



Little Victories: Perfect Rules for Imperfect Living

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The Wall Street Journal's popular columnist Jason Gay delivers a hilarious and heartfelt guide to modern living.

“The book you hold in your hand is a rule book. There have been rule books before—stacks upon stacks of them—but this book is unlike any other rule book you have ever read. It will not make you rich in twenty-four hours, or even seventy-two hours. It will not cause you to lose eighty pounds in a week. This book has no abdominal exercises. I have been doing abdominal exercises for most of my adult life, and my abdomen looks like it’s always looked. It looks like flan. Syrupy flan. So we can just limit those expectations. This book does not offer a crash diet or a plan for maximizing your best self. I don’t know a thing about your best self. It may be embarrassing. Your best self might be sprinkling peanut M&M’s onto rest-stop pizza as we speak. I cannot promise that this book is a road map to success. And we should probably set aside the goal of total happiness. There’s no such thing.

I would, however, like for it to make you laugh. Maybe think. I believe it is possible to find, at any age, a new appreciation for what you have—and what you don’t have—as well as for the people closest to you. There’s a way to experience life that does not involve a phone, a tablet, a television screen. There’s also a way to experience life that does not involve eating seafood at the airport, because you should really never eat seafood at the airport.

Like the title says, I want us all to achieve little victories. I believe that happiness is derived less from a significant single accomplishment than it is from a series of successful daily maneuvers. Maybe it’s the way you feel when you walk out the door after drinking six cups of coffee, or surviving a family vacation, or playing the rowdy family Thanksgiving touch football game, or just learning to embrace that music at the gym. Accomplishments do not have to be large to be meaningful. I think little victories are the most important ones in life.”

— *From the Introduction*

Little Victories: Perfect Rules for Imperfect Living Details

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Author : Jason Gay

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From Reader Review *Little Victories: Perfect Rules for Imperfect Living* for online ebook

Shannon Brady says

Saw this gem on the top of a heap of Holiday books at my local Costco, and grabbed it. It has since grabbed me. I cannot stop laughing. If you're looking for the standard self-help fare, or advice on whether you should stay or split from your job/spouse/vegan diet or what have you, keep combing the shelves. This isn't that kind of book.

If laughing-your-ass-off-with-every-page qualifies as self-help, however, then you'll no doubt be taking a 'little victory' lap around whatever doldrums are sucking the life out of your days. From the entire chapter of "Nobody's Cool, Especially Me" to how important a good wedding song playlist is and beyond, this book guarantees a welcome escape from self-pity. I've missed a subway stop and walked into a door by virtue of not being able to set the book aside and pay attention.

Highly recommend.

Betsy Gunter says

I enjoyed this book - it's basically stories from the authors own life organized in to sets of rules for life in general. I didn't detect any life affirming wisdom I hadn't read about or thought about before. But the metaphors and descriptions were witty and effective, and the book was overall amusing and satisfying. Well done.

Kristi Starr says

"Know this: cool is overrated. Freeing yourself from the relentless pursuit of cool can be the single biggest thing you can do to create personal happiness in your life, besides installing a zip line in your backyard or deleting Twitter from your phone."

By this account, my husband and three teens are the happiest people on the entire planet. True story. Well, OK - none of them ever installed the Twitter app in the first place. But still.

This is a sampling of Jason Gay awaiting you in *Little Victories: Perfect Rules for Imperfect Living*. Highly anecdotal, highly amusing. Then again, I'm part of a family that checks each morning's *Wall Street Journal* for Gay's column and looks forward to his Rules for Thanksgiving Touch Football almost as much - maybe more during some years - Thanksgiving Day football itself.

Gay relates to and opines on issues as varied as coolness, health, marriage, sports, gyms, manners, work, and kids. In each chapter, expect a story. Or a quiz. Maybe it's serious. Maybe it's humorous. But it's totally Gay. And it's followed by advice in bullet-point form - again, some serious, some tongue-in-cheek.

If you have any sense of decency, you will smile. You will read a sentence or two to the person sitting

nearest you. You will tweet newly-acquired advice. (Because face it, most of us are still hanging on to Twitter, trying to be cool.) You might even laugh out loud. And if you're not careful, you just might pick up something worthwhile along the way.

Doubleday Books says

"*Little Victories* is an incredible blend of humor and heart. Jason covers everything from being a new parent and the everyday challenges, to what songs you should play at your wedding and which fashion trends should die and never come back. These are rules easy enough for us all to live by and reminders that what's really important in life are the little victories we can sometimes take for granted."

- Lauren W. Doubleday Marketing Department

Elaine says

I did not like this book as much as I thought I would from reading the introduction. Several chapters into it, I decided I felt that way because I wasn't really relating to or connecting with the author. I didn't relate to his lifestyle. I didn't like his potty mouth (I know it doesn't bother a lot of people, but it does me), nor his style of writing which was very casual and rambling. It felt like it was a bunch of what I call "random neural firings" (RNF's -- coined by Dave Berry in a book I read by him many years ago). It wasn't what I had expected in the way of a "rule book." When I reached pp. 130-131, there was FINALLY the kind of format I expected with his list of "10 Key Rules for the Thanksgiving Touch Football Game." I think if he had written the whole book this way -- with the rules listed and THEN his RNF's -- I think it would have felt more focused and I would have enjoyed it more.

That being said, there were parts I really did like -- some that really made me laugh (like the Thanksgiving chapter), other parts that were good commentaries on life in our society today (i.e., technology, stress relievers (soup!), raising children, and manners (I love his Aunt Genie!), and still others that were quite touching (his own health crisis and his dad's illness and death).

"If you're feeling stressed out, eat some soup. It's impossible to be anxious eating soup. . . . You just can't do it. It's just you and a bowl and a spoon and some soup. See, you're feeling less stress already. SOUP! It is magical." (p. 59)

"Nobody likes a visiting turkeyologist. . . . the person who, upon arrival in the host's kitchen, begins to propose an alternative cooking strategy for the turkey, based on a careful reading of a magazine article he or she perused on the train. . . .It is okay to stash this person in the garage until dinner is served." (p. 129?)

On Technology: (pp. 148-153)

" . . . so much of the agitation on the Internet is redirected loneliness. Social media offers an opportunity for instant reaction, and that reaction, like any intoxicant, is both euphoric and dangerous."

"Technology is rushing to reduce the routine of everyday human contact . . . the biggest hazard go technology is how it is pulling us away from the present."

"Technology makes a dubious promise of something better and fresher than where you currently are."

". . . The phone didn't make you happy. The moment did. The technology offered a beautiful opportunity, but the happiness was being the moment."

And a final favorite:

"I'm going to make so many mistakes, but I know it is okay. I'll take the small steps. Marginal improvements. Little victories." (p. 204)

Nate Hawthorne says

This is an advice book like I would write, only written better by someone who has had more worldly experiences. It is told with a sense of humor, mostly cheesy, with glimpses of being profound.

Ann says

HYSTERICAL ! And moving, and eye-opening. Picked this up because it seemed like a good "New Year" book to read. I finished it in one day...laughing out loud, reading passages out loud, laughing some more with tears in my eyes. Very funny, spot on, and well written. Great food for thought for enjoying - and cherishing - this amazing life.

Victoria says

I love this little book. I love Jason Gay's humor and heart. I want to buy multiple copies as gifts and I want to make it required reading for my book club so that we can all sit around taking turns reading the hilarious, as well as, the poignant bits of advice Gay provides. I'm now carrying this book in my handbag and rather than endlessly scrolling through my phone when I'm bored, I pick up this little gem and pick out any piece of advice and either laugh out loud or wistfully sigh. Believe me, it makes standing in endless lines or waiting for a doctor's appointment feel less infuriating. Life is a comedy of minor furies, notes Gay, there is no strategy that will make you like life's annoyances, but you can achieve little victories.

And it is these little victories, what he describes as creating small, perfect moments that bring about temporary relief and happiness that is the point of the book. He wants us 'to achieve little victories because happiness is derived less from a significant single accomplishment than it is from a series of successful daily maneuvers.' All happiness is temporary, there's no everlasting bliss, just a lot of collected joyful moments, a compilation of little victories.

This is a different kind of advice book presented as rules, some of the advice is practical, maybe even wise, some outlandish, but mostly funny. Very, very funny. Laugh out loud funny. I'll cop to a few snortles (my rare and terribly attractive snort/chortle combination). It is Gay's endearing warmth and guile, however, that stays with you. His gratitude for the life he lives, for the people in his life and for the life affirming moments he shares with us.

'Sometimes it's easier just to believe that life's path is chance, a fluke of randomness and yet it's not really random, not when you think about what you are and what you wanted to be and all the miles in between. And

I thought about all the people who had imparted advice to me...you think you are on your own, but you really are not. Nobody figures it out alone.'

Jason Gay's advice, his little victories, might help you get through a tough time or maybe shed light on a situation, something you already knew or believed or, like me, he'll brighten up a little corner of your day every time you pick up his book. Whatever the case, this is worth reading and sharing and no one has ever made me want to join the Twitter universe more than this author.

Thank you Amy for gifting me your advance copy! And thank you to the publishers who provided it to her, not to worry, you'll get your money's worth with all the additional copies I purchase.

Angie Noble says

I became a fan of Jason Gay's during the 2017-2018 academic year when a former student and I were talking about the importance of reading established, credible news sources, and he shared with me that he read the Wall Street Journal every day (and he's 15). I started talking about some of my favorite journalists to read, and he suggested I start reading Jason Gay's columns. Even though I don't follow play by play sports news stories, I do enjoy sports columnists. I became an instant fan and then in a search for a column, his book *Little Victories* appeared in the search. I checked it out from the library and read it in about 5 days. For a 40-something, I connected immediately with his experiences and found his writing to be articulate yet conversational, which is a gift. Quick vignettes that deal with relationships, aging parents, raising young children, and coming to terms with changes in our lives that we weren't always ready for but still achieving (and celebrating) the "little victories."

Kevin says

Like a Dave Berry, but since Jason went to Wisconsin, he is even better! Loved this book. It's funny, but tells a great story.

Donna D'Angelo Struck says

Very enjoyable audio book, read by the author. I think my 3 star rating would have been higher if I was a) male, b) a parent and/or c) into sports. Overall, I highly enjoyed Gay's humor and heart. The parts about his dad were particularly endearing.

Steve says

Little Victories could be called a self-help book in the same way *Caddyshack* could be called a golf instruction video. Jason Gay's light-hearted little book is nominally meant to give advice and rules of thumb for navigating the modern world, but we all know it's just a format for making jokes. It's not entirely airy, though. He adds ballast with topics like his bout with testicular cancer and his father's failing health. And every once in a while we're led to think. But for the most part it's all about the humor.

Gay's current job is as a *WSJ* sports columnist. He's also written for *Rolling Stone*, *GQ*, and *Vogue*. With everything of his I ever read, I end up cracking a smile. His humor is droll, observational, and self-effacing. He's slightly edgier than Dave Barry, not as big into anecdotes as David Sedaris, and less of a suburban housewife than Erma Bombeck, but he correlates with them all. His likability index is high, too, which always helps.

I realized only after I was most of the way done that the best way to sell this book to friends would be with examples. Since I was too lazy to backtrack, I hoped that whatever I underlined from then on would be enough. Here are a few I came up with. You be the judge.

Asking a survey question to discern how smart phone-dependent you might be:

Are you reading this copy of *Little Victories* as "an actual hardcover book, with printed pages, by candlelight, in a hayloft, above sleeping livestock, as people used to do in the 1990s?"

Talking about how orderly an aunt's place is where they regularly visit in the summer:

My house, by contrast, feels as if a tribe of orangutans has gotten loose and opened up a case of Heinekens.

Describing advice from an older sibling on parenthood:

My brother, whose daughter is on the verge of her teens, treats me like I'm still in the first season of *Breaking Bad*. Wait until Season 4, he says, when it takes your kid two hours to dress before school.

On curbing the time kids spend with digital devices:

[...] if you hand a child a phone in a public setting, people look at you like you've just given your kid a sack of enriched uranium. You are lazy, you are ceding parenthood to the machines, you are not actively building organic fun. The parenting magazines and blogs tell you to set limits, and this is useful advice, but I am not setting limits on, say, an airplane. If it means a peaceful cross-country flight without dirty stares from every other passenger, I will let a two-year-old watch *Scarface*.

The book contains wise words about the value of friends, the joys of a good marriage, the excesses of youth sports and the importance of little things that should be appreciated for how they cumulate, even if imperfectly, into a life. At his best, he mixes earnest good intent with some chuckles. The only thing that didn't wear well was a tendency to exaggerate with numbers. For example, he said, "I am so afraid of poisoning you that I will leave that chicken on the grill until 2042." Or, once in a job he made "21 billion cheese sandwiches." There must have been more than 16 thousand such instances and they ultimately made me cringe.

If you're looking for a little palate cleanser between courses, and you want it light but still flavorful, this is one to consider. My laugh tally was ~~somewhere north of 63 million~~ substantial.

karen says

a fun, engaging read about being present and looking for the little things that make our lives and the lives of both our loved ones and complete strangers a little bit happier and easier. i read this over several sittings in one day and even laughed aloud a few times. ?

Amy says

I received a galley copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review...and...so it shall be.

This book full of practical advice & is at times humorous.

Most chapters begin with a short story & are followed with bullet points of advice & observations on the chapter's topic.

A couple of chapters deviate from the format.

Only A Game (But Not Really) begins as an open letter written to the author's children's future Little League team followed by related bullet points. The letter invites young baseball participants to join the Zen Cubs, "the planet's least selective, low expectation and most emotionally balanced youth sports team" as an alternative to the All Star caliber team that will suck the parents' time & souls away over the years. The Zen Cubs will focus on the best thing about sports...fun without consequences. It's a fantastic satirical letter that effectively points out the obnoxiousness of the amount of importance adults place on children's sports.

Your Phone Is Not You is in the format of a multiple choice quiz/test. This is one of my favorite formats that I'm seeing more often in books. The multiple choice answers made me giggle while at the same time caused me to question & reflect on my own tethering to my cell phone.

Other highlights of the book include:

Thanksgiving & the Touch Football Game: "If fewer than three people cry, it isn't a real family Thanksgiving, and you have to start over." Some of us apply this rule to Christmas as well.

Music for Weddings and Babies and the Rest of It: "Yes. You're playing Brick House."

Travel and Snack Packs:

"One day I will launch my own airline called Air Uptight & Organized, which will come with an advance screening of all fliers on their packing ability." "There will be a test. You will need to be able to enter and exit a plane in less than three minutes."

"Air Uptight & Organized will become the most popular airline in the world. We don't even have to fly anywhere, actually-we can just sit there on the Tarmac in smug satisfaction." YES!!! Please!!! I think we all know that I would be one of those sitting in smug satisfaction!!! We are not all created equal when it comes to travel!

Aunt Genie Says Mind Your Manners:

Excellent chapter with excellent advice. Manners need to make a comeback! The "erosion of these common courtesies" is of a concern to me, the author, and his Aunt Genie.

Aunt Genie agrees with me! It's rude not to respond to a RSVP. Rude! Don't want to attend? Ok. Rather than ignoring an invitation from a friend...it's really simple..."leave a message & express your appreciation for being invited. Do not leave the host hanging..." Someone was kind enough to think of you & invite you...return the courtesy by providing them with a response.

Epilogue: Come Over Right Now:

Touching story about the author's experience with grief when his father passed away. It describes the confusion that is associated with not feeling what you think you should be feeling & when you think you should be feeling the loss. It's beautiful & will cause you to end the book with tears rolling down your face.

There's a lot of solid advice packed into the book's 200 pages.

These stories of little victories are helpful & humorous and will remind you that it's important to embrace little victories in life...and...maybe even high five yourself on occasion.

Wendy says

A delightful little book. I went in expecting to have a fun, easy read with a few laughs. I did. But I also actually learned a few things. Mostly that you should just stop trying to be cool -- it's a fruitless effort.
