



# The Ten-Minute Life Changer

I decided instead of focusing on completing a task, I would focus on the actions involved to complete the task. Instead of defining my success based on a result, I would define my success by my commitment to a process. I changed my objective from completion, to progress.

My experiment started with a few tangible, creative outlets that I felt I'd neglected for years. One of them was playing guitar.

Back in my later teenage years, I was in a cover band. I was never "good." But I wasn't so bad that I was embarrassed to play in front of other people. Fast forward a few neglected decades and my guitar playing ability had deteriorated to the level of that annoying guy at camp who starts to play a song, then stops playing right as you start to sing because he forgot the chorus—fumbling around with random chords until he eventually gives up and starts the whole painful process again with a different song.

To get back to my not-too-embarrassing skill level, I was tempted to make a list of songs and set a goal to re-learn them. But this approach had gotten me to start and stop dozens of times over the years. I knew I had to do something different. What happened next was a life-changing breakthrough.

Instead of setting a goal to learn three songs on the guitar in a month or some other tangible outcome, I thought I'd try practicing ten minutes per day of intentional learning, then re-assess where I was after a month. I wasn't just practicing guitar. Without realizing it, I was *practicing* letting go of results and approaching my future with a sense of curiosity.

I chose ten minutes per day because it seemed ridiculously attainable. It could have been seven minutes, or fifteen. I don't think it matters that much. Ten minutes was short enough to avoid any excuses and not feel too frustrated in any given session, but it was long enough that it would add up to five hours of practice by the end of a month. I figured that was five hours per month more than I had been devoting over the past two decades. At least it was *something*.

I was shocked.

At the end of two weeks I had developed calluses on my fingers, so playing didn't hurt. At the end of the month I had picked up about five new songs that I could play along to from start to finish. By the end of only six weeks, I felt I was almost back to my not-too-embarrassing high school level. I was making progress and I was having fun!

I was so encouraged by this method, I began to apply it to everything I could think of. Meditation, working out, writing, reading...even though many of these things take longer than ten minutes to really be effective, I knew that ten minutes is a hell of a lot better than nothing. Often, the ten minutes was just a low expectation to get me moving. Once I started working out for ten minutes I had met my obligation to myself. I could walk away feeling accountable, but I'd be warmed up and ready for more. Ten minutes became twenty. Twenty became thirty. Working out for an hour every day became the normal lifestyle.

But even the practices that remained at ten minutes were shockingly effective. Ten minutes of meditation per day didn't seem to do much for quite a while. But I remained curious enough to continue. After about ninety days I realized how impactful the practice had become. I found myself perceiving my life differently. Staying focused and present required less effort. Gratitude was constantly flowing. Creativity, curiosity, resilience—all became apparent personal traits.

These small ten-minute daily practices were helping me accumulate knowledge, skills, and accomplishments that eventually tipped the scales. My entire life seemed to spill over into the vision I had been creating.

*Action:*

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*Daily:*

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