn to something else. I did a bit of research on low back pain and eventually came across some very informative yoga sites. So starting in 2005 I began to practice yoga and I haven't stopped.

The first thing I learned about yoga was that it required a relaxed state of mind and body to begin. I also learned that yoga has physiological benefits unlike any other form of exercise I had done before. Practicing yoga allows for autonomic nervous system equilibrium. That is the scientific way of saying that yoga balances the involuntary nervous system. When I practice yoga my pulse rate decreases, my respiratory rate decreases and my blood pressure decreases.

I also learned about the psychological benefits of practicing yoga. First, my somatic and kinesthetic awareness increase. That means I am more aware of my self-control and body movements which increases the learning experience I have when practicing yoga. My mood improves when I do yoga and so does my well-being. I am happier with myself and there is no anxiety or depression. Practicing yoga allowed me to become aware its biochemical benefits. For example, glucose decreases, sodium decreases, and total cholesterol decreases. [There have been numerous clinical studies over the years that reveal these statements so do not just take my word for it.](#)

I have always been a physical exercise person. My motto used to be "No Pain No Gain!" But that was only because it was drilled into me over four years of high school football and I didn't know any better. That mindset also helped me to prepare for the rigors of basic training in the US Army and it served me

well throughout my service. However, “No Pain, No Gain!” is a young person’s exercise mantra. The great thing about yoga practice is that I learned physical pain does not necessarily result in good health. Having a good, clean and clear mind leads to good health. I still lift weights and ride my bike every day, I walk the dog and play sports with my children but yoga has added a new dimension on how to be healthy and strong.

With the long list of benefits I just described there does not seem to be any exclusion factors for people to practice yoga. There is debate out there about how seriously religious people should take the philosophical and spiritual aspects of yoga but the same could be said for Rock and Roll. It’s a big world and you should be open minded enough to incorporate the benefits of this wonderful lifestyle. You must check with your physician first because yoga is a proven life improver for people who suffer chronic pain, depression, poor health, poor mental health. It’s great for athletes and the everyday person who just wants to feel better and raise their energy level to its fullest.

The sun salutation is the easiest yoga series to introduce new comers. It is really great if it can be practiced outside and if not at least facing an outside window preferably facing sunlight. This not only makes doing the sun salutation more fun but it also fulfills the body’s need to get vital sunlight. The best time to practice the sun salutation is when the sun is rising but if your lifestyle prevents that then do what fits your schedule best. I prefer doing the sun salutation in the morning facing the sun and there are few things greater in life than welcoming the sun with good vibrations and good yoga. The sun’s rays lighting up your inner spirit by poring through your body is a wonderful feeling when the weather permits.

The sun salutation like all yoga exercises goes hand in hand with conscious breathing. As you practice the moves not only must you concentrate on the shape you body is to change to but also the deep breaths that aid in the execution of the moves. Breathing deep into the lungs allows for a clearing of thoughts from the mind and as you concentrate on the deep breaths and the motion of your body you begin to feel connected to an inner self that you normally forget is always there. That inner self is the one that has guided you through life so far and has many more years of wise guidance to provide if only you will let it.

I present the sun salutation as a range of motions you carry out while inhaling and exhaling deeply at the appropriate points. There are twelve steps that make the sun salutation series. As one series is achieved continue until you can achieve two, three and more up to a total of twenty minutes. This is not a strength exercise so do not treat it like one. Instead allow your body to learn the moves and flow with its own energy from the Sun.

The best way to do understand the Sun Salutation or any yoga practice for that matter is to watch someone else do it and follow along. Rather than spend time repeating the work of others I recommend that you go to the following links and learn from the experts. The first is a [link to a diagram of the Sun Salutation steps](#) and you can connect to it here

The next is the [“Wake Up Your Spine” video](#) performed by Sarah Cline of YogaToday.com. The [“Wake Up Your Spine” video](#) is Sarah showing you how to do it on the YogaToda YouTube channel.

For more on my experience with yoga and how I have integrated it as part of my lifestyle I refer you to my website <http://ToDoListHome.com> In [Episode-85- Practice Yoga To Improve Health And Live A Better Life](#) I present useful information about the sun salutation and how it can be a great way to start living your life through body movements, deep breathing and connecting to your wiser inner self. In that episode I also provide links and information for finding great yoga information online and a couple of book recommendations.

In [Episode-92- Do Yoga To Feel Great And Remedy A Cold](#) I describe how I practice yoga to alleviate the symptoms of the common cold. The primary series of yoga was introduced in that episode as well my unique take on how to feel great even when you have a cold. That episode also has links to more information on yoga and some videos to help you follow along and feel better.

It all begins with one long deep healthy and cleansing breath. Don't wait another moment to start feeling great. Another note of caution is that practicing and increasing your knowledge and understanding of yoga can be addictive and fun. Let me know what you think by sharing your experience with me. I can be contacted at TonyTeolis@ToDoListHome.com

"Don't limit investing to the financial world. Invest something of yourself, and you will be richly rewarded." Charles Schwab

Produce Your Own Food

The third thing to do for a better life is to produce some of your own food. Particularly you must learn to produce something that you enjoy eating and are currently dependent on a complex system for production. For this part I focus on plant food but the concepts can be applied to raising small animals for eggs, milk and meat. It may seem like too much trouble at first when you consider it can take months from the time you plant a seed until the first harvest. But whatever fruit and vegetables you buy from the store or anywhere else don't take any less time to grow. If you're not buying locally grown fruit and vegetables from a farmers market, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) system or growing your own you are reliant on a complex system to provide you with sustenance. At what point does this become too expensive for you? How many people and machines have a hand in the production of the food that appears on your dining room table? How much are those systems reliant on other systems like the energy complex to make food appear in the grocery stores?

These and other questions lead me to believe that food costs will only increase exponentially over time. What you depend on every day to get by is dependent on strangers and strange systems and your sacrifice of liberty to control what you put on the table is worse than what we experience when we have to take our shoes off at the airport. The more dependent we become on complex systems the more we are forced to pay the piper for the going price. As food becomes more expensive I have chosen to take control of what I can. It's not everything but it is so much more than zero. I could never grow enough to support the needs of my growing family but that's not the point. It's about learning and improving permaculture techniques to help build community, sufficiency and reliance. Through efforts in this field everyone grows a little food of their own and shares not just the food grown but also knowledge and creativity with new understanding.

[In 1900 over 38% of the American population was farmers and the rest had easy access to locally grown food.](#) Today Americans are dependent on less than 2% of the population to farm America's produce. Almost all food purchased in stores today is grown hundreds or thousands of miles away. A lot of produce in American stores is not even grown in America. In fact imports of fresh foreign produce have increased to the tune of \$5 billion annually. [According to the USDA these higher fruit and vegetable imports are the result of rising consumer incomes and major advances](#) in storage, packing and transportation.

The number of US farms and farmers have decreased and production has increased only through higher cost in price and usable farmland. Farmers used to work with nature to grow a variety of crops to meet the needs of their local markets. Today US farmers specialize in crops like corn, soy and wheat and grow only those crops for shipping far from their domains. Doing so has degraded farmland with over production of monoculture crops which is something not exhibited in nature. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) will continue to increase in use in crops grown worldwide due to the perceived benefits of increased production and lower cost. [The World Health Organization has an informative page of 20 questions and answers](#) about GMOs that you should read.

The more dependent people become on complex systems for the food the greater the chances of losing access to food when problems arise. Whether these problems reveal themselves through natural or manmade catastrophes it is important to remember that things change when disaster strikes. Disaster can come in the form of a job loss or an earthquake and if there is a not ready supply of resources such as food to help alleviate the pain the hardship will be worse.

The great science fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon once wrote that "Knowledge is a pile of bricks, and understanding is a way of building". I started collecting vegetable seeds even before I had a place to put them. We were still living in apartment in the summer 2008 when I made my first purchase of seeds from Big John Lipscomb. His website and YouTube videos helped me understand that there were some things that I could have influence over and one of them was growing your own food. However, when I began gardening I lacked the bricks of knowledge to build gardens with an understanding of how to succeed. Through lots of reading and practical experience I gained knowledge of the essentials for growing food such as soil, water, and sun. I gained more bricks like permaculture, hugelkultur, frost protection, pest control, rain harvesting, and drought protection and started to understand how to add them to my plans.

Nature is the best and harshest teacher and my gardening has only become successful because of my observations of nature and interacting with the food and flowers I grow in ways that work with nature not against it. Tomatoes are America's favorite vegetable to grow at home. What I learned about growing my own food is best explained through my experience with growing tomatoes. The first time I grew them I didn't know what I was doing. I had successfully sprouted my first plants from seed but they soon turned spindly with just a long stem and a little leaf and they died. I was gardening in a very reactive manner without knowledge and understanding. I used to think all that was required was a seed, dirt and some water. Then I learned I needed a grow light system and started again with resulting success. After seven weeks of careful nurturing my tomato plants were ready to go in the ground. I

didn't plant them correctly the first time as I just dug a hole, placed in some crushed egg shells for calcium, put the tomato plants in straight up and down and let them go at it. I remember that after they started to gain some height I bought some tomato cages from Wal-Mart. That was a big mistake because the cages were just a few feet tall and I thought that was as tall as tomatoes should grow. Luckily before I put the cages to use the tomatoes were growing too fast and I was able to return the cages for a refund.

That first growing season I was surprised by how well they grew. I didn't anticipate that the tomato plants would grow and grow as long as runners were pulled and proper support was provided. I used a bunch of tall sticks and had to run twine around them every week to support the growth. This was time consuming and very hard on my back. Now I know better and I wish to share my planting method with you. I credit Jack Spirko of the survival podcast for introducing me to Mel Bartholomew and the method I use for starting, growing, transplanting and growing the tallest and tastiest tomatoes in my neighborhood.

I initially learned this method from Mel Bartholomew's Square Foot Gardening book and a Japanese friend of mine. First, be sure to plant tomatoes in a mostly sunny place. About 4-6 hours per day of sun is all that is really required. Never plant tomatoes in the same place year after year because they will develop diseases previous tomato plants leave in the soil. They must be rotated on a four year cycle or you will have wasted your time, energy and money. As tomatoes grow they require strength and they get it from their stems. The stems will sprout new roots and this can be achieved by laying the tomato down in a shallow trench. I now line the bottom of my tomato trenches with egg shells and gently bend the top up and lay it on a pillow of dirt. I then cover the plant with soil and mulch. For a 1 foot plant only the last few inches remain above ground with stem bent at a nearly 90 degree angle and laid in the dirt horizontally. The roots that grow from the stem will support a tomato that can grow to amazing heights. I refer you specifically to [Episode-109- Grow More Tomatoes, Flowers And Vegetables With Trellis](#)

I truly experience liberty when I take a tiny single seed and produce a plant to feed my family and then later retrieve dozens or hundreds of new seeds from that same plant. For me growing my own food is as exhilarating as hunting, fishing and sports. All of those things require hard work, patience and perseverance and gardening is no less of a challenge. As a result of the permaculture principles I practice with gardening I am now able to provide for our own herbs, garlic, onions, tomatoes, beans, greens, radishes, hot peppers, and even honey. We have more than eighteen gardens of various sizes and shapes around our one third acre property in northern Virginia. Some gardens date back to 2009 and I have added new ones with new techniques over the past 4 seasons. 2012 welcomed the introduction of hugelkultur and the gardens I built on top of soil covered wood logs. The biggest hugelkultur garden is 3.5 feet high, 5 feet wide and 10 feet long. Previously the space taken up by this monster hugel bed was only 32 square feet of flat growing space. Now it is a four dimensional growing space of over 80 square feet. [Episode-17- Build a Hugelkultur Raised Bed and Feed Yourself.](#)

It's really amazing and although the slugs did their best to challenge my efforts the powers of the plants exceeded the slugs' ability to maul them. Slug problems have occurred in all my gardens but that's normal with the wet springs we have. It is part of the reason I plant so much because there is always

more available than can be destroyed. Now that summer 2012 is in full swing the gardens have truly come alive and are thriving pretty much on their own.

I have two honey bee colonies and both are doing well. We harvested 16 pounds of honey from the colony that was established in April of 2011. See how we did that in [Episode-106- Honey Harvest And How To Get Honey From A Bee Hive – Part 1](#) and [Episode-110- Honey Harvest And How To Get Honey From A Bee Hive – Part 2](#)

I have let some plants like radish grow flowers instead of harvesting them because the honey bees really love them. We had a wonderful strawberry and raspberry harvest and made plenty of jam with both. Now we are coming the near the end of the blackberry season. I have always grown beans because they are easy to grow anywhere and their production in size and yield in the hugelkultur beds has been phenomenal. The Swiss chard, endive, radish, and spinach have produced enough for lots of salads over a two month period and there's still more. We are harvesting enough to get at least 2-3 family sized salads per week. It's never enough but it is so much more than nothing.

We have also been harvesting a lot of herbs and [Episode-105- ToDoList: Dehydrate Food For Long Term Cost Savings, Storage And Use](#) depicts how we are harvesting and storing them. Italian parsley, curly parsley, basil, cilantro, chives, rosemary, oregano, sage and thyme are all over producing and that has required some new activity for us to store them without going to waste.

Having all these fruit and herb plants was a wonderful way to anticipate the amazing tomato season we are currently enjoying. Tomatoes, squash, beans and cucumbers have all done amazingly well in the hugelkultur beds and we have been making and storing a lot of tomato sauce and pickles this year. One surprise I have to note is the two awesome pumpkin vines that are producing in the back yard. They are not big pumpkins but they are pumpkins none the less which must have grown from seed tossed in the compost bin last fall. The brand new blueberry, elderberry, raspberry, blackberry and asparagus plants have come alive as well and seem like they will survive this first crucial season to become mainstays of <http://ToDoListHome.com>

One of the main reasons I am interested in becoming a great gardener is because of the taste of the food we produce at home. Food that I grow naturally at home is so much fuller of flavor and texture than what can be purchased in stores. My family loves to eat what we produce on our own and the natural curiosity of my children is encouraged by them being able to eat what they have helped produce. It gives the children a greater appreciation for how food is grown and prepared and their understanding of how nature works has grown exponentially. They don't seem to take food for granted which is prevalent in first world society.

We also love growing our own food because we get to share our production with friends and family. Our excess produce makes great presents and our neighbors always seem happy to receive something they watched grow slowly over several months. We love the feeling that giving provides and it also helps to solidify our value to our community. It is for the reasons stated so far and more that I recommend you to grow your own food for a better life.

Gardening is hard work and it is imperative that you consult professional medical advice before taking on the rigors of growing your own food. I have so far excluded the health benefits of working in a garden and eating better because I guess they seem obvious to me. However, if you are new to this subject then you may be unaware that as human beings born of planet earth it is important for us to work with the earth and all the organisms growing in the soil. What grows in the ground is natural and placing your hands in the dirt and growing something to eat or admire from where there was no life before affirms human domain on this planet. Each person has the ability to provide some kind of food for themselves and others it is just a matter wanting to learn what food you are capable of growing.

To get started I highly recommend starting small and building up as your knowledge and understanding grow. In [Episode-36- Grow Sprouts And Influence The Future](#) I provide useful advice for getting started with easiest food to grow at home. Growing sprouts is always on my to-do list in the winter time. Production is down near zero for home produced vegetables and growing sprouts allows for a proactive solution to eating fresh produce at a lower cost than what the local stores offer. Growing sprouts has become such a regular part of our fall and winter daily schedule that we are very good at it and may be expanding for revenue producing purposes.

If sprouts are not your thing or you are ready for more then I recommend the tomato as a great plant to start your gardens. Grow them as I have noted and be sure to add flowers such as nasturtiums and marigolds and herbs like garlic and chives to help keep pests at bay. Tomatoes grow well with peppers and cucumbers and a first garden can be those three with a few of the flowers and herbs. Throw in some lettuce seeds and you will be making salads to add to your evening meals. You can expand your selection but be sure to only grow what you already like to eat and eat what you grow.

If you have the space I cannot understate the benefits of growing perennial fruits and vegetables. These are plants that require hard work once to get them established. After they are started they will provide you with years of production. Nourse Farms located in Whatley, Massachusetts has become part of the establishment at ToDoListHome.com. For three years I have received and planted asparagus, blackberry, raspberry and strawberry from Nourse Farms. This year we received more plants and expanded the plantings with blueberry and elderberry. We also planted more asparagus. This time purple passion asparagus was planted in a 2 foot by 8 foot by 8 inch hugelkulture bed. Of course we couldn't help ourselves and planted 5 more blackberry and 5 more raspberry for a total of 20 and 17 respectively and they keep growing. [Episode-90- Plant Fruit And Vegetables From Nourse Farms – Edible Review](#) and [Episode-91- Plant Fruit And Vegetables From Nourse Farms Part 2](#) show why we love having Nourse Farms as a provider. The videos for those episodes show how the plants are prepared and placed in the ground.

My recommendation for growing your own food to make life better would not be complete without referring you to the masters who have helped me learn how to grow food. First there is Jack Spirko of <http://www.thesurvivalpodcast.com> who first turned me on to methods he learned from others. From Jack I learned about Jason Akers of <http://theselfsufficientgardener.com> , Mel Bartholomew of <http://www.melbartholomew.com> , Geoff Lawton and Bill Mollison of <http://www.permacultureusa.org/> , Paul Wheaton of <http://www.permies.com> and Sep Holzer of

<http://www.krameterhof.at/en/index.php?id=aktuelles> These are the folks who have helped influence what goes on in my front and backyards and I realize I am only beginning a permaculture lifestyle. The dreams I have for production in the future exceed my capacity for implementing them quickly but over time food production will increase at <http://ToDoListHome.com> and it will make my life and the lives of my family better.

[Episode-107- Grow Gardens At Home And Make Your Own Food And Flowers – A Guided Tour – Part 1](#) will help you get started.

Epilogue

I hope you have enjoyed this book. The intention is not to guarantee you a better life but rather to motivate you to take charge of things that you can influence. You control your attitude and demonstrating gratitude can brighten your outlook on life. You control what you do to develop mentally and physically and greeting the sun in the morning with yoga will envelope you with greater appreciation for both. You control what you eat and how you eat. Establishing some control over what you put in your body will fill you with a great sense of liberty that cannot be gained any other way. Let me know what you do for a better life. My e-mail is TonyTeolis@todolisthome.com. Good luck and best wishes.



“Live with intention. Walk to the edge. Listen hard. Practice wellness. Play with abandon. Laugh. Choose with no regret. Appreciate your friends. Continue to learn. Do what you love. Live as if this is all there is.” Mary Anne Radmacher