

THE BIG IDEAS

The 5 Second Rule

An origin story. And definition.

How to Win the Life Game

Start. Work. Play the long game.

Excitement + Anxiety

Feel the same in your body.

Managing Distractions

It's not rocket science.

One Moment

Of courage can change your life.



The 5 Second Rule

Transform Your Life, Work, and Confidence with Everyday Courage

BY MEL ROBBINS · SAVIO REPUBLIC © 2017 · 240 PAGES

“You are about to learn something remarkable—it takes just five seconds to change your life. Sounds like a gimmick, doesn't it? It's not. It's science. I'll prove it to you. You change your life one five-second decision at a time. In fact, it's the only way you change.

This is the true story of the 5 Second Rule: what it is, why it works, and how it has transformed the lives of people around the world. The Rule is easy to learn and its impact is profound. It's the secret to changing anything. Once you learn the Rule, you can start using it immediately. The Rule will help you live, love, work, and speak with greater confidence and courage every day. Use it once and it'll be there for you whenever you need it.”

~ Mel Robbins from *The 5 Second Rule*

Alexandra got this book the other day and gave me a quick overview of the basic idea. At which point, I might have grabbed it and raced upstairs to start reading it. (Hah.)

It's pretty awesome. Actually, the book is REALLY (!) good.

In fact, Mel Robbins' 5 Second Rule *might* just be one of THE most elegantly efficient Tools we can use to close the gap between who we're CAPABLE of being and who we're ACTUALLY being. (Seriously.)

And...

Seeing that closing that gap is THE #1 game in town, that makes this Tool even more powerful.

Mel Robbins is funny, witty and wise. Her TEDx Talk (called [How to stop screwing yourself over](#)) is one of the most popular of all time, with more than 18 million views. This book is also super popular—with over 1,000 Amazon reviews.

I LOVED it and highly recommend the TEDx Talk and the book. Get a copy of the book [here](#). Learn more about Mel [here](#).

I'm excited to share some of my favorite Ideas so let's jump straight in!

5... 4... 3... 2... 1... BLASTOFF! :)

THE 5 SECOND RULE

“That's one of the things I've learned using the #5SecondRule. When it comes to goals, dreams, and changing your life, your inner wisdom is a genius. Your goal-related impulses, urges, and instincts are there to guide you. You need to learn to bet on them. Because, as history proves, you'll never know when your greatest inspiration will strike and where that discovery will lead you if you trust yourself enough to act on it.

This is how some of the world's most useful inventions were discovered. In 1826, John Walker

“If you're searching for that one person who will change your life look in the mirror.”

~ Mel Robbins

*"The 5 Second Rule:
The Moment you have an
instinct to act on a goal you
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move or your brain will stop
you."*

~ Mel Robbins

discovered the match while he was using a stick to stir a pot of chemicals, and when he tried to scrape the gob off the end—it ignited. He followed his instinct to try to recreate it and this is how he discovered the match. In 1941, George de Mestral invented Velcro after noticing how easily cockleburs attached to his dog's fur. In 1974, Art Fry got the idea for Post-It Note because he needed a bookmark that would stay put on a page in his hymnal until Sunday's church service, but that would not damage the pages when he removed it.

That's even how the Frappuccino was born. In 1992, an assistant manager at a Starbucks in Santa Monica noticed that sales dropped whenever it was hot outside. He had an instinct to make a frozen drink and he followed it, asking for a blender, tinkering with recipes, and giving a Vice President a sample. The first Frappuccino rolled out in his store a year later.

When it comes to change, goals, and dreams, you have to bet on yourself. That bet starts with hearing the instinct to change and honoring that instinct with action. I feel so thankful that I listened to that dumb idea about launching myself out of bed like a rocket because everything in my life changed as a result of it. Here's what happened:

The next morning the alarm clock rang at 6 a.m. and the first thing I felt was dread. It was dark. It was cold. It was winter in Boston and I did not want to wake up. I thought about the rocket launch and I immediately felt like it was stupid. Then, I did something I had never done before—I ignored how I felt. I didn't think. I did what needed to be done.

Instead of hitting the snooze button, I started counting.

Backwards.

5..4..3..2..1..

And then I stood up.

That was the moment I discovered the #5SecondRule."

Welcome to the 5 Second Rule.

Let's start with a little origin story.

Many moons ago, Mel wasn't feeling so great. She's 41. Unhappy in her marriage. Struggling with finances. Drinking a little too much. She dreaded getting out of bed so much that she'd hit the snooze button so many times that her kids often missed the school bus.

Then one night she's about to turn off the TV before going to bed when she sees a commercial that ends with the famous final five-second launch countdown.

5... 4... 3... 2... 1... BLASTOFF!

She thought to herself, "That's it. I'll launch myself out of bed tomorrow... like a rocket. I'll move so fast that I won't have time to talk myself out of it."

She says that it was "just an instinct. One that I could have easily dismissed. Luckily, I didn't. I acted on it."

Enter: The 5 Second Rule.

Defined as: "The moment you have an **instinct to act on a goal**, you must **5-4-3-2-1** and **physically move** or your **brain will stop** you."

You have an instinct to act on a goal?

TRUST IT.

Don't hesitate.

Initiate the final countdown launch and rocket yourself into action!

*"Knowing what you need to
do to improve your life takes
wisdom. Pushing yourself to
do it takes courage."*

~ Mel Robbins

"As you use the Rule, you'll see it too—there is a five-second window between your initial instinct to act and your brain stopping you. The problem was very clear. It was me. I was holding myself back, five seconds at a time."

~ Mel Robbins

5-4-3-2-1-GO!

I've been playing with it and I've gotta say: It's a pretty epic way to close that gap between who you're CAPABLE of being and who you're ACTUALLY being.

You know those two lines we draw all the time? The one at the top representing who you're CAPABLE of being and the one below it representing who you're ACTUALLY being?

Well, imagine yourself at that bottom line going through your day.

Then you get an "instinct to act on a goal" (whether that's picking up a piece of laundry so you can have a clean house or sitting down to do some Deep Work so you can hit your creative goals).

Then what?

Then initiate the 5 Second Rule. 5-4-3-2-1-GO!

Imagine strapping on a jet pack and launching yourself from the lower line to the line above it.

I'm laughing as I type that but I must say that this might just be the most elegantly fun way to operationalize areté we've discovered so far!

If you feel so inspired, try it out today the next time you have an instinct to act on a goal!

5-4-3-2-1-GO!

TO WIN: START. PLAY THE LONG GAME!

"To play any game, you have to start. To win, you'll need to keep going. If you want to make your dreams come true, get ready for the long game.

Life is not a one-and-done sort of deal. You've got to work for what you want. Do you know the game Angry Birds? Rovio, the brand that created the game, launched 51 unsuccessful games before they developed Angry Birds. How about *The Avengers* star Mark Ruffalo? Do you know how many auditions he did before he landed his *first* role? Almost 600! Even Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times. My favorite vacuum cleaner is Dyson. And there's no wonder why it doesn't suck at sucking up the dirt. James Dyson created 5,127 prototypes! What? And this last one will blow your mind. Picasso created nearly 100 masterpieces in his lifetime. But what most people don't know is that he created a total of more than 50,000 works of art.

Did you see that last number? 50,000. That's two pieces of art a day. Success is a numbers game. And you're not going to win it if you keep telling yourself to wait. The more often that you choose courage, the more likely you'll succeed."

In Part 1, we're introduced to The 5 Second Rule.

In Part 2, we're introduced to "The Power of Courage."

A specific kind of courage. The most important kind. What Mel calls "Everyday Courage."

She actually connects the 5 Second Rule to Aristotle who told us that the only way to BE virtuous is to DO virtuous things.

As you may recall, the whole point of his *Nicomachean Ethics* is to teach us how to achieve the *summum bonum* of life (the highest good!): how to experience *eudaimonia*. As we've discussed, that word is (very) weakly translated as *happiness*. It means something closer to *flourishing*—that state when we're expressing the best within ourselves and high fiving our inner daimon.

Of course, he told us that the way to achieve that state of *eudaimonia* is to live with virtue. (Technically, he described it as "virtuous activity of the soul.")

You know what his #1 virtue is?

"You can choose courage or you can choose comfort, but you can't have both."

~ Brené Brown

"If you have the courage to start, you have the courage to succeed."

~ Mel Robbins

COURAGE.

Again, not the kind of courage we think about when we think of superheroes saving the world.

EVERYDAY COURAGE.

The kind of courage required to notice an instinct to act on a valued goal and then ACTUALLY DO THE THING YOU KNOW YOUR BEST SELF WOULD LOVE TO DO!

If we want to win the game of life we need to start. Then we need to stay in the game. For the long run.

And one great Tool to have in our Optimize Depot Courage Department is 5-4-3-2-1-GO!

P.S. How epic are those numbers on Picasso and Ruffalo? Wow. Mel references Adam Grant's [Originals](#) in this chapter and the wisdom also reminds me of our "50 lbs = A" wisdom from [Art and Fear](#).

P.P.S. One of the stories she tells is about Michelangelo. Ever heard of the work he did on the Sistine Chapel?

Well... Did you know that when the Pope originally asked him to do it in 1506 he "felt so overwhelmed with self-doubt that he not only wanted to wait, but he fled to Florence and hid." He didn't feel like he was ready. We rarely do. Enter: 5-4-3-2-1.

EXCITEMENT + ANXIETY: FEEL THE SAME IN YOUR BODY

"I first used this 'reframing strategy' as a public speaker. I get a lot of questions about public speaking and specifically how did I get over my fears and nerves about public speaking. My answer always surprises people: I have never gotten over my fears and nerves; I just use them to my advantage.

I speak for a living. A lot. In 2016, I was named the most-booked female speaker in America—98 keynotes in one year. Amazing. Do I get nervous? Absolutely. Every single time. But here's the trick: I don't call it 'nerves.' I call it 'excitement' because **physiologically anxiety and excitement are exactly the same thing**. Let me say that again. Fear and excitement are the exact same thing in your body. The only difference between excitement and anxiety is what your mind calls it. ...

The first time I ever really gave a legitimate speech was that TEDx Talk in San Francisco. I remember standing backstage listening to one PhD after another PhD give their talks, thinking to myself, "This is the dumbest thing I've ever gotten myself into. I am going to sound like a complete moron compared to these smart people."

My palms were sweaty. My heart was racing. My face was hot. My armpits were dripping like Niagara Falls. My body was preparing itself for ACTION! It was getting ready to do something. But I told myself that I was nervous. I labeled all those sensations as a sign that something bad was about to happen and the nerves got worse.

Want to know something wild? Six years and hundreds of speeches later... I still feel the EXACT same things in my body back stage. My palms sweat. My heart races. My face gets hot. My armpits start dripping. Physiologically, I'm in a state of arousal. I'm about to go into ACTION and my body is getting ready. I feel the exact same thing as fear, I just channel it in a positive direction."

How great is THAT?

Where shall we begin? How about with Niagara Falls under her armpits? (Hah.)

That's from a chapter in which Mel walks us through some of my ABSOLUTE (!) favorite research that demonstrates the power of simply reframing all that energy we feel as

"There is no right time. There is only right now. You get one life. This is it. And it's not going to begin again. It's up to you to push yourself to make the most of it and the time to do it is right now."

~ Mel Robbins

"Hold on. Let me over think about it."

~ Mel Robbins

EXCITEMENT via the crazy simple phrase "I'm excited!!"

It's called "anxiety reappraisal." We talk about it (and Harvard Business School's Alison Wood Brooks' research) in [The Upside of Stress](#) and *Originals*.

As Mel says: "When using this technique in experiments ranging from singing karaoke to giving a speech on camera to taking a math test, participants who said, 'I'm excited' did better in every single challenge than those participants who said 'I'm anxious.'"

The important thing to note: Even after doing hundreds (!) of talks, Mel's body STILL responds with the same physiological response. And, that's a GOOD thing. Her body is getting ready for ACTION. The trick is in the "reappraisal." Simply labeling it as excitement channels all that high-arousal energy to help us get the job done and have fun riding the waves of Niagara Falls. :)

btw: Jon Eliot says exactly the same thing in [Overachievement](#). He tells us: "Everything that your body does to you when the pressure is on is good for performance."

Plus: "The physical symptoms of fight-or-flight are what the human body has learned over thousands of years to operate more efficiently and at the highest level. Anxiety is a cognitive interpretation of that physical response."

"Courage is commitment to begin without any guarantee of success."

~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

And: "Butterflies, cotton mouth, and a pounding heart make the finest performers smile—the smile of a person with an ace up their sleeves... They definitely would agree with Tiger Woods, who has often said, 'The day I'm not nervous stepping onto the first tee—that's the day I quit.'"

P.S. I find it awesome that Mel and [Brené Brown](#) have two of the most popular TED Talks in history. And... They BOTH were super-freaked out about them. Mel had her Niagara Falls moment and Brené woke up the next day with a [vulnerability hangover](#) pounding so bad that she wanted to somehow steal the recording of her talk so she could destroy it before it went online.

GET SERIOUS ABOUT MANAGING DISTRACTION

"Managing distractions is like following through on health goals. You're never going to feel like it; you just have to make yourself do it. You already know that being addicted to your phone, texting, and answering emails is a distraction... but stopping it feels impossible.

Even though you know you should turn off pop-up alerts, silence your phone, and stop checking email every five minutes, this knowledge doesn't change your behavior. I could bury you with research about how bad this is, but it wouldn't change your behavior. This is where the #5SecondRule comes into play—you don't have to want to do it, you just have to push yourself to do it.

"Productivity can be boiled down to one word-FOCUS.

There are two types of focus you need to master productivity. First, the ability to manage distractions so that you can focus moment-to-moment on the task at hand, and second, the skill of focusing on what's truly important to you in the big picture, so you don't waste your day on stupid stuff."

~ Mel Robbins

First, you must decide that distractions are not good. Interruptions of any sort are the kiss of death for your productivity. Research shows open office spaces are a nightmare for focus. Checking email can become an addiction because of what behavioral researchers call 'random rewards.' You have to decide that your goals are more important than push notifications. It's that simple.

Then, you just remove them. I'm not claiming this is rocket science. I'm also not going to tell you that it's easy. But I promise you that if you use the #5SecondRule, you'll actually do it."

That's from a chapter called "Increase Productivity."

I laughed out loud at Mel's line that she "could bury you with research" about how bad checking your email every 5 minutes is. And how true is this? "You have to decide that your goals are more important than push notifications." <- It REALLY IS that simple.

So... What's the #1 thing you KNOW you could be/should be doing to Optimize your focus?

Let's run the 5 Second Rule on it! (RIGHT NOW?! :)

"The 5 Second Rule:
The Moment you have an
instinct to act on a goal you
must 5-4-3-2-1 and physically
move or your brain will stop
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~ Mel Robbins

ONE MOMENT OF COURAGE

"Yes, you can move mountains. Whatever is happening right now, this is it. This is your life. And it's not going to begin again. You can't change the past, but in five seconds you can change your future.

That's the power of everyday courage. When your heart speaks, honor it, 5- 4- 3- 2- 1- and move. One moment of courage can change your day. One day can change your life. And your life can change the world.

There is greatness in you. The time to reveal it is now.

5...4...3...2...1...GO!"

Well, there ya go.

That's a super-quick look at a super-powerful Tool.

Want to change your life?

You can.

When?

Right now.

Shall we lift off?

5... 4... 3... 2... 1.. GO!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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

[The Upside of Stress](#)

[Originals](#)

[Constructive Living](#)

[Art and Fear](#)

[Solving the
Procrastination Puzzle](#)

[The Progress Principle](#)

About the Author of "The 5 Second Rule"

MEL ROBBINS



Mel Robbins is an award-winning CNN on-air commentator and op-ed writer, a contributing editor to *SUCCESS Magazine*, best-selling author and one of the most sought-after keynote speakers in America. She began her career as a criminal defense attorney in New York City, then launched and sold several companies and hosted TV and radio programs for A&E, FOX, Cox Media, and CNN.

Now that she's no longer arguing "reasonable doubt" inside the courtroom, she's teaching leaders inside the world's leading brands how to break the habit of self-doubt and build the habits of confidence and courage at work and in life. Mel is a Dartmouth College and Boston College Law School graduate. She and her husband of 18 years have three young kids. She lives in the Boston area, but remains a Midwesterner at heart.

About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives so they can actualize their potential as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + practical tools. Learn more and optimize your life at optimize.me.