Climbing from Base Camp to the Summit of Your Dreams.
Why Gaggle?
Don’t be Afraid to Accept Normalcy

I came from a family in turmoil, most of the time due to my dad’s alcoholism and drug abuse. My dad was not an evil person. When he did drugs or abused alcohol, he was on a course of destruction, but he was a different person when he was sober.

As part of Dad’s family, our lives went up and down. We had a house, paid the rent, and then the police would come because Dad beat someone up. He went to jail, and we lost everything. Our lives were a constant series of resets. We’d set everything up in the new house, the new apartment, the new trailer, the new whatever, and waited for the new reality to be over. Permanency was not something we ever got used to. We lived in many cities and states across the United States, always running from the law.

One time, the police were pulling Dad over. I don’t remember what state we were in, but Dad was telling us to hide the beer bottles under the seats. Dad taught us that the police were bad people, and we had to see them as the enemy. We were more like guard dogs than children in some cases. It was a life of turmoil and constant stress.

While I had dreams of escaping, the reality was I wasn’t getting out of this life. If I started to rise a little bit, there was something that would come and knock me back down. Someone would come and stomp it. Someone would judge my dream and make me feel stupid for having it.

When my father died, it was the beginning of my escape from that life. I could finally start something, and it couldn’t get destroyed unless I destroyed it myself. When it came to my dreams and goals, I was finally on my own. I tell kids today: “Maybe you have a hard life right now, maybe you don’t have choices, but when you turn 18, your life belongs to you.” I was planning my escape from the time I was 16. I was thinking about college. I was getting my mind right for the new challenges that would require more than day-to-day survival; it would take planning, patience and work.
There are certain things you’ve got to change about yourself if you want something different from life. Sometimes you judge these things harshly because you didn’t have them. You make fun of what you can’t have. You minimize what you don’t have. It’s easier than admitting you want something better that will take time and hard work to get. The truth is, if you really want a better life, you’ve got to stop pretending that you don’t. Start saying, “I want that!”

For my dreams to come true, I had to work hard on things that never mattered to me before, things like grades and positive relationships with teachers and stakeholders in my life who had the power to help or hurt me. I walked across the stage in high school to accept my diploma. The grades that I learned to work hard for earned me scholarships so I could go to college. This was no accident, it was all part of my escape plan. It helped pay some bills.

I went to Ottawa University, a small, private Baptist college in Kansas. Because of my learning disabilities, I had to read everything three times to understand it. All the while, I knew that most kids read the same material once and understood it. Rather than getting bitter at this apparent unfairness, I continued to learn any way that I could. When I had important coursework to do, I stayed up almost all night reading it over, and over, and over, making notes on the side to help me understand how to turn the words into pictures that I could hold onto in my head. I kept my grades up. I kept my scholarships.

I decided to become a teacher because teachers helped me; not all teachers, but some teachers who reached out and lifted me up and really changed my life forever. You have, or had, those same kinds of people in your life; those people who are willing to help. There may be, or have been, times you bite them emotionally or

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Striving for something more...
Commit to No New Sins

If you live a life where you’re trying to get up from the bottom and, routinely, you or your friends do things that might be considered marginal to most of “polite” society, I want you to stop doing these things. These behaviors may or may not be illegal, but regardless, they could just be things that don’t lend themselves well to helping you build a positive reputation.

I’m calling this, “No New Sins.” In other words, stop the bleeding. As long as you’re doing things that most of the world would consider wrong, or bad, you’re going to have to continue to tell yourself that you need to stop. You’re going to have to get over those things before you can even start building a life where people support you, where people want to be on your side, want to be in your corner.

For the most part, if you’re trying to better yourself, there are a lot of people who want to believe in you. But if you posted something stupid last night to Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, or even ended up in jail, at some point the believing is going to stop.

Start by admitting you did these things, but then move to the realization that you don’t need to do these things anymore. You won’t be able to better yourself if you’re still practicing these bad behaviors. Ask yourself, “How do I get that to stop? How do I stop doing those things that keep me from starting down a new path? Ask yourself, “What kind of person do I want to be?” Then work to become that person. Study other successful people. Who are their friends? What are their habits? What don’t they do that you currently do? Even if you have lied to others, make sure you never, ever, lie to yourself about the realities of your choices. If you do, you will fail... I guarantee it.

Stop the bleeding.
Study Success

It’s hard to invent your path alone.
Turn Your Images Into a Paycheck

Make something!
Release Your Single Today!

Let’s say that you’re a musician, or a singer, or a poet, or a writer and you want to put your stuff out there for the public to hear or read. You could do that in a lot of different ways. I’m going to give you one idea. If you can, create an mp3, record yourself reading your poem, reading your story, singing your song, playing your guitar, anything that ends up as an audio file. One of my favorite places to share audio files online is a site called Tunecore.com. Upload your mp3 files, choose album art and pay $9.99 to release your single everywhere: online music stores, Amazon, iTunes, everywhere.

Guess what comes next? You have to promote your song, your music, your poem, your story. Sound familiar? One of the ways that I do that is I look for places where people are listening to songs or products like mine. I Google radio stations that play new artists and I gift one 99-cent copy to a station manager or DJ with the hope that they like it and play it, and suddenly, if my work is good I might have a new opportunity.

You can do the same thing with your own story or poems. Collect your stuff and be creative. Don’t worry about whether or not it’s perfect. Don’t wait for perfect. Perfect gets in the way of you getting started. Go ahead and publish one of your songs. Get it out there and let it irritate you that it’s not perfect and then make another one later, rather than sitting around waiting for perfect. Some people live their whole life and die waiting for perfect. Perfect is the enemy of done!

I have 32 of my songs on iTunes right now and none of them are perfect, but I am making the slow climb toward the summit where one of them becomes popular. If I can do it, you can do it. So if you have your song, or your story, or your poem—iTunes accepts spoken word albums—get your web browser pointed to Tunecore.com and get started thinking of anything that you can say or sing that belongs to you and share it with the world!

Remember, creating and publishing is two-thirds of the job. Promoting is the last third. And that’s a big job because when you start promoting and tracking your sales, you can go from “nobody knows me” to “I’m actually selling stuff.”
Your Choices Govern the Quality of Your Life

Realizing that you’re driving…
Own Your Own Narrative

I tell people all the time: “Your biggest weakness is your biggest strength waiting to be told well.” I want you to embrace where you’re from, and what you’re from, and what’s happened to you. Don’t use it as an excuse. It should be rocket fuel. But it can only be that if you refine it. You don’t take oil out of the ground and pour it in the car and call it gas. It gets refined.

So, this crude oil life that you’ve had, whether it’s foster home, gangs, being homeless, how do you own that narrative? How do you tell that story? That narrative is a pity party, right? It starts to get interesting when you start talking about, “Look what I did anyway.” That’s when you start to find your power.

Tell your story in its full glory, the things that happened to you. Tell your story from your point of view. If you live in a house with siblings, they’re all going to have their points of view. And what I’ve learned is that each one of them saw the situation from a unique point of view. So I can tell my story from my point of view and my brother can tell his story from his point of view. And his is right, and mine is right; it’s the lens we saw the world through.

Tell your story in your voice. That’s your dialect. It will get interesting when you start talking about how you took control of your life. You’re smart. You worked hard. It took this... it took that. That will move an audience. That will win you customers. That will win you a following and will sell your book, and a lot of other things. So your story is your power. Don’t ignore it. Find out how to use it to propel your own future.

"Your biggest weakness is your biggest strength waiting to be told well."
Make Smart Choices on Social Networks

You get to tell your own story...
Self control is the beginning of success.

Take the Reaction Button Off Your Forehead
Start wrapping your head around making the climb to your personal summit.

Kevin Honeycutt

Get the book! http://hnyctt.me/climb