

## THE BIG IDEAS

### The 3 Conditions

= Meaning + Interactions + Energy.

### Meaning

= Strengths + Interests + Needs.

### Your Talents

Double down every turn.

### 45 + 15

Work. Rest. Repeat.

### 500 Million Moments

Use them wisely.

### The iPhone Effect

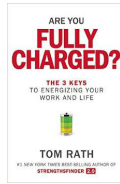
Put your smartphone away.

### Making the Connection

Btwn daily decisions and energy.

### Infusing Good Things

While we can.



# Are You Fully Charged?

The 3 Keys to Energizing Your Work and Life

BY TOM RATH · SILICON GUILD © 2015 · 240 PAGES

“To discover what creates a full charge, my team and I reviewed countless articles and academic studies, and interviewed some of the world’s leading social scientists. We identified and catalogued more than 2,600 ideas for improving daily experience. As we narrowed down the concepts to the most proven and practical strategies, underlying patterns continued to surface. Three key conditions differentiate days when you have a full charge from typical days:

- **Meaning:** doing something that benefits another person
- **Interactions:** creating far more positive than negative moments
- **Energy:** making choices that improve your mental and physical health ...

The good news is that you don’t have to go on a retreat in the woods to find meaning, you don’t need to find new friends at a cocktail party to have better interactions, and you certainly don’t need to run a marathon or embark on a fad diet to create physical energy. The biggest changes for your daily well-being start with a few small steps.”

~ Tom Rath from *Are You Fully Charged?*

Are you fully charged?

[Tom Rath](#) tells us it’s all about what we do DAILY and that if we want to improve the quality of our lives (and sense of aliveness!), we need to focus on optimizing three key conditions: Meaning + Interactions + Energy.

Tom himself is an incredibly inspiring guy. Diagnosed with cancer at 16, he discovered that he has a rare gene mutation that shuts off a powerful tumor suppressor. As a result, he lost his left eye and has spent a week in the hospital every year getting tests to make sure his various cancers (in his eye, kidneys, pancreas, adrenal glands, and spine) are in check before getting a new 12-month lease on life. (Wow.)

Being the superhero he is, this has catalyzed him to make the most of every day. He’s written a number of books (including *StrengthsFinder 2.0* and [Eat Move Sleep](#)) that have sold over 6 million copies and spent 300+ weeks on *The Wall Street Journal* bestseller lists.

Tom also wrote one of our absolute favorite children’s books (which complements this book) called [The Rechargeables](#) featuring two little kids (Poppy and Simon) who learn how to get their charge up via moving, eating and sleeping then go on a mission to help the rest of their town. Emerson LOVES it. (As he runs to the park or eats “brain food” he’ll often say, “I’m getting my charge up!” (And, when he wakes up from a nap I love to take a look at his charge. :))

The book is packed with wisdom that distills a \*ton\* of research into fun-reading, actionable goodness. (Get the book [here](#).)

As always, I’m excited to share some of my favorite Ideas so let’s jump straight in!

*“Your overall satisfaction with life certainly matters. But you create more meaningful change in moments and days, not years and decades. It is easier to improve your own happiness-and the well-being of others-when you focus on doing it right now. Taking small, meaningful actions today is the best way to make changes. And eventually, these small changes will lead to important long-term outcomes.”*

~ Tom Rath

*"Try to remind yourself of why you do what you do every day. Bringing your mission to the forefront keeps you motivated. It could also make you a lot more productive."*

~ Tom Rath

## MEANING = STRENGTHS + INTERESTS + NEEDS

"You create meaning when your strengths and interests meet the needs of the world. Knowing your talents and passions is critical, but that is only half of this supply-and-demand equation. What may be even more important is understanding what the world needs from you and how you can productively apply your strengths and interests. ..."

One of the rightful critiques of all the 'follow your passion' advice is that it presumes that you are the center of the world, and pursuing your own joy is the objective of life. Those who make a profound difference, in contrast, begin by asking what they can give. Starting with this question allows you to direct your talents toward what matters most for others."

Creating meaning on a daily basis is the first condition of getting fully charged.

Two things here.

First, Tom's critique of the "follow your passion" advice reminds me of [Cal Newport](#) whose great book *So Good They Can't Ignore You* (see Notes) is essentially a treatise pointing to the perils of what he calls the "passion mindset" vs. the power of the "craftsman mindset."

Here's how Cal puts it: "Whereas the craftsman mindset focuses on what you can offer the world, the passion mindset focuses on what the world can offer you. This mindset is how most people approach their working lives."

In short, it's not all about us. So, how do we create meaning?

—> "You create meaning when your strengths and interests meet the needs of the world."

### Strengths + Interests + Needs.

What are you good at? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you want to do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What does the world need? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Deep, sustainable meaning is created at the nexus of those questions.

I've journaled a similar version of this set of questions countless times. Business writer Jim Collins tells us that great companies and great humans focus on what he calls the Hedgehog Concept—the nexus of what you love, what you can be the best in the world at and what the world needs/is willing to pay for.

These questions are worth exploring again and again. And, most importantly (of course), living.

Here's to creating meaning!

## DOUBLE DOWN ON YOUR TALENTS AT EVERY TURN

"If you spend most of your life trying to be good at everything, you eliminate your chances of being great at anything. Unless your goal is to be mediocre at a lot of things, starting with what you are naturally good at is a matter of efficiency. Focusing on strengths is in many ways a basic time-allocation issue. Every hour you invest in an area where you have natural talent has a multiplying effect, whereas each hour you spend trying to remedy a weakness is like working against a gravitational force. Yet many people spend years or even decades working on weaknesses in hopes that doing so will make them well-rounded."

*"There is something that you can do better than anyone else in the world."*

~ Tom Rath

*" Instead of aspiring to be anything you want to be, you should aim to be more of who you already are.*

*Starting with your natural talents—then investing time in practicing, building skills, and increasing knowledge—yields a much greater return."*

~ Tom Rath

Do everything you can to avoid falling into this trap. While well-roundedness may be helpful for acquiring the basic tools in any trade—such as reading, writing, and arithmetic—it loses value as you get closer to finding a career. At that point, what's more important and relevant is what sets you apart. If you want to be great at something in your lifetime, double down on your talents at every turn."

Tom is ALL ABOUT focusing on our strengths. I need to do a Note on his best-selling *StrengthsFinder 2.0*. For now, let's do a quick check in.

First, a review of the first question above: WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?

Second, where's your focus? On developing your strengths or on your weaknesses?

We need to put enough energy into making sure our weaknesses don't ruin the whole party, but beyond that, we need to have the courage to FOCUS on our strengths.

What sets you apart?

Are you willing to double down on your talents at every turn?

## 45 + 15

"The answer to this question may lie in DeskTime, a software application that meticulously tracks employees' time use throughout the day. When the makers of this software looked at the most productive 10 percent of their 36,000-employee user base, they made some surprising discoveries. What the most productive people have in common is an ability to take effective breaks. These elite 10 percent work for 52 minutes at a time, then take a 17-minute break before diving back into their work.

According to Julia Gifford, who works with DeskTime and wrote the report, the reason this pattern helps productivity is that the top 10 percent treat the periods of working time like a sprint. "They make the most of those 52 minutes by working with intense purpose, but then rest up to be ready for the next burst," Gifford wrote. She also noted that during the 17 minutes of break, the group was more likely to go for a walk or tune out rather than checking email or Facebook."

That's from a mini-chapter called "Focus for 45, break for 15" in which Tom talks about the Finnish educational system where, for every 45 minutes in the classroom they are given a 15-minute unstructured break.

Apparently the results are astonishing so Tom wondered if the same results would apply to adults. Short answer: It does.

We talk about this a lot. [Tony Schwartz](#) and [Jim Loehr](#) describe it as "making waves"—honoring our natural "ultradian" rhythms and alternating intense bursts (/sprints!) of work activity with equally intense periods of rest.

ON and OFF.

Rhythmically expanding the amplitudes of the waves we make throughout the day.

How're you doing with that?

What's ONE thing you could do *today* to get a little better with it?

P.S. Later in the book, Tom talks about K. Anders Ericsson's classic research on elite performance. We all know about the 10,000 hour rule at this point. A less known fact from that data is that the best performers RESTED more than the sub-elite. A lot more. They slept more and they napped more—after working in intense bursts like we discussed above.

P.P.S. I promise to keep bringing this up as it's huge. :)

*" Prioritize seven to eight hours of high-quality sleep ahead of all else."*

~ Tom Rath

*"Oxytocin metabolizes faster than cortisol, so the effects of a positive surge are less dramatic and enduring than they are for a negative one."*

~ Tom Rath

## 500 MILLION MOMENTS

"The actions you take throughout every single day accumulate to shape your years, decades, and overall life. However, when you think about a typical day, it's easy to take these moments for granted.

Even brief interactions count, such as exchanging a smile or greeting while passing someone on the street. If you look at moments as three-second windows, there are 1,200 moments per hour and 19,200 in a day. That equates to roughly 500 million moments over a lifetime. The frequency of these brief experiences, within a given day, is far more important than their intensity, as research on this topic confirms.

For example, a person who has a dozen mildly positive things happen during a day will feel better than someone who has one single truly amazing thing happen. Even in a single day, it is the little things that count. My team's research found that people who reported having great interactions throughout the day were *nearly four times* as likely to have very high well-being."

One of the key themes of the book is that our life is \*really\* made up of small moments, that, when looked at over the course of a day determine our sense of aliveness and, over the course of our lifetimes equate to our overall sense of well-being.

3 second moments.

They matter a LOT more than we may think.

And...

There are a LOT more of them than we may think.

500 million moments.

The quality of our lives are determined moment to moment to moment.

Let's make our interactions as positive as we can. And feel our charge go up and stay up!

## THE IPHONE EFFECT: PUT YOUR PHONE DOWN + OUT OF SIGHT

"Nothing adds more value to life than close social relationships. This is why it is so important to focus on the people you are with when you are with them.

There are countless distractions around you. In some cases, these distractions can be helpful. When I'm stuck in a long line in a grocery store, my digital pacifier (smartphone) is remarkably useful. Having the Internet in my pocket turns boring and frustrating moments into an opportunity to learn something or text a friend. However, these distractions create problems when you use them *while* spending time with friends, colleagues, or loved ones.

In fact, a 2014 study titled 'The iPhone Effect' shows how the mere presence of a smartphone can ruin a conversation. In an experiment with 200 participants, researchers found that simply placing a mobile communication device on the table or having participants hold it in their hand was a detriment to their conversations. Any time the phone was visible, the quality of the conversation was rated as less fulfilling when compared with conversations that took place in the absence of mobile devices. People reported having higher levels of empathetic concern when phones were not visible."

A couple primary things of note here.

- 1) The quality of our social interactions is one of THE key drivers to our overall well-being.
- 2) Although they can be handy when we're alone, smartphones are TOXIC when we're hanging out with other people.

*"When you choose to have dedicated time with another person, such as dining, driving somewhere, or going on a walk, give that person your undivided attention. Talking on your phone, using apps, or reading a message tells others you don't value their time as much as you could. You chose to be with them, so make it count."*

~ Tom Rath

I love the fact that scientists have actually studied this.

If you want to reduce the quality of your interactions, then make sure you keep your phone visible while you're hanging out with people.

AND, if you *really* want to diminish the quality of your social experiences, hold your smartphone and glance at it often as you get new messages—that will let your friends/family/etc. know you are either a) a rat addicted to your stimulant and/or b) you just don't care about them. (Hah.)

Remember the iPhone Effect.

Be present. Put the phone in airplane mode. And put it out of sight.

Please.

(This has to be one of the simplest, most powerful ways to bring a TON of presence and mojo back to your relationships. As a former iPhone addict, it's been remarkable for me to practice this. Try it!!!)

## MAKING THE CONNECTION

*"If you want to make a difference—not just today, but for many years to come—you need to put your health and energy ahead of all else."*

~ Tom Rath

"Making the connection between better decisions and my daily energy levels has done far more to change my behavior than all I have learned about longer term health consequences. When I have an important day ahead, I make sure to get some activity in the morning so I'm in a better mood and my thinking is sharper. I base my decisions about what to eat for lunch on whether the meal will help sustain my energy into the afternoon and evening. If I am active throughout the day and eat well, I know that I will then have a better night's sleep, which will give me a head start on the next day."

The third key condition to getting our charge up?

Energy.

We MUST prioritize adequate sleep, healthy eating and consistent movement.

Tom's wisdom above echoes [Michelle Segar](#)'s research on the science of motivation from her great book [No Sweat](#) (see Notes) where she tells us:

*"As it turns out, research shows that even reasons that sound very sensible and important may not lead us to the results we're seeking. Some years ago, my colleagues and I conducted a study in which we examined the impact of people's reasons to start exercising on their actual involvement in exercise. We first asked the participants to state their reasons or goals for exercising... Then, to uncover their higher-level reasons for exercising, we asked them why they cared about obtaining those particular benefits. My colleagues and I found that 75 percent of participants cited weight loss or better health (current and future) as their top reasons for exercising; the other 25 percent exercised in order to enhance the quality of their daily lives (such as to create a sense of well-being or feel centered). Then we measured how much time they actually spent exercising over the course of the next year. The answer may seem counterintuitive, but it's true: The vast majority of the participants whose goals were weight loss and better health spent the least amount of time exercising overall—up to 32 percent less than those with other goals.*

*Think about that for a moment: Our most common and culturally accepted reasons for exercising are associated with doing the least amount of exercise. How can this be?"*

In short: Forget the abstract, long-term benefits of healthy living. Focus on how simple decisions you make today will effect your energy levels TODAY.

Want to feel great? [Eat Move Sleep](#).

#repeat

*"Recent experiments suggest that the best way to produce sustainable increases in well-being is to appreciate what you already have and to continue creating new positive experiences with the people who matter most."*

~ Tom Rath

## INFUSING GOOD THINGS WHILE WE CAN

"You have a limited number of days to make a difference. This is one of the few certainties that everyone shares. It can also be an extraordinary motivational force. Embrace the fact that you need to infuse a lot of good things into this world while you can. You have the opportunity to decide how you will spend your time. Use this knowledge to stay focused on doing what's most important every day. ...

Start with work that creates meaning. Invest in each interaction to strengthen your relationships. Make sure you have the energy to be your best. Doing these three things, in combination, is the definition of being fully charged \*and\* adding a positive charge to those around you."

As we all know (but often like to ignore), we have a finite number of days to make a difference. TODAY is the day to stay focused on what matters.

I love the way [Todd Henry](#) helps us capture the power of this reality in this thought exercise from [Die Empty](#) (see Notes + Micro Class).

In short: He tells us to imagine someone following you around all day, taking copious notes about when you get up, what you do, how you treat people (and yourself)—basically everything from the moment you get up till the moment you go to sleep. Then that person catalogues their notes and creates a summary of your \*entire\* life based on that one day.

If you had that person following you today, how would you act? Would you bring more meaning to your life? More presence to your interactions? And more energy to the whole day?

Here's to getting our charge way up as we optimize, actualize and give ourselves most fully to the world!

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
*Chief Philosopher*

If you liked this Note,  
you'll probably like...

[Eat Move Sleep](#)

[No Sweat](#)

[Die Empty](#)

[Why We Do What We Do](#)

### About the Author of "Are You Fully Charged?"

TOM RATH



Tom Rath is an author and researcher who studies the role of human behavior in business, health, and well-being. He has been described by business leaders and the media as one of the greatest thinkers and nonfiction writers of his generation. Connect: [www.tomrath.org](http://www.tomrath.org).

### About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at [brianjohnson.me](http://brianjohnson.me).