

Do You Realize How Close You Are to Being Extraordinary? By John C. Maxwell

You're one giant (but realistic) leap away. Do these 7 things to get started on an incredible life for yourself.

Do you think of yourself as extraordinary?

Are you rolling your eyes because you think extraordinary is some special, unattainable status held by a privileged few?

Let me share a secret: The distance between ordinary and extraordinary is much smaller than you think, and they're separated by the smallest of margins. Crossing over is as simple as shifting your mindset and making a series of incremental changes. Here's how to get started:

Focus just a little more. Unintentional neglect can impact us in subtle ways that we don't begin to realize until after the fact. You probably don't go out of your way to make your closet messy, but it happens anyway. Messiness and clutter occur in larger parts of people's lives in the same way.

Isn't that the truth? How much of your life is bogged down with mundane tasks, misplaced priorities and trivial details?

Repeat after me: *It's OK to say no.*

Not an offhanded no, but instead an intentional decision to put certain essential activities ahead of others of little importance.

Personally, I start by regulating my calendar. I control what goes on it and keep others from hijacking my agenda. I've discovered that by focusing a little bit more and wiping out some nonessentials, my results increase significantly, as will yours.

Slay a dragon before breakfast. My friend Michael Hyatt, the former CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishers, says he fights a dragon named Lethargy each morning. He explains on his blog, "If I don't slay this dragon before breakfast, he usually gets the best of me. After breakfast, when the day's activities are crowding into my life, my chances of doing battle and winning drop dramatically."

Hyatt wakes up early—while Lethargy is still dreaming sweet dragon dreams about the land of Honalee—and uses those predawn hours to gain the upper hand through prayer, exercise and reading.

If you have a hard time slaying your dragon, plan your battle the night before. Do this every day for a month, and you will be amazed at the positive results.

Schedule your family first. I measure my success by the strength of my family relationships. To keep

those bonds firm, I make sure to prioritize my time with them above all else.

Balance isn't easy. The list of things I want to do is longer than the time I expect to have on this earth. I could work 24/7 and not do all that I want. Does that mean I work 24/7? No. I set my work aside and put my family first.

Each December, when I plan the coming year, I block out several weeks just to be with my wife, Margaret, or our family. I pay particular attention to vacations, holidays and birthdays. Family time goes on the calendar first.

At the start of each month, I carve out days here and there for my loved ones. And I'll spontaneously shift daily priorities to make room for family—whether it's dropping everything when the grandchildren stop by or letting Margaret organize an afternoon outing.

Too often successful people give their families the leftovers. It's difficult to live an extraordinary life if things aren't good at home, though. Family relationships take work. But that one effort will yield a huge return.

Add one extraordinary team member. Every leader knows that the better the players, the better the team. Good teams create momentum, and momentum makes leadership easier.

I'd rather have one extraordinary player than three ordinary ones. Extraordinary people make things happen. They are game changers. They carry more than their weight, and their influence is felt in everything they touch.

If you can find just one all-star player, you'll change the entire dynamic and performance of your team. And that change can take the entire group to another level, including you, Coach.

Dive in and start swimming. Extraordinary people take risks. I have yet to meet one who plays it safe. When a good idea or opportunity comes along, don't test the water. Don't wade in. Dive!

It's unnerving when you don't know how cold that water is—or whether your forward-flipping somersault will end in a belly flop. But failure isn't the end of the world, and extraordinary lives don't exist in languid streams. Seek the riptides.

Possess an extraordinary attitude. While this step might seem the simplest, it could be the most important. Hall of Fame third baseman Wade Boggs once said, "A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst, and it sparks extraordinary results."

Your attitude may be the greatest determining factor in how you live your life—positively or negatively. And it is entirely within your control. Choose to be extraordinarily positive.

Reflect on your day every day. Too many leaders are on the go all day, every day, and rarely take the

time to reflect. Extraordinary leaders, however, pause for a few minutes every evening to consider how they spent their time, what they accomplished during their day and what they can do better tomorrow. That's how you learn from your mistakes and improve. That's how you become exceptional.

Let me leave you with one last thought. Becoming extraordinary rarely hinges on what you can or can't do. More often it lies in what you will or won't do.

As author Mark Sanborn wrote on his blog, "Every morning when we wake up, we are confronted with a choice: another day just like the last or a clean slate to start all over."

Make today the day you choose to pursue an extraordinary life.