



"All young people need to get inspired, explore, learn, and live with purpose. Ryan Porter champions this message with heart and humor."

—Josh Shipp, Teen Expert & TV Personality

MAKE YOUR OWN LUNCH

**How to Live an Epicly Epic Life
through Work, Travel, Wonder, and (Maybe) College**

Ryan Porter

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CONTENTS

[Front Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Step 1: Setting the Table](#)

[1: It's Lunchtime! An Introduction](#)

[Time to set the table \(a.k.a: what's this book all about\).](#)

[2: Make Your Own Lunch](#)

[How to live an epic life and other helpful hints.](#)

[3: My Lunch Story](#)

[A little background on making your own lunch through trial and error...my trial and error.](#)

[4: Bento Box](#)

[Sometimes the greatest adventures come from the simplest decisions—like deciding to live juuust outside your comfort zone.](#)

[Step 2: Cookin' It Up](#)

[5: The Main Ingredient: Decision](#)

[Decision is the ultimate superfood.](#)

[6: Point, Smile, & Hope](#)

[How to know yourself enough to identify what you want without guessing, crossing fingers, wishing o](#)

falling stars, and other terrible ways of deciding your future!

7: Understand Your Menu

Once you know yourself, know what your options are “out there.”

8: Slice, Dice, & Chop

Cut off all alternative options.

9: What Goes In Must Come Out

You can make decisions, but you can't “decide” the consequences.

10: Get Hungry

Begin making your ultimate list.

Side Dish: Your Personal Menu

Twenty-One Questions to Get You Started

Step 3: Your Balanced Diet: Map It Out

11: The Four Food Groups

Four decisions you can make right now.

12: What's in Your Cupboard?

Discover your skills and talents and how to make them work for you, and how to move forward if something's missing (without focusing on what's missing!).

13: Food Group I

Decide what you will have.

Side Dish: All You Can Eat

When What You Love and What You Do Meet

14: Food Group II

Decide where you will go.

15: Food Group III

Decide what you will do.

16: Food Group IV

[Decide who you will be.](#)

[Step 4: Eat Up! \(a.k.a. Chew, Digest, Repeat\)](#)

[17: Recommended Daily Intake I: Vision](#)

[Create a vision for your epic life and administer a daily dose of your dreams.](#)

[18: Recommended Daily Intake II: Action](#)

[How to come up with an action plan and then actually act on it.](#)

[19: It Doesn't Always Taste Good](#)

[Everybody has obstacles—not everybody will move past them, but you can.](#)

[Side Dish: Sweet & Sour](#)

[Choose to See the Good in Every Situation](#)

[20: Spit It Out](#)

[How to quit the stuff that's holding you back and politely reject the naysayers you love who love you too.](#)

[Step 5: Chocolate-Covered Everything: Reap the Rewards of Hard Work, Realized Dreams, and All Things Sweet](#)

[21: Your Food Is Getting Cold](#)

[Procrastination is not a Recommended Daily Intake. Start doing something with your epic ideas now!](#)

[22: Itadakimasu](#)

[It's time to say thank you.](#)

[23: Dig In](#)

[Begin living your epically epic life of work, travel, wonder, and \(maybe\) college.](#)

[Big-Ups & Shout-Outs](#)

[Resources & Tools](#)

[How to Contact Me](#)

[About Ryan](#)

[Back Cover](#)

For Seiko

My life with you is the most epic life I could imagine.

Thank you.

STEP 1

SETTING THE TABL

IT'S LUNCHTIME! AN INTRODUCTION

Time to set the table (a.k.a. what's this book all about).

→ “When I yell, ‘Paddle!’ look straight ahead and paddle as hard as those pale, skinny arms can paddle!”

It was week two of my four-week trip to Hawaii and Japan. I was hanging out on the north shore of Oahu (the surfing capital of the world), taking surf lessons from a fifty-five-year-old surfing veteran.

My surfing instructor was yelling at me as I waited, lying on my surfboard, in ridiculous anticipation of my first wave. The sun was beating down on my neck, waves were crashing all around me, and I was beginning to get nervous.

“Remember, be patient. Whatever you do, watch out for the pearl!”

Before I had the time to remember that *the pearl* was surfer slang for a face-plant, my instructor was yelling, “Now! Paddle!”

And with that, I began paddling as hard as my pale, skinny arms could paddle. My adrenaline was pumping as hard as the water under my board, and as the wave began to break, it picked me up and carried me toward the shore. I waited, even though I felt the urge to stand up. My surfing instructor had specifically told me that when you feel the urge to stand up, paddle three more times and *then* get up.

One...two...three...

I quickly slid my hands to the sides of the board, planted my feet, and stood up. I threw my arms out to my sides for balance, and miraculously, I was surfing. I’m sure I looked ridiculous, and maybe a little out of place, but I couldn’t have cared less. It felt awesome. I looked down at the wave then up at the beach. I couldn’t believe it—I was actually surfing.

In high school, I couldn’t have imagined that I would be doing what I do now. Traveling across North America talking to teens about how they too can do the things they want. I never thought I would write a book. I never pictured myself traveling around the world, camping on volcanoes in Guatemala, wearing samurai armor in Japan, surfing in Hawaii, or scuba diving in Honduras. My teachers and counselors never talked about other options.

They never guided with phrases like “be patient” or said anything about taking the time to figure things out. I was told there were three options: go to a four-year college, go to community college, get a job. I wasn’t confident that any of those options was right for me at the time, so I took another route. I decided to *make my own lunch*.

I’ll explain what it means to “make your own lunch” in just a bit. In fact, the whole book is about exactly that. But what I mean in a nutshell is, we spend a ton of our young-adult lives being told what we need to survive and thrive. We’re told what our success should look like (and what we should look like) and how we should get it. And a lot of us end up eating it up and swallowing it even if it doesn’t taste good going down.

Make Your Own Lunch is for you if any of the following apply:

- You are not sure if college is right for you.
- You know exactly what you want, but it doesn’t include college and your next steps aren’t clear.
- You have questions about school or what to do when you graduate.
- You don’t know where to start your next adventure.
- You want to meet people who took career paths your counselors and teachers didn’t talk about.
- You dream about traveling the world and exploring far-off places.
- You want to have fun and excitement in your life.
- You have trouble making decisions.
- You want to make changes to your school, your community, or the world.
- You want to start your own business.
- You’re sick of staying at home talking to stuffed animals on weekends.

- You want to learn another language.

- You want a better relationship with your friends, family, or boyfriend or girlfriend.
- You hear that you can do anything, but you don't know what that means.
- You dream about living the life you want.
- You want freedom.
- You keep hearing people tell you that your dreams aren't realistic.
- You want success.
- You know there's a way to have what you want but don't know how to get it.
- You want a job or career you love.
- You want to study things you are passionate about.
- You don't know how to find your passion.
- You don't know what you want.
- You don't know where to go or what to do.
- You don't want to live like most of the people you know.
- You don't know who you are or who you could be.

Make Your Own Lunch is for you.

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

That question haunted me for the first twenty-three years of my life. It started in kindergarten as a fun game of imagination, and by the end of high school, it had evolved into a giant monster breathing fire down my neck. High school finished and I still had no idea what I was going to be, so I took some time off to search for an answer. The quest to answer that question brought me to Japan, Hawaii, Slovakia, France, Honduras, Guatemala, Austria, Las Vegas, and more.

I'd love to act like my journey was all part of some master plan that I had carefully and meticulously crafted, mapping it out years in advance, but honestly, I had no idea what I was doing half of the time. The other half of the time, I was just doing what I was drawn to and what I thought would be best for me (and the most fun).

Somehow, while looking for the answer to the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I realized the question was wrong. Wrong because there isn't only *one* thing you can do with your life. Wrong because it makes it sound like there's a direct path from A to B, when really there are a bunch of paths, side adventures, and detours. Wrong because it puts so much pressure on young people to “figure it out” immediately.

Once I started searching, I started uncovering new questions and a ton of really exciting answers. I began realizing that you really never have to have it *all* figured out. The next step is what's most important now, and it's fine if beyond that is a bit of a question mark.

I wrote this book so you don't have to waste time trying to answer ridiculous questions like, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” or “How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?”

I wanted you to know that it's perfectly OK and perfectly normal to *not* know the answer to either

of those questions. It's OK to take some time to figure yourself out and explore the many different paths that will lead you to the answers you're looking for.

This book was written over six years from various planes, trains, cars, hotel rooms, hostels, and the occasional jungle. Sometimes I wrote it on my office computer, other times on my laptop, and a few times with actual pen and paper. My goal was never to give you a specific plan, or *347 Strategies for Success in Career, Education, and Life*, because for some people there could be a bunch of steps, and for others there are just a few to reach their desired destination.

You'll figure out the steps you need to take. You'll come up with your own plan to make it happen. And you'll develop your own *strategies for career, education, and life success*.

Some parts of this book are really short; others are a bit longer. Take your time, read the stories, and while reading, write down any ideas or inspiration you might have. If while you're reading, you feel inspired to do something, call somebody, go somewhere, or build something, do it. This book isn't going anywhere...unless you left it on the subway, in which case, it is now a pillow for a tired backpacker.

Last, thank you for reading this. From this point, you begin (or continue) building your own epic life through experience, work, travel, wonder, and (maybe) college. Right now. It's go time.

—RYAN P.

MAKE YOUR OWN LUNCH

How to live an epic life and other helpful hints.

**WHY ARE YOU PUTTING UP WITH STUFF YOU HATE?
IF THERE'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T LIKE, CHANGE IT. 'NUF SAID.**

→ There were three construction workers named Simon, Andrew, and Bob. These three friends worked together as part of a construction crew building a skyscraper in the downtown area of a major city. One day, the crew's lunch bell rang and the three friends went to the top of the unfinished skyscraper to eat.

As they sat on the edge of the rooftop with their feet hanging hundreds of feet above the ground, Simon opened his lunch box, looked in disgust at his two friends, and shouted in frustration.

"A ham sandwich again! I get ham every day of the week, and I'm sick of it! If I get a ham sandwich one more day, I swear I'm going to jump off this building." Andrew and Bob laughed. Andrew put his lunch box on his lap and opened the latches on the front. When he flipped the lid open and saw what was inside, he shouted in disbelief.

"A turkey sandwich again! You've got to be kidding me. I get turkey every day of the week, and I've had enough! If I get a turkey sandwich one more day, I swear I will jump from this building!"

Bob was the only one laughing now. He opened his lunch box and pulled out his sandwich. Disappointed with what he had in his hands, he shouted in anger.

"A peanut butter sandwich again! This is getting ridiculous! I get peanut butter every day, and I'm sick of it! If I get peanut butter one more day, I swear I'm going to jump off this building!"

None of them was laughing now.

They were all extremely hungry, so they finished their lunches without talking and went back to work.

The next day, the three workers, as they had done the day before, sat down at the top of the skyscraper for their lunch break. They ate in the same spot as the day before, with their feet dangling high above the street. Simon got his lunch box from his work bag, opened it, and pulled out his sandwich. He erupted in anger.

"Can you guys believe this? A ham sandwich again! I am so sick of eating this every day! I told you guys how much I hate ham!" Simon slammed his sandwich down with fury and jumped from the building, plunging to his death.

Unfazed by what had just happened, Andrew opened his lunch box. He turned to Bob, and at the top of his lungs, he screamed, "Is this a joke? A turkey sandwich again? I get turkey every day and am so sick and tired of it. I have had enough!" He threw his sandwich down on the platform, stomped on it, and jumped from the building, falling to the street below.

Bob nervously opened his lunch box and slowly took his sandwich out. He separated the two slices of bread to reveal what was in the middle. In absolute frustration, he threw the sandwich to the platform and began jumping on it. As he jumped on his lunch, he yelled to the sky, "Why me? Why me? Why me? A peanut butter sandwich again? I can't believe this. I get this every day and can't take it anymore!" He didn't hesitate as he threw himself over the edge of the building.

A few days later, Simon, Andrew, and Bob's wives held a funeral for them. When the funeral was over, they met to console one another. Simon's wife spoke first. Through her tears and sniffing, she mumbled, "I...I...I don't understand. If Simon wanted something other than a ham sandwich, he should've asked me. I would've made him something different, but he never asked."

Andrew's wife put her arm around Simon's wife and agreed.

"I don't get it either. If Andrew was so sick of turkey sandwiches, why didn't he say something? I would've made him something different, but he never asked. I feel terrible!"

Bob's wife, clearly distraught, spoke next. "I don't understand. Bob made his own lunch."

[This is where you laugh.]

I'm not sure if this story is real or not. Actually, I'm still trying to figure out if the tooth fairy is real. I swear I saw her once. She was beautiful. #truestory

I bet I know what you're thinking though. *What an idiot* (not me or the tooth fairy, but Bob). *What's wrong with Bob? He has to be the stupidest person in this universe. Why would he make lunch every day that he absolutely hated? Even crazier is why would he complain about it when he was the one making it?*

Who would do that?

You would.

Wait. Don't hit me!

The truth is, *you* are Bob (even if you're not a guy or your name isn't Robert).

Relax. Before you get angry and burn this book, we are *all* Bob sometimes. It's as natural as thick-framed glasses on a hipster (please note: I am wearing thick-framed glasses as I type this, so I'm n

knocking it).

I'm positive you have spent time being upset about something like the weather or your weight or your relationship with someone in your family or that weird smell coming from your closet. Maybe you've complained that you have bad luck or that you have no idea what to do after high school. You're fed up that you can't stay focused. You can't get a boyfriend or girlfriend (or any kind of friend for that matter), and even your imaginary friends changed their relationship status to "It's complicated" on Facebook.

You may not always complain out loud, but in quiet moments by yourself, I'm sure you have had thoughts similar to these at least once or twice in your lifetime.

If you are anything like the average person, a day rarely goes by without complaining about something you aren't happy with or complaining about something in your life. Don't believe me? Look at your social media news feeds. Everybody is complaining about something.

Am I right? Don't answer out loud, especially if someone else is in the room. That's just weird. People will tweet about you. #thatawkwardmomentwhen

If I asked you to write down all of the things that aren't right, or that you aren't happy with, or that you want to change in your life, how long do you think you would be writing for? Five minutes? Ten minutes? An hour? A day?

Don't get me wrong. I'm not assuming that you just sit around all day complaining about your life and how bad things are. But I'm sure you would love to see some things change.

Don't worry. You're not alone. There are Bobs everywhere. We all spend time every day fed up, confused, or complaining about things in our lives that we have the power to change.

You, like Bob, *make your own lunch!* You decide what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and more important, how you think and feel about it. And just like Bob, you get to do this every day.

Every day, you wake up with a ton of decisions to make. Some of them are as simple as deciding which pair of Hello Kitty socks match your outfit the best. Other decisions are slightly more difficult. Like deciding about going to that school you've always dreamed about, or getting that job you've always wanted, or taking a six-month surfing tour around the world. Or all three.

Or something completely different that's unique to you and you alone.

So yeah, we are all like Bob sometimes, but a lot of people spend a lot of time being like Simon and Andrew. Let's take a look, shall we?

Simon and Andrew

I think you'd agree with me that letting somebody else make decisions for you is never a good call. Oh, and if you need some kind of reminder, go back and look at awkward old family photos when your parents dressed you. Yeah. That's what I thought. Something tells me you didn't decide that the *entire* family should wear the matching kitten sweaters.

Simon and Andrew were a lot like that poorly dressed younger version of you. They were letting somebody else (a.k.a. their wives) make their lunches, and they spent every day complaining about it. They represent a large group of people who let other people make decisions for them. For some,

might be their parents; for others, it might be their boyfriends, girlfriends, friends, or teachers.

A few years ago, I spent some time filming a short low-budget, low-quality documentary about how college students choose their schools, their programs of study, and their courses. I thought I was going to hear stories of people following dreams and pursuing passions. Instead, I heard countless stories of students making decisions based on what their parents had told them or what their school counselors had suggested. Other students told me they did whatever their friends were doing.

It was really surprising.

Do you want to know how many of these people were happy with their decisions? About 30 percent said they were glad they listened to the advice they were given, and only *half* of that 30 percent were actually happy with their decision. The rest said they wished they had taken more time to figure out what really would have been best for them.

Simon and Andrew don't just represent the people who let others choose for them. They are the people who let others influence how they dress, what kind of music they listen to, how to act, how to feel, what to do on the weekend, who to be friends with, whether they should drink alcohol or take drugs, whether and when they should have sex, or even what to do in their spare time.

The Simons and Andrews of the world let others make decisions for them and then spend a lot of time complaining about it. The Simons and Andrews are the ones who usually live with regret and disappointment. They usually respond to people with statements like, "It's not my fault. _____ made me do it!"

When asked about their dreams and goals, they will probably tell you something like, "I wanted to do _____, but because of _____, I wasn't able to do it, so it isn't my fault."

People like Simon and Andrew will never be happy. They may experience short-term happiness because they feel accepted by the ones making decisions for them, but they will almost always end up miserable, full of regret, and wearing a really ugly denim vest with a giant unicorn on the back.

The Simons and Andrews of the world go through life forfeiting responsibility for their decisions. They would have been on time, but the *bus* was late. They would have gone for a run, but they were too *tired* (probably from staying up too late watching *The Bachelor*, *Teen Mom*, reruns of *The Hills*, weird infomercials, or playing Xbox live). They *meant* to buy a birthday present, but the mall closed at 5 p.m. They want to be healthy, but their mom and dad are overweight, so it's in *their blood* to be overweight and unhealthy.

The Simons and Andrews of the world always claim to be victims, when in reality they could have taken an earlier bus, they could have gone to bed earlier the night before, they could have bought a birthday present a few days before Saturday. They could've read the directions on the box before trying to bleach their eyebrows. They could decide to work out and commit to being healthy regardless of the condition their parents are in. They could decide to change just about anything, but they don't because it's much easier to blame others for being miserable.

Simon and Andrew are lame. Sorry, Mr. Cowell and President Jackson. No offense.

If you are being a Simon or an Andrew, stop it! Take back control and start doing things *you* want to do. Go the places *you* want to go. Take the unicorn vest off and wear the clothes *you* want to wear. Hang out with the people *you* want to hang out with. Stop wasting time and be the person *you* want

be!

Bob

It's time we talked a little more about Bob, but first, can we just take a minute to nod our heads and agree that people hate complainers as much as they hate spam emails and trolls.

Lucky for you, you aren't a complainer. I like you. I wish I could say the same for Bob.

I have told the make-your-own-lunch joke to hundreds of thousands of students, and I have yet to have a group not laugh and not make fun of Bob in some way.

The sad thing is that there are more Bobs on this earth than any other group of people. The Bobs of this world spend a ton of time complaining about stuff they could change if they weren't so lazy! They are quick to complain, but they never do anything to change the things they are complaining about.

I bet you can name fifteen people like this off the top of your head. They are the people who do the same things over and over again and expect something different to happen. They have the same conversations all the time, and they probably spend the majority of the time complaining about something.

"I still don't have a good job." But they get up and go to the same job every day.

"I don't have any money." But they use their credit card to buy their 427th pair of Lacoste sunglasses.

"I keep gaining weight." But they eat deep-fried chocolate bars. (Yes, these exist. My brother suffered third-degree burns trying to make them.)

"I didn't make the team again!" But they roll over in bed and press "snooze" on their alarm.

"I failed another test." But they watch another rerun of *The Simpsons* instead of studying.

"My boyfriend is being a jerk." But they stay with him.

"I hate the way my parents are treating me!" But they break their curfew for the third weekend in a row.

"I am sick and tired of _____ every day!"

If you find yourself saying this kind of stuff every day, do me a huge favor and punch yourself in the throat. That way you won't be able to talk for a while.

OK, I actually don't condone violence, but the fact is, we don't want to hear it anymore.

Bobs spend too much time complaining about their lives, jobs, schools, communities, and relationships without ever trying to change them.

Do I really need to type it again?

Fine, I will: *You make your own lunch!*

Whether you like it or not, you are the reason you are who you are right now. If you like that person, awesome. If you don't, don't sweat it! You can decide to change from here on out.

I do need to mention one thing before we move on. There are certain situations you have no control over, things like being a victim of violence, war, sexual abuse, death, natural disasters, and divorce, and a *bunch* of other situations. Those things are completely out of your hands. Please, don't *ever* blame yourself for those situations. Please.

But as bad as those things are and as much pain, hurt, and sadness as they cause, you can choose to move on, to get help, to feel better, to speak out against those things, and to help others in the same situation. More important, you get to choose how to feel and what to think about that stuff. You have that kind of power.

Decide now to not let those things hold you back. Decide to move forward and become the exact person living the exact, incredible life that you want.

Decide to stop complaining about the things you can actually change, and decide to start making those changes.

The world has way too many Bobs in it.

Don't be one of them.

MY LUNCH STORY

A little background on making your own lunch through trial and error...my trial and error.

*EVERYBODY HAS A STORY. HERE'S MINE.
RATED PG SO THE WHOLE FAMILY CAN ENJOY.
YOU'RE WELCOME.*

Growing up, I was a “regular” dude (and no, this had nothing to do with probiotic yogurt or fiber). I came from a family of five kids. Yes, that’s right. I said five kids. I have three brothers and one sister.

I wasn’t a troublemaker, but I somehow always seemed to get in trouble. I wasn’t a bad kid. I just liked excitement and couldn’t stand being bored. And sometimes this may or may not have involved spray-painting our local community center while it was being built and being brought home by the police at age eight.

I had great grades all through school and was constantly doing things differently than what most people would call “the norm.” Unless, of course, there are a lot of other people who bypassed running the traditional lemonade stand to make some PlayStation game money by catching fish from a river to start the neighborhood’s first, and last, summer fish stand. Did I mention it was a very hot summer day?

I figured out early in life that I could make my own decisions. I learned that sometimes it works out great and I made fantastic decisions, but other times things didn’t work out as I had planned.

Here’s a list of some of my decisions:

1. Not talking until I was three years old, which resulted in many visits to specialists and lots of worry from my parents, who were wondering if I was going to be “normal.”
2. The first five years of my life, the dress code was “clothing optional.” Anywhere. Anytime.
3. At age five, I raced a kid riding a bike while I was on foot. I slipped and fell, and then I was run over by the bike, which broke my leg.
4. At eight, I decided to say no to the girl who asked me if I would be her boyfriend. This resulted in my *first* face slap from a female.
5. At nine, I decided a pink dress shirt, denim vest, and cutoff leather gloves were cool—a decision I will never make again.
6. At thirteen, I decided to create my own public holiday with three friends: Fire Day.
7. At thirteen, I also decided that my basketball team was NBA bound. One win, twelve losses later I decided it should have been a team decision.
8. At sixteen, I decided to mock a Shania Twain (country songstress) look-alike until she actually beat me up. #fail
9. At seventeen, I played the fainting game. After a severe concussion, giant gash across my face, and blood leaking into my eyeball, I decided we should have played road hockey instead.
10. At eighteen, I said “no to the flow” and didn’t go to college after I graduated. I needed time to figure myself out.
11. At nineteen, I went to college and studied business and marketing. I learned later that I should’ve taken more time to figure this decision out.
12. At twenty, I bought the most luxurious car I could afford at the time. A 1983 Volkswagen Rabbit. Price: \$500.
13. At twenty and a half, I decided that luxury cars start when you turn the key and don’t have a football-sized rust hole in the hood. I decided the Rabbit wasn’t luxury after all.
14. At twenty-one, I dropped out of college, moved out of my parents’ home, and spent all of my

savings and student loans on pointless partying, Mr. Noodles, and pizza.

After this point in life decisions can become a bit more serious, scary, and difficult to make.

At twenty-one, I felt like I went from enjoying my youth where decisions barely had an impact on my day to getting a little older and encountering decisions that could potentially affect the rest of my life. I mean, I went from deciding between “truth or dare” to “should I get a credit card or take out a student loan?”

During my second year of college, I found my classes boring. The school track I thought was right for me wasn't as exciting as I had hoped, so I dropped out of school. My parents weren't exactly thrilled. I moved into my friend's basement in a town outside of Toronto, Canada. The house was near the university my friends were attending, and I thought this was an awesome opportunity to live the university party life without actually going to university. This is what is referred to in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “The Perfect Plan.” #theperfectplan

I thought this idea was so great that I could afford to quit my job as the frozen-food section manager at our local grocery store, Tom's No Frills, and bank my entire future on the plan.

I lived with my friend and his roommates for about three months with no job, scraping by on ramen, noodles and pickled banana peppers. I had spent all of my student loans and drained my savings account, and I wasn't sure how I would pay my already-late rent, when one random Sunday, my mom—who just happens to be a career counselor, decided to pay me a surprise visit and treat me to lunch.

Imagine what it was like for her, a career counselor, having a son who was unemployed, not in school, and had no idea what he wanted to do with his life. That's like Chuck Norris's son not being able to grow a beard by age thirteen. The shame would be unbearable.

When we got to the restaurant, she didn't even let thirty seconds pass before she asked me a question. Not just *a* question but *the* question—the very question I had been avoiding for the previous couple of years: “Ryan, what are you doing with your life?”

Knowing I couldn't tell her that I was thinking about becoming a professional thumb wrestler, I remember thinking to myself, “If only *I* knew.”

I had tried so hard not to think about that question. I had stuffed it into the boxes with my college textbooks and elementary school love letters (all two of them) and had thrown it into the corner of my room in my parents' house, where I no longer lived.

I thought about the question for a minute and came up with the smoothest answer I could think of at that time: “Mom, don't worry about it. I'm just going with the flow.”

Apparently, this wasn't the answer she was hoping for, and I quickly realized this “lunch chat” was going to be the second most uncomfortable conversation I would have with a parent. I am sure you can guess what other conversation has the number-one spot.

My mom went on to tell me how worried she was about me. She told me all of the things she thought I should be, and could be, doing, and I did everything in my power to make her stop trying to counsel me and let me eat my chicken wrap in peace.

You've probably had a similar conversation at some point with a parent, friend, relative, or teacher. Not so fun, eh?

Finally, just when I thought I couldn't handle another minute of the lecture, our bill came. I reached into my empty pockets and acted like I was going to pay (knowing my mom wouldn't let me). My mom reached across the table, took the bill, put some cash on top of it, and stood up to leave.

We grabbed our coats, and as we were about to get into the family minivan, she reached into her pocket and handed me an envelope with some cash in it. I pretended I didn't need it and made a few weak attempts to refuse, but I eventually put it in my coat pocket, knowing my rent was past due.

After an awkward drive back to my basement apartment, it was time to say good-bye. As a final attempt to break the uncomfortable silence, my mom jokingly said, "Well, if you really have no idea what to do, you could just move to Japan and teach English or something."

We both laughed hysterically at the ridiculous thought.

Before I could open the door to the house, I heard those words in my head again, "...*Japan.*"

Being somebody who decided when I was young to always opt for the adventurous path, once I was inside the house, I ran straight into my friend's room, jumped on the Internet, and searched "teach English in Japan."

That decision changed my life.

Within minutes, I had found a company that hired English teachers out of Toronto to send to Japan. I reviewed my résumé to make sure it sounded like I was a good candidate for the job and sent it to the company that same afternoon. I didn't tell anyone about what I had done because I assumed there was no chance they would hire me to teach English in Japan. I was a college dropout whose only work experience was stocking frozen okra in a grocery store.

Little did I know.

Two days later, the phone rang. The company I sent my résumé to wanted to interview me for a teaching position in Japan. I couldn't believe it! There was a chance I could move to Japan. I was excited. I was nervous. I was confused, and then...I was scared. How was I going to tell my mom that her joke gave me the idea to move to Japan?

I picked up the phone and called my mom.

"Hey, Mom, I just thought I would let you know I have a job interview this week."

My mom was so excited. "That's great, Ryan. Which company called you back?" I hesitated and then answered, "Well, it's a company that hires English teachers to teach in Japan."

"Ryan, I was joking about that!"

Silence...sniffles...silence.

She spoke through her tears. Reading from the *Book of Mom*, she said, "That's great. I am so excited for you."

A few days later, I jumped on the subway and headed to downtown Toronto, wearing my dad's suit (which was approximately nineteen times too big for me) for the job interview.

The interview lasted four hours. I left the company office that day feeling supremely confident that there was no way I would ever get the job and that maybe I needed English lessons. I completely bombed the interview, and to top it all off, I looked absolutely ridiculous wearing my dad's pinstriped suit!

A week later, I ran out of money and had to move back to my parents' house. Defeated and feeling

horrible about myself, I went back to the grocery store I used to work at and asked the owner if I could work for him again. He agreed to let me return, but my old manager position was filled, and I would have to go back to being a grocery boy, stocking shelves and making less money than I had been before.

One afternoon not too long after the interview, while sitting in my parents' kitchen eating peanut butter with a spoon, the phone rang. I picked it up, because that's what you do when a phone rings.

I said hello and then heard a woman ask, "May I speak to Ryan Porter, please?" She told me she was calling on behalf of the company that had interviewed me for the position in Japan. I assumed that this was the courtesy "Thanks for coming out, champ—better luck next year" phone call for the people who didn't get the job, but then I heard the words, "Your orientation package is in the mail and you should receive it in a few days. Fill out the required forms and send it back as soon as possible because your contract begins in two months."

I was silent. I wasn't sure what this meant.

"Congratulations, Ryan. We are excited to have you join our company."

I was stunned. I got the job! I went storming into my parents' room. "Mom, Dad, I got the job! I'm moving to Japan!"

Silence...sniffles...silence.

This time, my dad stepped in and bailed my mom out so she didn't have to speak while crying. "They must've liked your suit!"

Things were about to get really crazy. I was going to Japan.

Do you want to know what it's like showing up in a country with no plan, no money, no idea how to speak the language, and no clue about its history, culture, or people? Keep reading, my friend. Before we get there, I need to ask you to do something.

Make one decision now. Make the decision right now to read this whole book. Read every chapter and question the things I write about. Figure out for yourself whether you think things in this book can help you. I promise you that as you read *Make Your Own Lunch* and question the ideas, you will learn more about yourself and see the power you have to change the things you're sick of. You'll see that it *is* realistic for you to live an epically epic life of epicness. You will see just how exciting it can be to make your own lunch.

These aren't just random words I decided to throw together while taking a break from playing *TiN Wings*. I live by the words on these pages, and I know how empowering and exciting it is to break free from the things people tell me I can and can't do and to live the life I want to live. My hope is that some of my experiences—epic fails and epic wins—can help you decide what you want and help you figure out how you'll get it.

So now you've read a little bit about my story, and as much as I like telling it to everybody and anybody who wants (or doesn't want) to hear it, it actually has a point: there's no set path for you.

You can decide to do the things that you really want to do. You can decide to travel the world. You can travel as much as I can and still have a "real job."

You can decide to start a business or work for a company you are stoked about. You can live a life of freedom. You can be healthy. You can be successful. You can learn new skills. You can meet new people. You can be different from everybody in your family or circle of friends. You can live the exact

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