

GOT A DREAM? LIVE IT...



Alastair Humphreys cycled 46,000 miles round the world, described by Sir Ranulph Fiennes as "the first great adventure of the new millennium". Now Alastair shares what he learnt along the way to help us all pursue our own adventures.

WHY ONLY 10 LESSONS?

Because we all have just one life, and the clock is ticking fast. We can't spend too long theorising about how we are going to live our lives; better that we get out and live them!

ALASTAIR HUMPHREYS spent 4 years cycling round the world. He has rowed to France, run the Marathon des Sables and is currently training for the first unsupported return journey to the South Pole. *Ten Lessons* is his third book.

Humphreys' engaging, sometimes brutal, sometimes comic style is above all a call to arms... **THE GUARDIAN**

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ALASTAIR HUMPHREYS **TEN LESSONS FROM THE ROAD**

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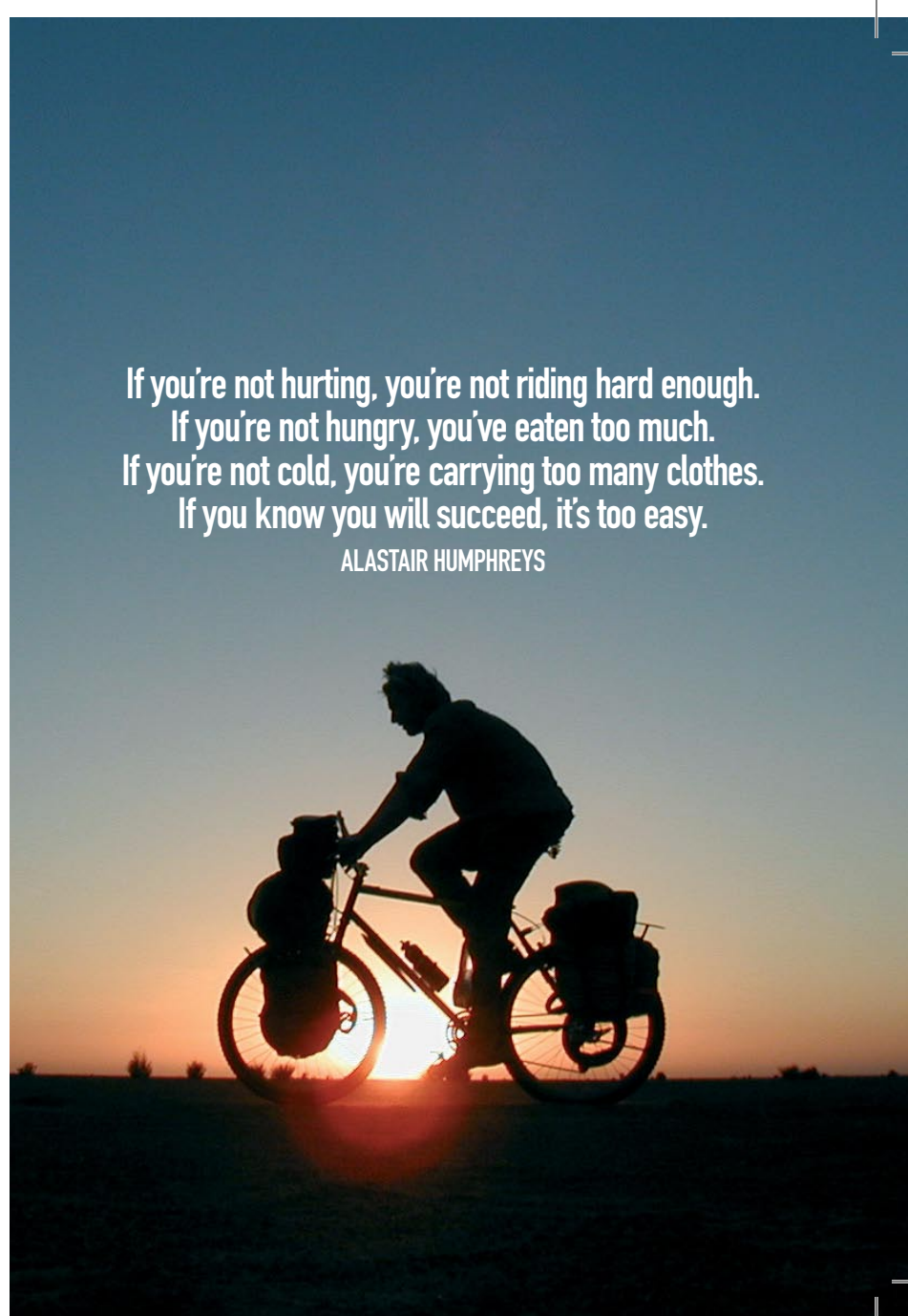
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If you're not hurting, you're not riding hard enough.
If you're not hungry, you've eaten too much.
If you're not cold, you're carrying too many clothes.
If you know you will succeed, it's too easy.

ALASTAIR HUMPHREYS





Introduction

IF YOU'VE BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK A FEW TIMES AND LEARNT A LESSON OR TWO, THINK WHAT YOU MIGHT HAVE PICKED UP GOING ALL THE WAY ROUND THE WORLD. THAT'S WHAT I DID. I WENT ROUND THE WORLD. ON A BICYCLE.

I'm a depressingly ordinary guy who had an extraordinary dream. My dream was to cycle right the way round the world. My friends felt it was ridiculous: would not one continent be adventure enough? Few potential sponsors bothered even to send, 'Thanks, but No Thanks' replies. It took me four years of determined effort to prove the doubters wrong and achieve my dream: cycling back to the front door I had closed behind me 46,000 miles earlier.

But the biggest doubter of all was myself. When I began I never believed I was going to make it. I just wanted to see how much I was capable of. For the first two years of the expedition – at least – I didn't think I would succeed. It was, to paraphrase Mr. Dickens, the best of times and the worst of times.

But now, back home again after spending four years, mostly alone, hauling myself down the highways of five continents – at times exhausted, sick, lonely

or afraid – I can look back with satisfaction at having persevered, and I can reflect on the lessons I learnt along the way. Lessons that will serve me well in my future life; in the office, at home, with my family, as well as out in the world's wild places. Lessons to help me try to pursue a happy, fulfilled, responsible life.

When hearing about my bike ride, people often say, "you must be so fit" or "I could never do what you did" or "I would never have the courage to do it." Rubbish. Total rubbish. I truly believe that anybody can cycle round the world. Sure, most people would not want to, but we all have our dreams, we all have potential, and we can all achieve more than we believe. The only hard thing is to have the guts to break the habits and dogmas that bind us, to just get on our bikes and begin riding.

I had plenty of time on the road to reflect on why I was doing my ride, what had

motivated me to begin, what I was learning on the way, what was stopping me from stopping, as well as what I hoped to take from it all on into the future. I have broken down some of these

lessons into ten simple chapters, illustrated with experiences from my journey. These are ten points that led to the accomplishment of the biggest venture of my life (so far), a success that in the beginning I felt was beyond me. Excerpts are taken from the books *Moods of Future Joys*

and *Thunder and Sunshine*) and stunning photography that is sure to inspire and thrill.

Why only ten lessons? We all have just one life and the clock is ticking fast. We can't spend too long theorising about how we are going to live our lives – better that we get out and live them! So ten lessons should be enough for now. Let's get on and ride the roads we have always dreamed of riding – before it's too late.







Contents

1. You Want to do *What*?

Set yourself an outrageous goal today.

2. Just do it

Make it harder to ignore your dream than to overcome the risks and obstacles involved.

3. Quitting is Not an Option (But Failure is)

Only by going too far will you learn how far you are capable of going.

4. We Walk Alone

You are the only one who controls your potential.

5. A Bad Day is a Good Day

Earn the good times.

6. Be Brutally Honest with Yourself

Do you believe your own excuses?

7. What do You Really Want?

Does this year matter? Then use it!

8. Think Like a Goldfish

Do not think about the end itself. Focus only on the next miniscule step that is needed to keep you moving on in the direction of your goal.

9. Shed a Load. Hit the Road

Get on your bike. Save the Earth, save yourself.

10. The World is a Good Place

Trust. Smile. Boldness and relentless passion will be rewarded.

1 You Want to do *What?*

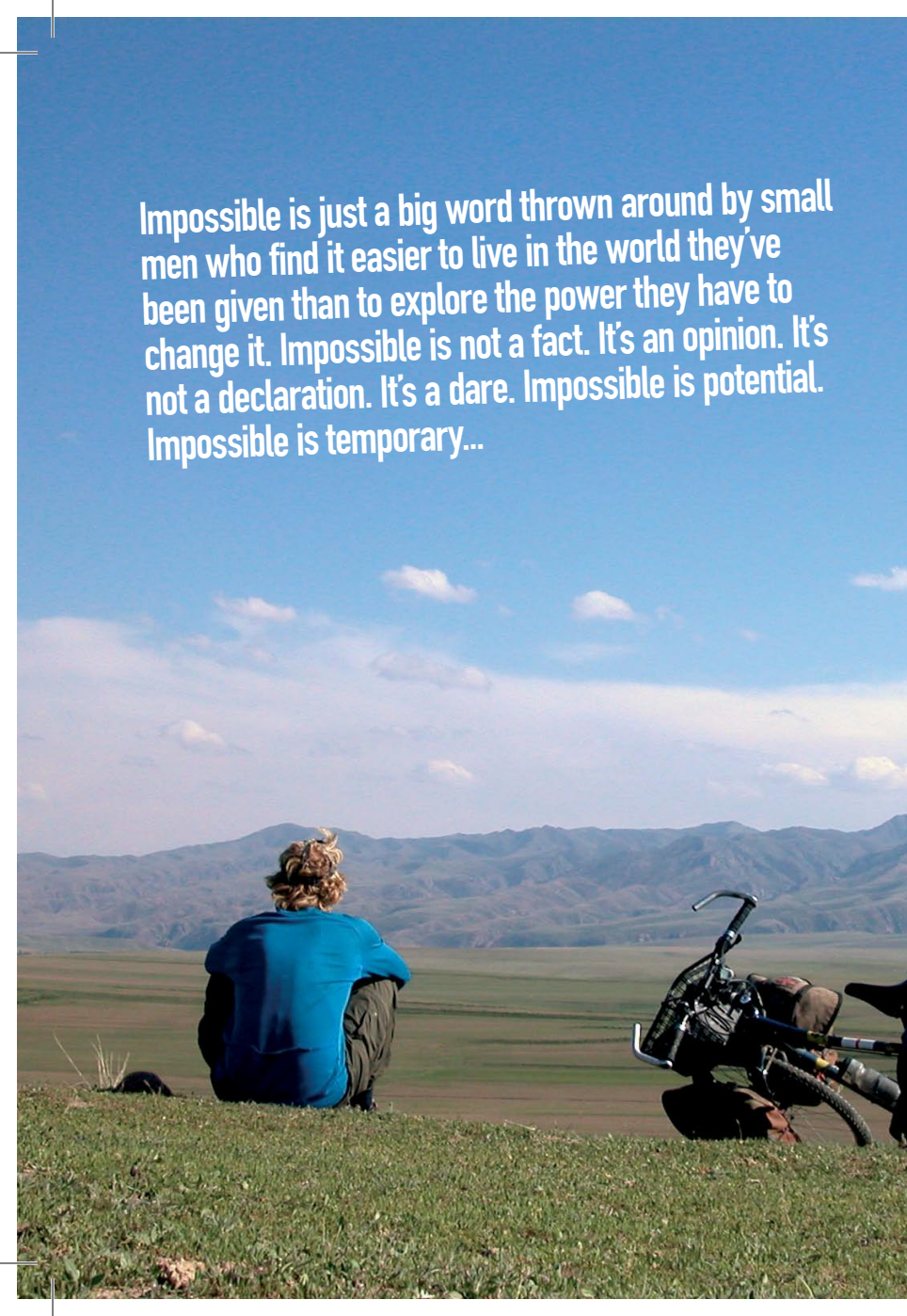
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE WITH YOUR LIFE? HOW DO YOU WANT TO LIVE YOUR LIFE? WHAT DO YOU WANT WRITTEN ON YOUR GRAVESTONE?



Nothing struck me as right. Nothing rang true. It all seemed like a compromise. The routes expected of me, the conventional procession towards a secure job, a sensible pension, a respectable-sized gravestone – the roads to ‘success’ – just did not appeal to me. It is easy to slip into

roles that bear little resemblance to how we really wanted our lives to pan out.





Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. It's not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary...

Impossible is nothing.

MUHAMMAD ALI

I did not want to be jolted with the realisation – years from now, while waiting one day in the rain for a bus – that life had passed me by. And so, tentatively at first, I began questioning things, asking myself what I really wanted.

I realised that if we want to buck the trend, to forge our own paths, and not to just do what is expected of us, we need to summon up the nerve to do what we really dream of doing – to think big – and to begin making the very most of our potential, our opportunities, our lives.

It was time to choose my road. I chose to leave everything that I was familiar with, everything that I knew and loved and enjoyed. I chose to leave my friends and family and girlfriend and country. I

decided to let go of everything that makes a life normal, secure and conventionally happy. It is a selfish, ungrateful risk to give up all that makes you happy in the hope that you can find better. You risk not finding it. You risk finding it, and then never being satisfied again, yearning always for more. But I was looking for experiences that nothing – not the dimming light of old age nor financial ruin – could take away from me. It was uncertain travel that held an appeal, a luring magic, for me. The intoxicating release from conventional bonds, a chance for self-testing and self-discovery, and the rushing joy of being alive that I rarely felt at home. I chose to leave everything behind; the wasted opportunities, the shiny things I had spent money on, the ironing

board and the expectations of conventional living, the race to get a bigger house, bigger car, bigger gravestone. I would have no home, no appointments, no deadlines, no career, no beautiful possessions, no weekend hobbies, no mortgage, no bills, no commute. I would have everything I wanted.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE WITH YOUR LIFE?

I want to make the most of my potential and my opportunities.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO LIVE YOUR LIFE?

Optimistically, ambitiously, generously and with good humour.

WHAT DO YOU WANT WRITTEN ON YOUR GRAVESTONE?

"He lived a good, full and worthwhile life."

DREAM EXTRAVAGANT DREAMS

At first I thought that I would like to cycle to India. I knew that that was possible; plenty of people had done it. But, looking at my atlas, it seemed a shame to stop at India. I would be halfway to Australia by then. I might as well keep going.



**Dreams make the impossible possible;
dedication makes the possible probable;
and work makes the probable happen.**

JIM TREFETHEN



PUSH AN IDEA TO THE LIMITS

Why not ride as far as it is possible to ride, to keep going until I arrived back where I began? Why not ride all the way around the planet? The idea seemed absurd. The idea became exciting.

LEGWORK AND PLANNING ARE NEEDED TO ACTIVATE A DREAM

But was it possible? How far was it? How long would it take? What should I take with me? The months before departure were exciting. I learnt so much. A lot of hard work went into getting ready to begin. I was inspired by life again. I absorbed book after book about great journeys and adventures and the men and women who had pulled them off. I marvelled at their

accomplishments and wondered whether I could do anything remotely similar. There was only one way I would ever know.

DREAM BIG WITH HEART AND SOUL

I had my dream: to undertake an outrageous journey. I knew that I might well fail, but I also knew that aiming ridiculously high meant that I was likely to end up achieving more than if I had set a realistic and achievable target. There is something that you have always dreamed of doing. It's time to be bold, time to commit yourself to that dream.

YOUR DREAM CAN BE ANYTHING YOU WANT. YOU JUST HAVE TO OWN IT, GUARD IT PRECIOUSLY AND TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO LIVE IT FOR YOURSELF

What visionary dared to dream of building the Great Pyramids? Or conceived the idea of the Monastery at Petra?

BE REASSURED: SETTING YOURSELF, AND ACCOMPLISHING, OUTRAGEOUS GOALS BECOMES A HABIT

I was fortunate enough to attain my goal. Today, the realisation of that dream defines who I am, even when I attempt to move on

to new things. It has shifted me to a different level than I was on before I began. People expect more of me now. I expect more of myself. More seems possible. The same will be true for you once you take the decision to kick-start your ambition.

YOURS IS THE WORLD

Imagine you are free. Totally free. Unfettered by commitments, finances, physique, intellect, talent, age, education and – critically – by your own perception of your capabilities. Imagine now that you have only 70 years of life on the most astonishing, improbable, wonderful planet that ever existed. The clock is ticking. The world is all before you. Go on, take whatever you want. Yours is the Earth, and everything that's in it. This is a supermarket sweep of infinite scope. It's all yours. What do you want? You are limited only by your imagination.

DREAM BIG

I am convinced that we consistently underestimate our capacities and our capabilities. We settle too low. We strive for what we know we can achieve. What's the point of that? Far better to be wildly ambitious, to set ourselves outrageous goals, and through that accomplish

far more than we dared believe possible. We should define our passions, define our goals, then set about achieving them.



Think of your many years of procrastination; how the gods have repeatedly granted you further periods of grace, of which you have taken no advantage. It is time now to realise that your time has a limit set to it. Use it, then, to advance your enlightenment; or it will be gone, and never in your power again.

MARCUS AURELIUS

A landscape photograph showing a vast, golden field of tall grass or wheat. In the foreground, a wire fence runs diagonally across the frame. A person is walking away from the viewer on a path in the distance. The sky is filled with large, dark, dramatic clouds, with some light breaking through on the right side. The overall mood is contemplative and expansive.

**The designers of Seville Cathedral
had a simple mission statement: "Let
us create such a building that future
generations will take us for lunatics."**



Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, the providence moves too. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. W. H. MURRAY

**Imagine you are
old and looking
back on your life.
Now – Just do it!**

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from the road**

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