

Throw
your own
birthday
party

CURIOUS

Catalysts

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THROW

your own birthday party



This exercise is from Margaret Lobenstine's 'The Renaissance Soul', 2013, p 75-80.

A classic task handed out by career counselors suggests you write your own obituary. You are asked to list the kind of accomplishments you'd want to have under your belt before the end of your life. But I find this exercise breeds a starchy, somewhat predictable "to do" list. Most entries end up looking something like this: *He was a fine, upstanding citizen who climbed to the top of his department, went to all his kids' soccer games, and was a respected deacon in his city's largest church.*

Instead of focusing on what really matters, this entry screams: *Please approve of me! Have I earned my gold stars yet?* For Renaissance Souls who have come to doubt their own instincts in the first place, this kind of exercise sucks them right back into the vortex of other peoples' values, usually the ones held by their parents' generation or the culture at large. Let's adapt this old chestnut to suit our needs.

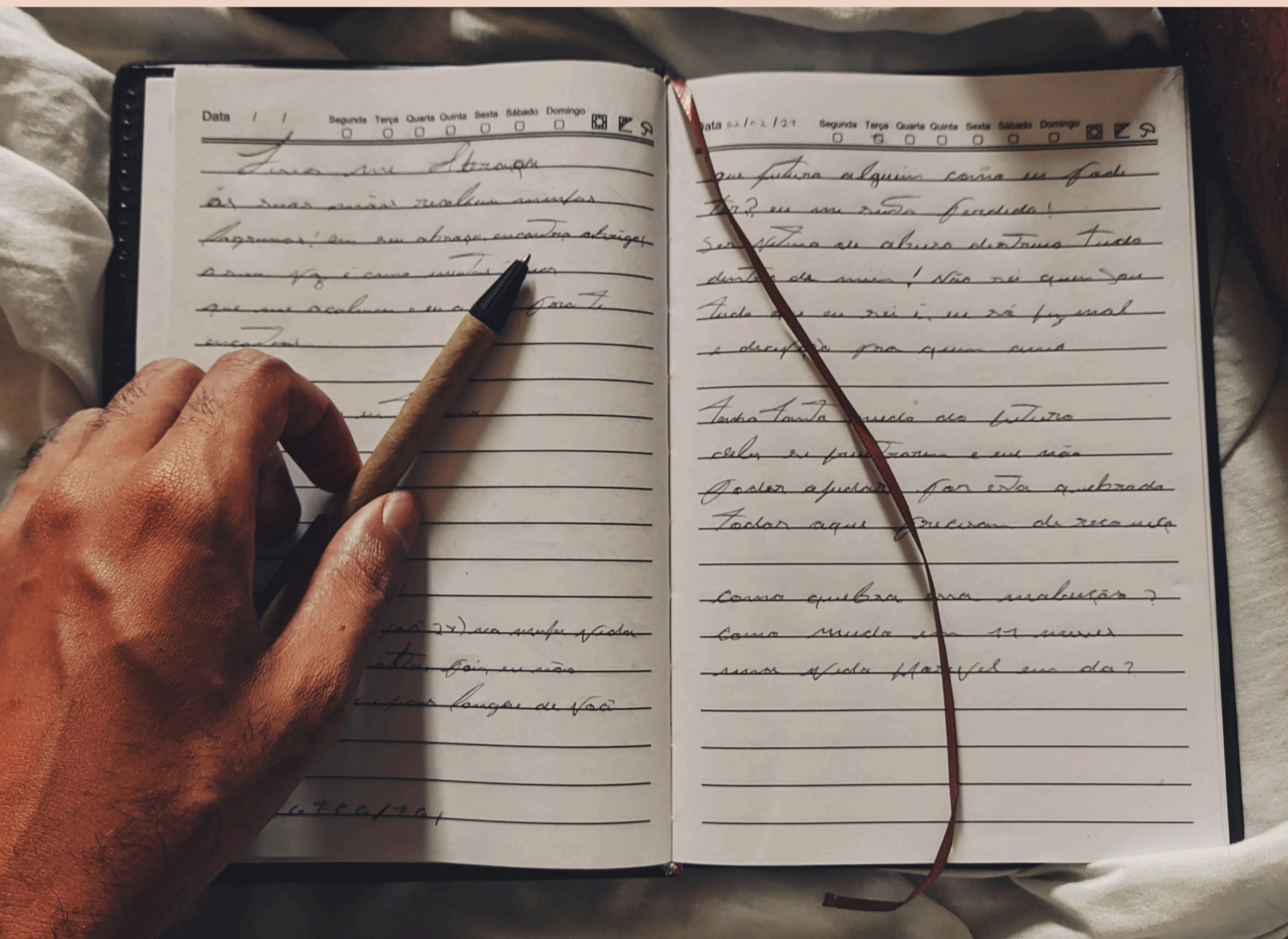


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Instead of picturing yourself in need of an obituary, imagine that you've lived eighty healthy and vigorous years (with more to come!) and are throwing a big birthday bash in celebration. You've asked four people who know the real you to make toasts in your honour:

- **A family member.**
- **A friend.**
- **Someone you've worked with.**
- **A person from your community (perhaps your neighbourhood, the gym, volunteer group, or place of worship.)**



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Of course, each person will have seen a different side of your personality and accomplishments. Some may tick off your achievements; others may praise less tangible qualities, such as kindness or commitment. Take some time to think about what you genuinely hope each of these people would say about you, and write out their "toasts" on a sheet or two of paper.



After writing out the toasts, it helps to highlight or spell out in the margins the underlying values described or implied. For example, if you have your colleague describe your ascent to the vertiginous heights of the corporate boardroom, you might write "Success & commitment." If someone talks about how much she enjoyed visiting your beautifully decorated home during the holidays, you might write "Giving pleasure to others through the domestic arts."



TO YOUR FUTURE

starting now.

Nearly everyone finds that some toasts are more challenging to write than others. Was there a category for which you struggled to imagine a person who might give the toast?

Don't let this discourage you; many people stumble across this realization as they ponder their toasts.

For example, someone may believe that community is an important value, but then discover that he doesn't know his neighbours. This person will then need to ask himself: Is community really one of my most deeply held values?

If I wanted to design a life so that I could participate more fully in a community, what would that life look like?



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Curious catalysts accelerate the process of identifying where we want to go and how to get there.

These are shaped through my coaching work with clients and by powerful insights from leading lights in the field which I've found useful in my own self-development.

Want more? Reach out to me at the website below.

curiosity and empathy for a world in flux

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