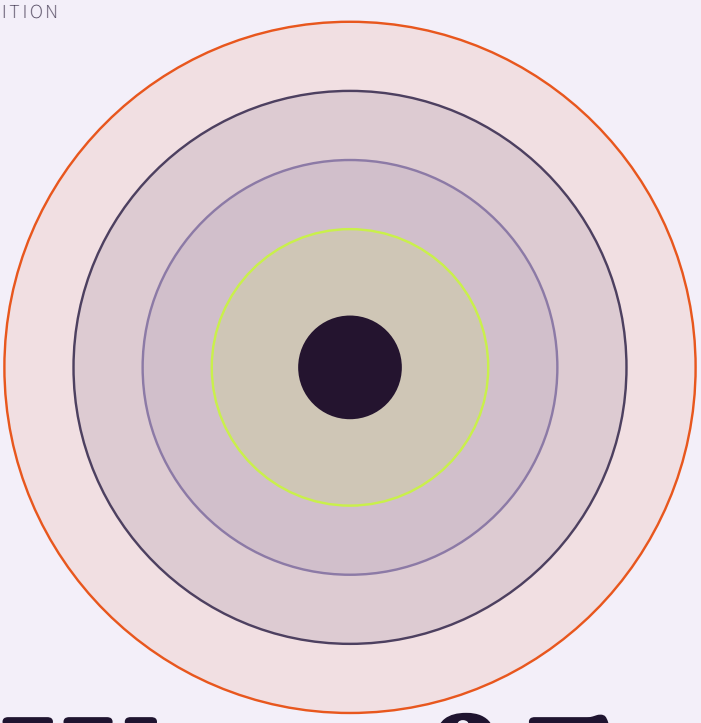


# The Way of Excellence: A Guide to True Greatness and Deep Satisfaction in a Chaotic World

A reading of the book by Brad Stulberg (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Way of Excellence: A Guide to True Greatness and Deep Satisfaction in a Chaotic World, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

# The book in a minute

Brad Stulberg writes and coaches on performance and well-being. He is the author of The Practice of Groundedness and Master of Change, and co-author, with Steve Magness, of Peak Performance. In this book he separates genuine excellence, which means doing hard things, creating, contributing and expressing what is distinctive about you, from pseudo-excellence: hustle as a signal, hacks, and chasing numbers. He argues that the drive to grow is part of human nature, and that deep satisfaction comes from mastery and mattering together. The book moves from foundations to a run of mindsets, habits and practices, among them focus, consistency over intensity, confidence built on evidence, living by your values and shaping your environment. It mixes research, philosophy and Stulberg's own experience of training and coaching, and ends with appendices on applying the ideas, core values and sleep.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

# The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Excellence is a way of doing things, not a trophy waiting at the end.

Stulberg treats excellence as an ongoing process of caring about something and giving it your full effort. That makes it open to anyone in any role, not only elite athletes and artists. You practise it on a normal Tuesday or not at all.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### The look-alike is loud: hustle, hacks and metrics can pass for excellence without being it.

The book calls this pseudo-excellence. It looks like ambition from the outside, with long hours on show, clever shortcuts and numbers that keep going up. Underneath, the work itself often gets less of your care, not more.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Deep satisfaction comes from mastery and mattering together.

Mastery is getting better at something worthwhile. Mattering is the sense that it counts, to you and beyond you. Skill without meaning goes hollow, and meaning without skill stays frustrated, so the book asks you to tend both.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Choose consistency over intensity.

A heroic week followed by a crash builds less than a modest effort repeated for months. Stulberg makes the case for showing up at a level you can sustain, so that the ordinary days do the compounding.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Real confidence rests on evidence, not on pep talks.

Telling yourself you are ready does little when the stakes rise. The steadier kind of confidence comes from the record of work you have actually done, which is one more reason to keep doing the reps.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Own your seat: trust the voice you have earned, without claiming one you have not.

Owning your seat is one of the book's ideas. Once you have done the work, hiding behind other people's opinions is its own kind of evasion. The check is honesty about where your evidence ends.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Build an identity house with many rooms.

If your whole sense of self lives in one role, one bad season there can bring the whole house down. Stulberg uses the image of a house with several rooms, such as work, family, friendship, body and community, so a setback in one does not leave you with nowhere to stand.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Attention is the raw material of excellence, so guard it like one.

The book links constant distraction and quick hits of novelty to a sense of alienation from your own life. Focus is partly a skill and partly a setting, so shaping the room you work in matters as much as willpower.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Excellence is not only personal: teams and communities can practise it too.

The book carries its principles beyond the individual to teams, organisations and communities. A group that cares about the quality of its shared work, and rewards the work over the show, makes it easier for everyone in it to do their best.

PUT IT TO WORK

# Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Name your core values
- [ ] Map your pursuits on mastery and mattering
- [ ] Set up one room for focus
- [ ] Write a goal about who you are becoming
- [ ] Draw your identity house

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Show up at your floor, not your ceiling
- ◯ Keep an evidence log
- ◯ Run a Friday look-alike check

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

# Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

# The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

# The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

## Name your core values

Write down three values that you want to steer by.

For each one, write a sentence about what it looks like on an ordinary weekday, so you can tell when you are living it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

## Map your pursuits on mastery and mattering

List the three to five things that take most of your time and rate each for growth and meaning.

Notice which one has meaning but no practice, and which one has practice but no meaning.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

## Set up one room for focus

Choose one place where your most important work happens.

Before your next session, put the phone in another room and clear the surface of everything that work doesn't need.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

## Write a goal about who you are becoming

Rewrite one goal as the kind of person you want to be, such as a writer who drafts every morning.

Then set the smallest daily action that person would never skip.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

## Draw your identity house

Sketch a house and give each room one role in your life.

If one room holds almost everything, book one hour this week for a different room.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

# Show up at your floor, not your ceiling

Set a minimum session you will do even on a bad day, such as ten minutes or one page.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ○ | 7 ○ | 8 ○ |
| 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
| 16 ○ | 17 ○ | 18 ○ | 19 ○ | 20 ○ | 21 ○ | 22 ○ |
| 23 ○ | 24 ○ | 25 ○ | 26 ○ | 27 ○ | 28 ○ | 29 ○ |
| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 ○ | 2 ○ | 3 ○ | 4 ○ | 5 ○ | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

# Keep an evidence log

After each practice session, write one line about what you did and what improved.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

# Run a Friday look-alike check

Each Friday, look at your week and mark the hours that went to looking busy or chasing a number.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ○ | 7 ○ | 8 ○ |
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| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

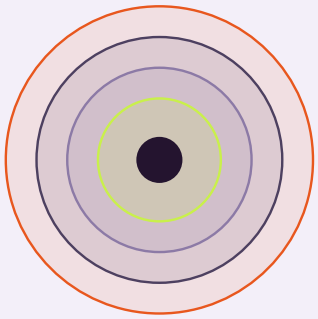
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



**Excellence is not a place you arrive. It is the way you show up, one ordinary day after another.**

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER BRAD STULBERG

Read it online, and vote on the takeaways:
hourlife.com/books/the-way-of-excellence
Made November 6, 2026 · HourLife, hourlife.com

The Way of Excellence: A Guide to True Greatness and Deep Satisfaction in a Chaotic World · The reader's edition