

Letter to Myself

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How to really focus on making your future better.

An interesting financial planning idea that is making the rounds these days is also one of the simplest: a letter to yourself. More specifically, a letter from your future self to you, today.

Come again? Imagine yourself in five years, assuming everything has gone more or less as you hope it will. You're healthy, in good financial health and--well, you know your hopes much better than I do. The point is that the You-In-The-Future is writing a letter of thanks to the You-Today. Future You might thank Today You for exercising regularly, because Future You is fit and looks good. Future You might thank you for being thrifty and watching your budget, because in that future date, you're on track to retire comfortably--or you may even BE retired.

Future You might thank you for taking the time to smell the roses along the way, for maintaining close relationships with friends and family, for spending a little more time accomplishing goals (Writing a book? Starting a side business? Traveling to see relatives or the world?) instead of unproductive downtime in front of the TV.

Whatever it is, you are thanking yourself for taking these actions, and be specific about what you did. Then look over the letter, and know that these are all things which you will thank yourself for someday, make a commitment to do them, and save the letter.

Every week or two, take the letter out and take another look at it. Are you on course? Are you earning the thanks that Future You gave you?

The point here is that you want your future life to be as good as it can be--as full of fulfillment and happiness, joy and prosperity as possible, and your actions between now and then will--or will not--make that happen. The letter to yourself is a fantastically powerful reminder you that you're really counting on yourself to take care of yourself in the future.

Meanwhile, in between the times you spend with the letter, you can get to know a variety of Future Selves (You-Next-Week, You-Next-Year, You-Five-Years-In-The-Future), and begin to ask these future versions of you about decisions you make now. How much of the money you earn should be given to your future self for retirement? What would you, a week from now, like to have cleared off your desk? Would you like to have learned a new foreign language by this time next year? Are there things which are hard to do now, but which you will wish you had done? Chances are, you know what that person who will be you would really like you to be doing now, which lets you navigate through the complexities of your life with very clear vision.

And if you can do THAT, you'll be one of very few in a world where most of us are muddling through our days. You could be one of the few who arrives in the future with no regrets about how you spent the precious, irreplaceable hours of your life.
