

How to Begin

Tags: [#career](#) [#personal-leadership](#)

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Dialogue

Title: How to Start Making Progress, with Michael Bungay Stanier

This book is a different focus -- what prompted a bit of a new direction?

Jim Collins in Good to Great:

Fire bullets, then fire cannonballs.

Invitation --> Discover what your history reveals about your future self.

The challenge with people like us...neither of us like to reflect. We like to move.

Experiment

Watch out for:

Making the Experiment bigger and more complicated than it needs to be.
Putting too much at risk in the Experiment.
Investing too much in the success of the Experiment.

How you did this as CEO.

Practice. What's different from experiment?

Annoyingly, we seem to learn deepest and fastest when we're in the discomfort of conscious incompetence.

What keeps people going?

What keeps you going?

What have you changed your mind on?

Quotes

Highlight [page 6]: TELL ME, WHAT IS IT YOU PLAN TO DO WITH YOUR ONE WILD AND PRECIOUS LIFE? MARY OLIVER, "THE SUMMER DAY"

Highlight [page 8]: Someone once said I was the bastard child of Pixar's Mr. Incredible and the Muppets' Fozzie Bear. Honestly, there's been no higher compliment.

Highlight [page 10]: First, Set a Worthy Goal. I'll help you find and refine a goal that is Thrilling, Important, and Daunting. A Worthy Goal entwines ambition for yourself and for the world.

Highlight [page 11]: Second, Commit. You want to be clear and confident that this is a journey worth taking. Naming what's to be won and what's to be left behind will help steel your resolve. Third, Cross the Threshold towards that Worthy Goal. Taking the first step leads to the next, then the next, and you make progress. You do need to get going. Being too scared to act on a Worthy Goal isn't just a loss to you, it's a loss to us all.

Highlight [page 19]: Important and Daunting but not Thrilling This Worthy Goal will feel a little too obligated. It's worthy work that stretches you and contributes to a better world, but it doesn't nourish you and isn't interesting enough to sustain you. There's the danger of burnout here. Thrilling and Daunting but not Important This Worthy Goal will feel a little too self-centred. It's exciting work that will stretch and grow you, but the "why" of the work is for you rather than also contributing to others. Don't write off small, more intimate, personal projects... but do find a way to connect them to the wider world. There's a risk of "Why bother?" here. Thrilling and Important but not Daunting This Worthy Goal will feel a little too comfortable. It's solid work and might have once stretched you, but now you're in cruise control. You might start to stagnate if you stay here too long.

Highlight [page 23]: The same is true when you begin to claim a Worthy Goal. It's almost impossible to nail it first time around. There are any number of reasons. We fumble after the right language. We diminish our own ambition because it's easier to write down something small. Or the opposite happens, and we overwhelm our ambition by writing something too abstract or overblown: "Find happiness." But we have to start somewhere, and when we start with full permission to write down a crappy first draft, it's something. Actually, it's more than something—it's a significant and critical first step. You might be hesitating. Yes, it's awkward. No, it won't be perfect. But take your best guess. It will set you up for the next step, where we'll take what you've written and make it stronger and better.

Highlight [page 54]: A TOUCH OF MADNESS, I THINK, IS ALMOST ALWAYS NECESSARY FOR CONSTRUCTING A DESTINY.

Highlight [page 70]: One of the deep and often unspoken truths about this work is that sacrifice is required. In *The Coaching Habit* I wrote about "The Strategic Question": If

you're saying yes to this, what must you say no to? "Yes" means nothing credible unless you're clear on what you'll say no to, what you'll sacrifice, to make that commitment. If you don't tally up the price that needs to be paid, you can't fully commit.

Highlight [page 79]: You've already visited the past once. When you weighed up the status quo, you noted down False Starts made on similar or related Worthy Goals. But your False Starts aren't the whole story, not by any means. You've also got stories about successes, peak moments where a best version of you rose to the occasion in just the same way you're hoping it will again. William Gibson said, "The future is already here—it's just not evenly distributed." It's like a temporal equivalent of a tongue twister.

Highlight [page 82]: As you design an Experiment, you'll need to manage three unhelpful but very human tendencies: Making the Experiment bigger and more complicated than it needs to be. You're testing a hypothesis, an assumption you have about what will happen and what's at risk should it fail. Keep asking: What's the simplest test that would give you the data you'd find helpful?

Highlight [page 82]: Putting too much at risk in the Experiment. Every Experiment risks failing; the goal is to plan for a risk you can absorb. Start small. Check in: What's a micro Experiment that would provide useful data and risk little? Investing too much in the success of the Experiment. The purpose of an Experiment is to gather data. You win whether the Experiment succeeds or fails. "Succeed or fail" is not the measure; it's "What's the data? What did I learn from this? What does this suggest about what might be the next smart thing to do?" Whether it works or doesn't, you've already won by conducting the Experiment.

Highlight [page 83]: The goal is to gather feedback about your Worthy Goal. Ensure that you'll gain data no matter what happens, and that catastrophe won't ensue should the Experiment "fail." When you're planning your Experiment, don't worry too This can take a bit of noodling. You might want to sketch

Highlight [page 84]: A Practice is a commitment to process over outcome, a commitment to taking small steps forward with the purpose of collecting feedback and learning. It's an Experiment + persistence. A Practice differs from building a habit because it is a commitment to stay conscious and open to learning. Habit building is fundamentally about setting the goal and then putting in the reps to move a behaviour from conscious competence to unconscious competence. A Practice keeps ebbing and flowing between conscious incompetence ("I can't believe how bad I am at this! Look what I'm learning! How fascinating!") and conscious competence ("I believe I'm getting the hang of this! Look what I'm learning! How fascinating!"). One person who worked through this process reflected that she'd done a lot of ad hoc Experiments to test her Worthy Goal, but hadn't really used the data to generate progress. For her, it was time to shift from an Experiment to a Practice. A Practice is really a series of controlled Experiments that build upon each other.