

Smart Growth

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

Creator: [whitney-johnson](#)

Dialogue

Point --> Smart growth starts slow.

You use the analogy of a bike

"All things are difficult before they are easy." -Thomas Fuller

S Curve / Launchpoint / Explorer-Collector

1. Audit your adult self; get reacquainted with your childlike self.

Your mindset shapes your future, but it's influenced by the ghosts of your past.

Roles, Secrets, Beliefs, Values, Boundaries

What's critical about exploring these? What's an example?

2. Pay attention and cultivate childlike wonder consistently.

Distinction -- zooming out and zooming in

The power of collecting images is really key.

Example: a day in the life of the Johnson's

3. Become a world-class Collector of feedback.

The price of a new, better self is the old self. We pay for it with our openness to feedback. Feedback gets us to focus our attention on things we don't see or may not want to see.

Key point:

Once we receive feedback, circling back and sharing what we did with it helps others feel valued and motivates them to remain invested in us.

It seems this is rare.

Key point --> we're often reluctant to receive both negative and positive feedback

You did this with your podcast

Using your words...

Using "I am" statements...using a noun rather than a verb. Instead of "I run" -- I am a runner.

What helps you -- or others -- to just write or say it?

What have you changed your mind on?

Reserve

Collector's notebook

- Best moment
- Worst moment

Quotes

Highlight [1]: We] each live thousands of lives, for each day we become someone slightly different. [We] don't change in one giant leap, but across a million little steps. The most important step a person can take is always the next one. — BRANDON SANDERSON

Highlight [6]: This book primarily follows the S Curve, from the Launch Point of an S Curve (chapters 1 and 2), through the sweet Spot (chapters 3 and 4), and into Mastery (chapters 5 and 6). We'll diagram the six stages of growth you encounter along the S Curve in the six chapters of these three sections. They are Explorer, Collector, Accelerator, Metamorph, Anchor, and Mountaineer. The S Curve framework will guide you as you move forward, deliberately and autonomously accelerating your growth. A seventh chapter, Ecosystem, examines the environment needed to expedite growth.

Highlight [27]: To quote Shakespeare again, "Assume a virtue if you have it not." Four centuries later, we paraphrase, "Fake it 'til you make it."

Highlight [27]: In his book, Create and Orchestrate, he wrote of how he got through the slowness of the Explorer phase: There was more to it than just hard work. My mindset was critical. . . . There wasn't a lot of evidence around me that I could be successful in

making this transition. I had to create a mindset supportive of my endeavor. I didn't achieve that mindset by believing I was becoming a programmer; I achieved that mindset by believing I already was a programmer. This distinction is very important. By believing I already was a programmer, even though it wasn't obvious to others, I bypassed many of the limiting thoughts and doubts about my ability to become a programmer. I never said I was a great or even a good programmer. I just believed I was a programmer. This small tweak of believing we already are what we want to be, rather than becoming it has significant downstream effects.

Highlight [29]: After a week's exploration, I had enough information to know I wanted to be on a running S Curve, and I wanted to run at least one 5K. Now I had to decide on an initial pace for how quickly I would increase the time and distance I ran each day. Five minutes in week one, ten minutes in week two, up to fifteen minutes in week three? For me that was too ambitious. I was looking for sustainable, long-term behavior that would evolve from conscious and challenging to natural and automatic. I settled on small increments—a ten-second increase each time I ran. This was a manageable level of effort, to which my brain would say, I can do that! I did that yesterday! even on days when I wanted to just curl up in a chair with one of our cats. It took about eighteen months to get to the top of my 5K S Curve, but because I made it easy enough to start and sustain, I persisted. I now run three times a week. The behavior has become automatic. I no longer think of running as something I do. It's part of who I am. I am a runner.

Highlight [48]: Collector is the second phase along the S Curve of Learning. As an Explorer, we use our mental and emotional capacities to explore our options. Once we have decided on a singular S Curve, we become Collectors. Getting smart about growth in this phase involves collecting both quantitative data found in facts and the qualitative data born of experience. From it, we try to decipher whether we should stick with this S Curve or not.⁴ Progress may not be readily observed. Slow is still the essence of this phase. Though impressive, Ulmer's milestones have been gradually achieved. But in the Collector phase we start to get a sense if we're gaining the momentum we need to keep growing. We'll talk more about momentum in later chapters; for now, know that a persistent lack of momentum on an S Curve typically dictates that it's time to move on.

Highlight [51]: A young father sent a video to his parents showing their grandson, Ben, riding a bike for the first time. The father captioned it, "First he couldn't, and then he could." He explained that he'd been trying to teach Ben to ride the bike for three frustrating weeks, seemingly without progress. But then, suddenly, Ben took off and rode as though none of the previous failures—even the one just five minutes earlier—had ever happened. For three weeks Ben had listened to his father's instructions, observed his siblings and friends as they rode their bikes, and tried to ride his own. He'd been collecting, thinking, processing, trying to put the pieces together. Growth had been happening out of sight, below detection. On this day, the lily pad of learning had reached the surface of the water, and the leaf unfurled. "All things are difficult before they are easy," said seventeenth century scholar and churchman Thomas Fuller.

Highlight [53]: In the Collector phase, for example, we may discover that an initiative will require more time than we anticipated. This is common. Lasting achievements tend to overrun every aspect of budget. Intrepid Collectors may decide that the opportunity is valuable enough to pursue anyway. Thirteen-year-old Maria Merian wanted to know where butterflies came from. She was willing to invest a lifetime pursuing the curve that started with a caterpillar. Indeed, virtually any plausible S Curve can be scaled if we're willing to devote enough time and effort. Henry David Thoreau wrote, "The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be given in exchange for it, immediately or in the long run."

Highlight [62]: The job of clarifying the overall theme and becoming a more effective interviewer, however, was something I needed to do. I started collecting examples of podcasts featuring great storytelling and pitch-perfect interviewing. I hired a consultant to help me apply their techniques in my own podcast. I got voice coaching. I asked my sound engineers for feedback. They were reluctant at first, but I was relentless. Then came the hardest and most important part: I started listening to my earlier interviews. I confess that in the early days of my Disrupt Yourself podcast, there were many episodes that I never listened to. When I was finally willing to face myself and listen, to determine where I was on my interviewing S Curve, to collect data, I grew my competence, I grew my audience. And from audience feedback, I knew I had helped others grow too.

Highlight [65]: A simple grammar exercise will help you do this. Imagine your S Curve goal is finishing a marathon. Instead of saying "I run" (verb), start saying "I am a runner" (noun). Using a noun rather than a verb represents "an opportunity to become a certain kind of person," says Stanford University psychology professor Gregory M. Walton. This subtle switch is what Walton calls a psychologically precise intervention. "These interventions are much like everyday experiences," he wrote in 2014. "They aim, simply, to alter a specific way in which people think or feel in the normal course of their lives, to help them flourish." Walton shows, for example, that a group of individuals who describe themselves with the statement, "I am a voter," had an increase of 11 percentage points in their voter turnout compared to individuals in a group that self-described with the statement "I vote." Saying "I am a writer" makes it more likely that the book will get finished than saying "I write." As a Christian, I find it powerful that Jesus repeatedly proclaims himself with "I am" statements: "I am the Good Shepherd," "I am the Bread of Life," "I am the Living Water." To grow smarter and faster, we need to use "I am" statements to help us self actualize. You're a pianist, you're a runner, you're a Collector.

Highlight [70]: The second stage on the S Curve of Learning is collecting. As an Explorer, you used your mental and emotional capacity to explore many options. Now that you have decided a particular S Curve merits further exploration, you are a Collector. You collect the quantitative data of facts and the qualitative data of experience. You are collecting data that supports sticking (or not) with this S Curve. Progress is happening, but it can be hard to spot. Slow is the essence of this phase. This part of the launch phase involves recovering your brain's ability to collect the way a child does: openly, with

optimism. Yet it can include such a large volume of new information to process, and important decisions to make, that your brain can overload. The excitement associated with novelty can quickly give way to stress and alarm. The stress-linked brain hormones adrenaline and cortisol make the challenge of sorting new information and making decisions even harder. The Collector phase makes you confront how this new S Curve might impact your identity. Growing in this area might clash with the way others see you, or it might not fit in with the way you see yourself. Stress can result when you feel uprooted from your old self, even if you're dissatisfied with who you are. As a Collector, you identify and collect the resources you need. Then you make room for those resources by eliminating ghosts of self_doubt. You furnish your mind with the growth mindset of childhood. Three tips for being a world_class Collector are to: Audit your adult self; get reacquainted with your childlike self. 2. Pay attention and cultivate childlike wonder consistently. 3. Become a world_class Collector of feedback. When you approach new opportunities with a childlike mindset and collect data without reservation, you can evaluate whether growth, however slow, is leading to momentum. Does the data you're collecting support staying on this path, or does it suggest you move on to another? Some S Curves are puddle jumpers: you hop on, you hop off. This is not failure. This is collecting.

Highlight [73]: The launch point of the S Curve feels slow. It's not that growth isn't happening; it's that growth may not yet be apparent. There is an amalgam of emotions—excitement, terror, discouragement, impatience. Stress levels are typically high with so much to process; making decisions is cognitively taxing. Confidence toggles between under_ and overconfidence (hence the impatience!). Questions about identity emerge—Who am I if I am not who I was?

Highlight [85]: Accelerator is the third phase along your S Curve of Learning. You have now collected the data and resources you need, committed to an S Curve, and tipped into the sweet spot of your growth. There are fewer gaps in your knowledge, and you have a good sense of where the remaining gaps lie. You're making conscious, deliberate choices about how you want to grow, and those choices become more automatic as stress and growth approach equilibrium. It's fun! You feel the exhilaration that comes with conquering your challenges, with managing yourself.

Highlight [87]: I enjoy watching footage of the 1969 Saturn V rocket, the pioneering craft that launched the first moonwalkers into space. It is an apt metaphor for the S Curve of Learning. For all the elegance of its engineering, the Saturn V's liftoff looks a bit clumsy: like trying to get a high-rise building off the ground. The massive first-stage engines generated more than 7.5 million pounds of thrust, yet it took a slow twelve seconds for the 3,100-ton rocket to clear its own launch tower.⁵ Acceleration didn't begin in earnest until roughly thirty-eight miles up, when the second-stage engines fired and the first-stage engines dropped away. Then the ungainly phase was over. Stage two was over thirteen times more fuel efficient and reached a speed three times faster than stage one. When we reach the acceleration stage in the sweet spot of the S Curve of Learning, the gawkiness of exploration and collection is likewise complete. We are increasingly

productive, competent, and confident. Our stage-two rockets have fired. Serious acceleration is underway.

Highlight [91]: O'Donnell learned that she had autonomy, even when it wasn't obvious. She was in the driver's seat. What began as a compulsory new S Curve of Learning ("I have to deal with this because no one else can") developed into an autonomous S Curve ("I choose to be here at the end of my parents' lives"). Even when unforeseen circumstances limit our autonomy, "we can hold two truths at the same time," O'Donnell said. "We can hold one truth, which is 'this is hell, and I don't want to do it,' and the other truth which is 'I know that this is a phenomenal moment, and I love that I'm able to care for my parents.' "

Highlight [98]: The concept of flow has been applied to myriad situations and states of mind since. Spending part of each day in a sweet spot is what I think of as equivalent to flow. Csikszentmihalyi writes: There are people who, regardless of their material conditions, have been able to improve the quality of their lives, who are satisfied, and who have a way of making those around them also a bit more happy. Such individuals lead vigorous lives, are open to a variety of experiences, keep on learning until the day they die, and have strong ties and commitments to other people and to the environment in which they live. They enjoy whatever they do, even if tedious or difficult; they are hardly ever bored, and they can take in stride anything that comes their way. Perhaps their greatest strength is that they are in control of their lives.