

## THE BIG IDEAS



### The Freaky Seven

Strategies to follow.

### Amplification

Flaunting your weaknesses.

### Alignment

The four P's.

### Limitations

Are good. Embrace them.



# The Freak Factor

Discovering Uniqueness by Flaunting Weakness

BY DAVID RENDALL · ADVANTAGE MEDIA GROUP © 2015 · 304 PAGES

“The term *freak* can mean maniac; fanatic; something unusual, irregular, or abnormally formed; an eccentric or nonconformist person; or a person who is obsessed with something.

In this book I define a freak as a person who is unique because of a natural, positive obsession. I use the word as a compliment. ...

The goal of this book is to help you discover and enhance your natural freakiness. I don't think any of us are, or were, normal, and most of us don't have to go to the trouble of making ourselves into freaks. We just came that way. ...

I'd like to help you make yourself into a bigger freak than you already are. As Marcus Buckingham says in his book, *First, Break All the Rules*, 'Don't try to put in what was left out, try to draw out what was left in.' This sentiment is echoed by Tom Rath of the Gallup organization. He believes 'you can't be anything you want to be, but you can be more of what you are.' That really sums up the purpose of this book: to help you to become more of who you are so that you can help others do the same.”

~ David Rendall from *The Freak Factor*

I got this book after Tom Morris referenced it in [Plato's Lemonade Stand](#).

As it turns out, Tom wrote the foreword to the book in which he tells us: “*Liberate yourself from average expectations and arbitrary limitations. Be true to yourself. Embrace the glorious freak within. And then, bring the world the greatest gift you can give the rest of us—you, in your own elegantly idiosyncratic form of excellence.*”

David Rendall has a doctor of management degree in organizational leadership, as well as a graduate degree in psychology. He's a former Professor of Leadership and stand-up comedian. And... He's so freaky that he spells his name “Dav!d” (notice that exclamation point... :) and starts the book on page number 74 so we can immediately feel like we're making progress. (Hah!)

As per the inside flap, David tells us: “*You don't need to fix your weaknesses. The Freak Factor shows you how embracing your flaws will increase your happiness, energy and fulfillment. So, be unusual, be weird—but above all, be successful.*”

The book is a fun call to arms to embrace our weaknesses and wave our freak flag with pride. (Get a copy [here](#).) As Chris Guillebeau, author of *The Happiness of Pursuit*, says: “*Everything you've read about weakness is wrong ... until now. This book will help you stop trying to be well-rounded and start excelling at what you always knew you were best at. Raise your freak flag and wave it with pride!*”

It's packed with Big Ideas and I'm excited to share some of my favorites so let's jump straight in!

*“ We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us something is valuable.”*

~ E.E. Cummings

*"I'm not going to change the way I look or the way I feel to conform to anything. I've always been a freak."*

~ John Lennon

## THE SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR FINDING YOUR FREAK FACTOR

"My unlikely transformation illustrates the seven strategies for finding your freak factor:

1. **Awareness**—Identify your strengths and weaknesses.
2. **Acceptance**—Stop trying to fix your weaknesses.
3. **Appreciation**—Embrace your unique characteristics.
4. **Amplification**—Flaunt your weaknesses.
5. **Alignment**—Find the right fit.
6. **Avoidance**—Move out of situations that highlight your weaknesses.
7. **Affiliation**—Partner with people who are strong where you are weak."

Welcome to Chapter #0: Awakening in which we get to learn about how Dav'd crafted his entire life around his supposed "weaknesses."

(And, don't forget: We got to start at page 74 so we're already winning! #freakywin)

So... Dav'd tells us that he was basically asked to leave one of his jobs because of all his weaknesses which included the fact that *"I was too talkative and wasn't a good listener. I was hyperactive and wasn't able to sit still. I was too independent and wasn't a team player. I was too intuitive and wasn't rational enough. I was too passionate and wasn't calm enough. I was too strategic and wasn't operational enough. I was too focused on the future and wasn't focused enough on the present. I was too impulsive and wasn't patient enough."*

Schew. What a basket case, eh? Nope. Those "weaknesses" are now his greatest strengths.

Sure, they weren't a fit at the job he had but he says *"I didn't improve by overcoming my weaknesses. I didn't really change myself at all. I succeeded by flaunting my weaknesses and finding situations that valued the positive side of my apparent flaws."*

How? Well, he tells us that *"I gradually transitioned from consulting to training to professional speaking. As a keynote speaker, I get praised for my energy and enthusiasm. My passion is infectious and helps me connect with audiences. As a solo entrepreneur, I can change quickly and act on my intuition without having to convince others to follow. I can also work independently and don't need to be a team player. My initiative and obsession with achievement keeps me motivated without direction or supervision from others. I'm in control and I love it. I'm rarely criticized anymore for my weaknesses. I still have all the same flaws; they just don't matter in my new work. I've lost weight and started running marathons, ultramarathons, and triathlons. I feel energized and confident. My work provides me with happiness, fulfillment, and a sense that I have truly found my calling."*

Love it. And I love the 7 strategies to get our freak on: *"1. Awareness—Identify your strengths and weaknesses. 2. Acceptance—Stop trying to fix your weaknesses. 3. Appreciation—Embrace your unique characteristics. 4. Amplification—Flaunt your weaknesses. 5. Alignment—Find the right fit. 6. Avoidance—Move out of situations that highlight your weaknesses. 7. Affiliation—Partner with people who are strong where you are weak."*

Each gets its own chapter. Let's take a quick look at a few of my favorites as we get our Freak on!

### FREAKY AMPLIFICATION

"Jimmy Kimmel is a comedian and the host of the late-night talk show *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* Because of his success, he was asked to host the White House Correspondent's Dinner. At one point during the event, Kimmel walked up to the podium and said, 'I also want to thank Mr. Mills, my high school history teacher, who told me that I'd never amount to anything if I didn't

*"Great spirits have always experienced violent opposition from mediocre minds."*

~ Albert Einstein

*"Don't try to stand out from the crowd. Avoid crowds altogether."*

~ Hugh MacLeod

stop screwing around in class. Mr. Mills, I'm about to high-five the president of the United States of America.' Then he stepped over and high-fived Barack Obama. When Kimmel came back to the podium, he said, 'Eat it, Mr. Mills.'

I'm not going to criticize Mr. Mills. He believed, as many people do, that school success is essential for success in life. He was trying to give Kimmel helpful advice.

But let's look at how Kimmel actually succeeded: He didn't stop screwing around. He went pro. He got sillier, more ridiculous, more childish, and more immature. He started screwing around for a living. He went further in the direction that Mr. Mills told him not to go. Kimmel amplified his weakness, and that is when he found success."

That's from Chapter #4 on the fourth principle: Amplification.

As in, "Amplification is the essence of flaunting your weaknesses. According to Encarta Dictionary, *flaunt* means 'to parade yourself without shame. Show something off—to display something ostentatiously.' This is a great description. Too often, we are uncomfortable with our weaknesses. We are ashamed of them, apologize for them, and try to hide them. My goal in this book isn't simply to help you become comfortable with your weaknesses. I want you to parade them without shame. I want you to show them off."

So... Jimmy Kimmel. David tells us that he "didn't stop screwing around. He went pro." He leaned in to his "weakness." But, to be clear, he didn't do it in a kinda-sorta, "Meh!" amateur-hour way. He went ALL IN. He TURNED PRO.

And, if you've been following along, I know **you know** what *that* makes me think of: Stephen Pressfield and his classics including [Turning Pro](#). What's Mr. Pressfield have to say?

He tells us: "The thesis of this book is that what ails you and me has nothing to do with being sick or being wrong. What ails us is that we are living our lives as amateurs. The solution, this book suggests, is that we turn pro. Turning pro is free, but it's not easy. You don't need to take a course or buy a product. All you have to do is change your mind. Turning pro is free, but not without cost. When we turn pro, we give up a life with which we may have become extremely comfortable. We give up a self that we have come to identify with and to call our own..."

Turning pro is not for everyone. We have to be a little crazy to do it, or even to want to. In many ways the passage chooses us; we don't choose it. We simply have no alternative. What we get when we turn pro is, we find our power. We find our will and our voice and we find our self-respect. We become who we always were but had, until then, been afraid to embrace and to live out. Do you remember where you were on 9/11? You'll remember where you were when you turn pro."

Oh. He also tells us: "The amateur tweets. The pro works." (<- Hah.)

Of course, in this case, we're talking about leaning in to our weaknesses and FLAUNTING them as a core part of our "turning pro" strategy.

Some of my weaknesses? Laughing at where I should begin. We'll start with the fact that my dad was an alcoholic and his dad was an alcoholic who killed himself. They were generous enough to bless me with my disposition to feeling like sh\*t. Thanks, guys! (lol.)

*"We are led to truth by our weaknesses as well as by our strengths."*

~ Parker Palmer

So, I've alchemized that weakness into the core of my work—focusing on the Energetic fundamentals that keep us plugged in so we can shine. I'm also super-sensitive to all kinds of food, too many tech inputs and, if I get one bad night of sleep, I tend to look like I raged in Vegas for a weekend. (lol) Whatever. It is what it is. I've TURNED PRO and made going to bed early and doing everything else a sport.

How about YOU? What are some of YOUR weaknesses and how can you turn them into a core part of who you unapologetically are?

*"Nature never repeats herself,  
and the possibilities of one  
human soul will never be  
found in another."*

~ Elizabeth Cady Stanton

P.S Dav!d shares this quote from Francois de La Rouchefoucauld at the start of this chapter: "We are so accustomed to disguise ourselves to others, that, in the end we become disguised to ourselves." <- Let's not do that. Much better to own our freakiness and wave that flag with pride!

## THE FOUR P'S OF ALIGNMENT

"There are four elements of finding the right fit.

The first is *passion*. What do you love? What energizes and inspires you?

The second is *proficiency*. What are your skills? Where do you excel?

The third is *payment*. How can you get compensated for activities that combine your passion and proficiency? How can you make a living doing what you love?

The final component is *purpose*. How can you make a difference? How can you make a positive contribution?

It is possible to design a meaningful and fulfilling career that includes all of these elements, but the sequence of the four elements is important. Most people address them in the wrong order. They start with payment: *How can I make the most money?* Then they move on to proficiency: *Can I do it?* This is followed by passion: *Can I tolerate the job requirements?* Finally, some consider the question of purpose: *Will this activity harm?* Unfortunately, this approach usually leads to frustration and failure. Passion comes first."

That's from Chapter #4 on "Alignment."

Right before that passage, Dav!d (I just love typing his name with that exclamation point every time—lol) shares this EPIC Robert Frost quote: "*My object in living is to unite my avocation and my vocation.*" <- Somehow I've never read that before. But I LOVE it.

Robert Frost is one of the exemplars Stephen Cope uses to make an important point in his great book *The Great Work of Your Life*. Cope tells us that Frost had the courage to set his entire life up to become a poet: buying a farm early in his career then moving to London a little later to give himself most fully to his work.

Cope tells us: "*Frost's genius—like Thoreau's, like Goodall's, like Whitman's—was at least in part his willingness to create the right conditions for his dharma to issue forth. His dharma required a farm—and so he bought one. His dharma required him to give up teaching—and so he relinquished it. His dharma required a period of intense work in England—and so he went. Like Frost's our job is to make choices that create the right conditions for dharma to flourish. The Gift is indestructible. It is a seed. We are not required to be God. We are not required to create the seed. Only to plant it wisely and well.*"

He also tells us: "*Having first named and claimed our dharma, we next begin to systematically organize all of our life's energies around our calling.*"

So...

Back to you and Dav!d's four P's: *Passion + Proficiency + Payment + Purpose*.

We can roughly map those over the key elements of Jim Collins's hedgehog circles: What do you LOVE to do? ("Hi, Passion!") What can you be GREAT at? ("Hi, Proficiency!") And what does the world NEED/what is it willing to PAY for? ("Hi Payment + Purpose!")

Then Sir Ken Robinson's two facets of *The Element* come to mind. He tells us: "*I use the term the Element to describe the place where the things we love to do and the things we are good at come together.*" <- "*Hi, Passion + Proficiency!*"

Finally, I think of Cal Newport's *So Good They Can't Ignore You* where he makes a case for making sure you focus on your CRAFTSMAN mindset not just your Passion mindset.

*"You really can't try to do  
everything, especially if you  
intend to be the best in the  
world."*

~ Seth Godin

*"Strong people always have strong weaknesses too. Where there are peaks, there are valleys."*  
~ Peter Drucker

In that Note, I basically echo what David is saying here by making the point that YES! We need to be Craftsmen and women AND we need to START with what we love.

So... One more time, back to you.

What's at the nexus of YOUR Passion + Proficiency + Payment + Purpose?

How can you get paid to do what you most love to do, are best at and feel allows you to make a contribution to the world. We need you to get on that and/or take it the next level. TODAY.

## LIMITATIONS ARE GOOD

"All this talk of avoidance can seem quite limiting. However, limitations can actually help us succeed. Barry Schwartz, in his book *The Paradox of Choice*, explains that when we have too many choices, we struggle to make decisions. He encourages us to 'learn to love constraints,' because 'as the number of choices we face increases, freedom of choice becomes a tyranny of choice. Routine decisions take so much time and attention that it becomes difficult to get through the day. In circumstances like this, we should learn to view limits on the possibilities that we face as liberating not constraining.'

Surprisingly, more options don't liberate us; they paralyze us. As Erich Fromm explained in *Escape from Freedom*, 'people are beset not by a lack of opportunity but by a dizzying abundance of it.' It is counterintuitive, but limitations, not options, are what liberate us."

Ah... The Paradox of Choice.

We THINK that having unlimited options liberates us. But, alas, it doesn't. Unlimited choice tends to PARALYZE us rather than free us.

Enter: Barry Schwartz and his wisdom from his wonderfully titled book *The Paradox of Choice*. As we discuss in those Notes, he tells us that we can either be a "maximizer" who always tries to get the absolute BEST of EVERYTHING or, we can be a "satisficer" who knows when good enough is good enough (which is most of the time) and is happy with constraining options and going with the simple decision.

This is an especially tricky and important one for us to get as we Optimize. I mean, our very NAME "Optimize" is derived from the Latin word *optimus* which, as we've discussed countless times, means "the best." Yes, striving to be the best version of ourselves in service to the world is nobly awesome. AND... Embracing the constraints of our reality and making sure we use those high standards and lofty ideals as *guiding stars* rather than "someday we'll get there and finally be happy" *distant shores* is REALLY (!) REALLY (!! ) REALLY (!!!) important.

Failing to REALLY get this leaves us vulnerable to succumbing to the perfectionistic tendencies that can make it very difficult to ENJOY and CELEBRATE the lives the lives we're living RIGHT NOW. (Trust me, I know. lol)

So... Limitations. Constraints. Etc. They're good for our well-being in general. And, they're good for our creative expression in particular—on both a high level in terms of choosing what we want to do with our lives AND in the day-to-day of actually making things happen.

David kicks this chapter off with a quote from [Seth Godin](#). He tells us: "You really can't try to do everything, especially if you intend to be the best in the world." <- Amen.

And, as I read this chapter I thought of chats I had back in the day with [Steve Chandler](#) when he and I worked 1-on-1. He loved Alan Watts's wisdom that tennis is more fun with a court (constraints!) and Igor Stravinsky's wisdom that "The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees oneself. And the arbitrariness of the constraint serves only to obtain precision in the execution."

*"Once we are aware of our weaknesses, we need to resist the impulse to correct them. The second step in maximizing your freak factor is to accept the inevitability of weaknesses and identify the strengths that correspond with each weakness."*  
~ David Rendall

*"The great epochs of our life come when we gain the courage to rechristen our evil as what is best in us."*

~ Friedrich Nietzsche

As I searched the ol' database of 600+ Notes on my Mac to find that Stravinsky quote, I found this parallel wisdom from Austin Kleon's [Steal Like an Artist](#).

He tells us: "In this age of information abundance and overload, those who get ahead will be the folks who figure out what to leave out, so they can concentrate on what's really important to them. Nothing is more paralyzing than the idea of limitless possibilities."

*The idea that you can do anything is absolutely terrifying. The way to get over creative block is to simply place some constraints on yourself. It seems contradictory, but when it comes to creative work, limitations mean freedom... The right constraints can lead to your very best work. My favorite example? Dr. Seuss wrote *The Cat in the Hat* with only 236 different words, so his editor bet him he couldn't write a book with only 50 different words. Dr. Seuss came back and won the bet with *Green Eggs and Ham*, one of the bestselling children's books of all time."*

btw: As I reread that, I thought of our Note on the brilliant biography [Dr. Seuss and Mr. Geisel](#) where we talk about those exact same constraints. Check it out!

As I chat about in our Notes on *Steal Like an Artist*, I LOVE constraints. They are my friend (when I remember them). Obvious constraints I use creatively include: Each PhilosophersNote is SIX pages long. Not 3 or 8 or 12 or... SIX. The +1s are short and sweet not crazy long. The Optimal Living 101 classes and Mastery Series sessions? They're each 10 Ideas and around an hour. Not 3 or 7 or 14 or 22. TEN! lol

Back to you. What limitations can you impose on yourself? How can you CONSTRAIN your options more so you can enjoy your life more?

As you noodle that, here's to getting our Freak on as we cultivate our Freaky Awareness + Acceptance + Appreciation + Amplification + Alignment + Avoidance + Affiliation... TODAY!

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
*Philosopher in Residence*

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## About the Author of "The Freak Factor"

DAVID RENDALL



Before becoming a professional speaker, David Rendall was a leadership professor, stand-up comedian, and manager for nonprofits that provided employment for people with disabilities. David has a doctor of management degree in organizational leadership and is the thought leader on harnessing weaknesses to leverage the unique potential of individuals and organizations. He has spoken to audiences on every inhabited continent with clients such as the United States Air Force and the Australian Government, as well as companies in the Fortune 500 like AT&T, State Farm, Ralph Lauren and GlaxoSmithKline. As a freak, David also uses his hyperactivity to compete in marathons, ultramarathons, and triathlons. He lives in North Carolina with his wife and three daughters.

## 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](#).