



Alec Brewer <abrewer@ourobio.com>

A Brief Practical Guide to Being an Infinite Player

1 message

The Inn <theinn@mail.beehiiv.com>

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Reply-To: The Inn <sy8005939@gmail.com>

To: "abrewer@transfoamllc.com" <abrewer@transfoamllc.com>

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A Brief Practical Guide to Being an Infinite Player By Sasha Chapin.

Upon reading James Carse's lauded work *Finite and Infinite Games*, I realized I'd never felt similarly about any other book. I was riveted, moved, and completely annoyed. What a tremendous concept: that we ought to spend our lives in acts of mutual generation and play, extending to infinity, rather than playing short-term zero-sum games! Also, what an irritating style of writing!

With all due respect to the dear departed Carse, he seemed to want to imitate the vague style of ancient prophets, out of a desire to, I don't know, seem mystical, maybe. It's just weird to spend a whole book advocating for an infinite existence without furnishing a simple example of the material attributes of such a life. It's also weird that a book about being playful doesn't have a single joke in it. Maybe he's participating in an infinite game by getting other people to come up with practical implementations of his principles.

If so, here is my move.

Encourage Your Friends

You probably have friends and acquaintances with stifled dreams, enterprises left un-pursued, dormant feelings unaddressed. And, while you can't make anyone live the life they want, sometimes a little bit of affirmation can push someone to take a first step. Make a point of occasionally asking people what they want out of life, then asking them how that's going. Initiating these conversations can feel a little awkward at first. But they can be hugely meaningful, even if you don't have any advice or knowledge to contribute other than 'dumber people have done it before' or 'I give you permission to try.'

This is most powerful in a high-context relationship, but that's not always needed. Recently an acquaintance I'd spoken to maybe three times told me that she resumed a project she'd been stalled on for weeks after I assured her that it wasn't embarrassing. This didn't require much work, just a little bit of intentional conversation.

Create Generative Social Activities

A lot of people basically socialize as a way to drink alcohol. They get drunk with their friends. That's totally fine and better than sitting at home doomscrolling on most dimensions. But you can also, occasionally or

frequently, create social events that spark new friendships and possibilities. Host a party with people you know well and don't, invite a shy person, make them comfortable. Share your weird hobbies. Explore new parts of a city with people you know.

Also, you don't even need to be there to be prosocial. Introduce people to each other who are cool. This takes five minutes of effort—ask if you can make an email intro, then do it—and it can be incredibly high-impact. You could just go and create a life-long friendship.

Do Mentorship, Either Formally or Informally

If you're not familiar with Bloom's 2 Sigma Problem, it basically boils down to this: individual, one-on-one education makes classroom education look silly. It's just so, so much better. The implication is straightforward. Provide one-on-one education in the skills you have, to the extent that you can. Two hours of personalized coaching can have dramatic effects—if someone is trying to do something you've done, they might be facing a simple bottleneck they're unaware of, or making some sort of easily connected systemic error. In fact, I'd argue that this is the general rule, not the exception.

You can make this a job if you want. I did with my writing coaching business, and, in spite of what some generic leadership videos would have you believe, it's not a bullshit profession necessarily. You can also just coach people whenever you want for fun and to benefit humanity. Post something simple on your social media like, "hey, I have experience doing x, does anyone want to sit down with me and talk about my experience?" You'll find that dispensing your expertise usually feels good, and it's also a great way to reacquaint yourself with your own dusty knowledge.



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Open-Source Your Transformations

Transformative moments tend to be both specific and generic. What I mean is that the exact makeup of every personal inflection point is different, but the general transforming circumstances are often available to others. If I had a great teacher who changed me, you could work with them too. If I read a book that transformed my consciousness, you can give it a try. By sharing these resources with others, you can partially export whatever good fortunate you've experienced.

Stephen King wrote: "No one can tell what goes on in between the person you were and the person you become. No one can chart that blue and lonely section of hell. There are no maps of the change. You just come out the other side." This prose is masterful but, to the sentiment, I say 'well, sort of.' I can't totally describe the phenomenology of my experience of my journey thus far. And personal change often involves going it alone, to some extent. But I actually can give you rough maps of the change right now. Look, it's easy! Here are a bunch of things that were transformative for me.

- Meeting other weirdos after being bullied and alone, through [indiscriminate extroversion](#)
- Failing at a series of artistic endeavors, accumulating interesting experiences therein, before succeeding in one
- Lamictal, cardio, sleep, psilocybin, ketamine
- Embracing my masculinity through combat sports and lifting
- Reading [weird spiritual self-help](#) books
- Reading [non-weird self-help](#) books
- [Committing to a great relationship](#) immediately upon meeting someone great

Even taking two minutes to put out a list like this could benefit someone. I see no reason why you shouldn't do it right now.

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