

An open letter to myself by Chris Spangle.

Dear me. I know what an anxiety-ridden time in your life this is and I'm writing to give you advice to make the next few years easier. Much of this is easy to say, despite it being very hard to learn.

A man named Malcolm Gladwell will soon write a book stating that the mastery of a skill takes 10,000 hours. You will find this to be true. Just pick one place and start. After you've mastered one skill, move on to the next.

That leads to my first piece of advice. Try stuff. Many times over the next years, you will feel the urge to do something, talk to someone, or ask for something and you will stop yourself out of fear. Fear is a natural reaction that protects us from being hurt. It is a prehistoric urge that keeps the human animal from danger. Anxiety pretends that emotional pain will kill us.

And It won't.

Getting hurt is good. The deepest moments of pain in our life are the opportunities to discover your true character. It molds us into a better person. At some point in my past and your future, I went through a divorce. I spent countless nights in bed, staring at the walls with waves of unimaginable pain rolling over me. Eventually, day by day, the pain evaporated. What was left was a man that understood what matters most to him. Most of all you lived.

Hurt feelings aren't a reason to not do something. Invite fear to dance, and after you've survived, you will understand that you can live through whatever else life has in store for you. Never confuse the temporary with the permanent.

When you're young, you experience everything for the first time. It is intense and wonderful. Cherish those firsts and the freedom that youth affords. The extreme lows and highs dampen with time, and once something has happened once, you will be scared less the next time you face a similar challenge.

Take more chances in love. The benefits of loving friends, family, and partners with your whole heart leaves you with a richer life. Our lives only have meaning in the small interactions between two people. It will lead to heartbreak along the way. You will lose relationships, and even some of those you never thought you'd lose those people, but after the pain dissipates, you will fondly remember all that they taught you. Knowledge will come from the compounding of lessons learned from others.

Silence is important to learning as well. Listening to others, to yourself, to God, and to your surroundings will accelerate learning. The brain learns best when it isn't engaged. so Give yourself space to think. And Give others space to talk. And give others space to talk.

Trying to project significance through words only leads to public embarrassment. Through these embarrassments, you will learn that every word that leaves your mouth or fingertips are an extension of your values. Others can only judge the true you by your words. If you don't want to be misunderstood, then don't misspeak.

You will also learn a polite word to an unsuspecting stranger will make their day a little better. The world is a delicate place. It is a network of humans interacting with each other and positivity or negativity spreads quickly. There will be one small kindness in your life when you're sitting in a Cracker Barrel at the lowest point in your life. You

hadn't left your house in a month because you'd been depressed, and a waitress came over and flirted with you a little bit. And that changed the entire course of your month.

In this I've spent a lot of time discussing interactions with others. We are pack animals, so it is important to have good relationships, but don't live for others. You have one job, and it is to take care of you. People pleasing can be a disease that rots a person through dishonesty. Don't say yes when you want to say no. Little white lies and enabling others do great damage to you and them.

You are a perfectionist. I am too. Give up on the idea that you should be good at everything. It is an impossible task. Learn what gives you purpose in life and become totally obsessed with it. If others think it is a waste of time, realize it is a waste of time to THEM. Society, family, and friends all have expectations of your time and don't be ruled by the expectations of others. Sometimes we think everyone is watching us, and believe me, no one is watching you.

Listen to your intuition. Your head and your heart are liars, but your gut is never wrong. Listen to the small voice inside. Call it intuition, the gut, a conscience, or just the buzzing feeling when faced with a decision. It's nature's gift to you. It's a truth detector.

You are in charge of your life. No one else. You are solely responsible for every choice you make, and life is a series of small choices. Take a pause before you choose because the end of that chain of choices could lead to great misery for you and others. Many of my friends and I have crashed and burned, and in the rising of the ashes from our personal tragedy, they remark, "I just didn't know how to get out it."

Never speak about or to yourself in a way where you wouldn't say it about others. Don't call yourself stupid. Or fat. Or ugly. Or unlovable. Or unworthy. Be your own best

friend and step back and examine the world you live in, and ask yourself in an objective way, is this the truth. Is this story I'm telling myself something that is reality. No, that's not the truth about yourself. And you have to go, I need to throw this away. Cause this isn't the truth about me. That objectivity will lead you to stop bad thinking immediately and learn to love yourself. Self-esteem is the anti-virus software of your mind. It defends from many attackers, including those that live inside your own head. You may need to spend time in therapy having someone fix your thinking just as you're going to need to a personal trainer to teach you fitness. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

While loving yourself is important, never be satisfied with where you are at in the essential parts of your life: the mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and career aspects of life. Make one improvement in these areas every day, even if it is a small one.

I have two final pieces of advice that might be the most important.

First, root canals are really expensive, so please, floss every day, especially your molars.

Last, but probably most important, is buy several dozen Bitcoins in 2009 so we can retire in 2018.

You've been listening to Chris Spangle, Creator of the Chris Spangle Show, contributor to the podcast We Are Libertarians, website designer for the Bob and Tom Show, and as he calls himself, a work in progress. This has been Katie Piedra for WHJE. Thanks to Chris for taking on this project, thanks to Abi Draper for inspiring me with her open letter, go check that out if you haven't, and thank you for listening.

Like this is the stuff that I wish I could go back and tell myself and say like don't do this stuff, y'know.

