



The Big Thing: How to Complete Your Creative Project Even if You're a Lazy, Self-Doubting Procrastinator Like Me

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A New York Times business journalist explains why it's important for people to pursue big creative projects and identifies both the obstacles and the productive habits that emerge on the path to completion—including her own experience writing this book.

Whether it's the Great American Novel or a groundbreaking new app, many people want to create a Big Thing, but finding the motivation to get started, let alone complete the work, can be daunting. In *The Big Thing*, New York Times business writer and editor Phyllis Korkki combines real life stories, science, and insights from her own experience to illuminate the factors that drive people to complete big creative projects—and the obstacles that threaten to derail success.

In the course of creating her own Big Thing, this book, Korkki explores the individual and collaborative projects of others: from memoirs, art installations, and musical works to theater productions, small businesses and charities. She identifies the main aspects of a Big Thing, including meaningful goals; focus and effort; the difficulties posed by the demands of everyday life; and the high risk of failure and disappointment. Korkki also breaks down components of the creative process and the characteristics that define it, and offers her thoughts on avoiding procrastination, on staying motivated, scheduling a routine, and overcoming self-doubt and the restrictions of a day job. Filled with inspiring stories, practical advice, and a refreshing dose of honesty, *The Big Thing* doesn't minimize the negative side of such pursuits—including the fact that big projects are hard to complete and raise difficult questions about one's self-worth.

Inspiring, wise, humorous and good-natured, *The Big Thing* is a meditation on the importance of self-expression and purpose.

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From Reader Review *The Big Thing: How to Complete Your Creative Project Even if You're a Lazy, Self-Doubting Procrastinator Like Me* for online ebook

Marisa says

This book was very Meta (self-acknowledged), which had me hesitating at a few moments, but the book really came through for me! Since the book wasn't simply a description of the trials and challenges the author was working through in her own journey, it really kept me interested. I loved that Korkki was willing to give anything a shot and worked with a variety of experts to get their perspectives as well.

Though I think this book would be fantastic for many people, part of me kept wanting to say "JUST START!" Starting is definitely the hardest thing when it comes to a dream, but once started it's also the easiest thing to improve as you find out what mistakes you're making! Personal opinion aside, the book was definitely inspiring to give yourself a real shot at your dream and to stop putting it off until tomorrow.

Who should read it? Folks with a lingering dream that is unfulfilled!

Please note: I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review courtesy of TLC Book Tours.

See all my reviews and more at www.ReadingToDistraction.com or @Read2Distract

Andrienne says

I received this book as an e-galley. I found a lot of takeaways from this book. Plenty of self-help books from Barbara Sher or books like "Power of Habit" already talk about the importance of goal-setting or finding your passion. This book examines the author's struggle to write and dispenses advice (via experts) as well as takes the advice herself. I found this book to be a reassuring piece on the process of finding a way to create something big in life - how a person might feel compelled to finish or why it doesn't happen at all. For those who might not have a Big Thing but feel doubts on why that is will also find a reason to pick up this book.

Julie lit pour les autres says

Le *big thing* du titre réfère à cette chose, ce projet - parfois très clair, parfois informe - qui habite de façon durable et constante certaines personnes. Que ce soit la réalisation d'un projet artistique, une invention, un défi entrepreneurial, l'auteure émet le souhait que ce livre donne des pistes des réflexion pour ceux et celles qui sont habités.es par ce désir de réalisation.

Le titre est toutefois mal choisi : le *comment* n'est pas clair, ni explicite. Il s'agit plutôt d'une réflexion personnelle sur un projet créatif (soit le livre que l'on tient entre les mains) entrecoupée de plusieurs exemples de personnes ayant fait la conquête de leur propre *big thing*. L'auteure réfléchit à ses propres limites personnelles, de façon parfois un peu trop intime. On le sent dans l'écriture: elle se fait plus

brouillonne, moins analytique et a des tics d'écriture qui finissent par agacer.

J'en ressors avec l'impression que si sa recherche est de bonne qualité et m'a fourni de quoi approfondir ma réflexion, le regard qu'elle porte sur son expérience personnelle est resté en surface. J'ai apprécié toutefois certains angles inattendus adoptés par l'auteure (les personnes dont leur projet personnel s'incarne dans leur vie quotidienne, par exemple). Ce n'est pas un mauvais livre, mais ce n'est pas un très bon livre, malheureusement.

Matthew says

Very useful as I consider my next Big Thing, even though I'm not completely sure what that Big Thing is at the moment. Finally, a book by a creative person who admits to being less-disciplined than would seem to be the ideal (e.g., Beethoven and his precisely-brewed cups of coffee every morning). Useful considerations of the intersection between work and "work," work and love. Worthwhile reading for any creative or anyone who wants to be creative.

João Guilherme Brotto says

I was expecting something like a real "how to" - as the title suggests - full of techniques, tools and good stories. But the book is not practical at all. It seems more like a personal project of the author to show to herself that she could do her big thing. The stories are not very well connected and sometimes is a lot of blablabla. The reading is quite boring.

Anyway, If you want to achieve your big thing, here are my tips:

- 1 - Be absolutely passionate about it.
- 2 - Eat well
- 3 - Take care of your mind and body.
- 4 - Create a daily routine.
- 5 - Look for people that can help you.
- 6 - Work hard!

There's no magic.

Shari Strong says

I have such mixed feelings about this book. There were chapters that were so incredibly helpful to me, and I took tons of notes, especially at the beginning. Her insights about writer's block and self-doubt and procrastination were spot on and so, sooo helpful. On the other hand, there were entire chapters that seemed irrelevant to my situation. I didn't really enjoy all the interviews with various subjects. That aspect of the book was very journalistic (which makes sense; Korkki is a journalist), and just didn't resonate with me, style-wise and subject-wise. Korkki's own insights and observations were much more valuable to me. I highly recommend that all procrastinators and self-doubters read the first chapter of this book; it's worth getting your hands on this book for this chapter alone. Then skim the rest and read the sections that seem

relevant to your life. (I got some good info out of chapters two, three and five.) I didn't connect much with Korkki's interviewees, but I did with her, particularly when she was at her most vulnerable.

Alexis says

So I was going to give this two stars and then I decided not to finish it, so down to one star it goes. It seemed to start out pretty well, but quickly lost focus and structure. I felt like each chapter was just a series of tangents on the same subject that were loosely tied together at the end to relate back to the "big thing." Like other reviewers I also found it repetitive and unclear. The title proclaims it a self-help book, but instead of offering clear strategies to help complete your project, it mostly seems like a meditative study on different ways creative people (usually very famous like Beethoven or Darwin) have coped throughout the ages. Not what I was hoping for and unhelpful to my endeavours.

Linda says

Not a self-help book nor any newsflash on how to achieve our lifetime goals, however, I gleaned much from chapter 7 - "Through the Ages." Our desires, dreams and goals change as we change with the times. Life happens and thus, other aspects come into play. We may no longer have the emotional or spiritual zeal to invest in what initially mattered to us in our fervent years. That given, do we hold or do we fold?

Nayad Monroe says

I enjoyed this book so much that I was surprised to see reviews from other people who griped about it. It's a book about the process of completing a big, personal project of any kind. The author wrote about her struggles and the things she learned while completing her own big project... which was writing this book. I loved that premise, as well as the many angles she covered while discovering different approaches to try as she learned how to do this challenging task. She got ideas from interviewing people who had completed their own big projects, as well as other people who were professional coaches for areas in which the author was trying new things. I borrowed this book from the library, and liked it so much that I bought my own copy!

Jack Oughton says

Likely that you'll not learn much from this book - but you will get to read some fascinating case studies about people from all walks of life, and of all ages - finally pursuing their 'big thing' (i.e big creative project - thing they want to do with their life, but haven't, yet...). This is reassuring and inspiring.

Don't die with your music still in you.

Nicole Roccas says

This is basically a creative nonfiction work about writing a book. The author has long wanted to write a book but could never manage the long-term inertia to get it done--so she wrote her book about getting a book finished (this one). It sounds a bit circuitous but somehow the author makes it work.

The result is an engaging synthesis of in-the-moment experiences as well as strategies the author uses and research she conducts on how other people map out long-term creative projects. It is not a self-help book for writers, nor is it a memoir--it falls somewhere in between.

Here are some take-away points I got from this book:

- Where in the brain long-term planning and strategy comes from (spoiler alert: pre-frontal cortex) and why this kind of thinking is difficult.
- Engaging in a long-term creative project from start to finish requires strengthening the prefrontal cortex--this can be done, but it's difficult. Keep at it!
- What a mindful approach to writing might look like for someone who has neither the patience nor desire for a formal mindfulness program (me!). Mindfulness is about being able to focus your attention where you want it to go, rather than allowing your attention to go wherever the heck it is being stimulated at any given moment. Some of my favourite parts of the book is when the author tries to connect this idea to her writing practice, it's something I would like to retain or try to implement.
- Writing and depression--and other mental illnesses. This isn't a topic we writers like to think or talk about! I found the author's exploration authentic and helpful.

Who this book will be most helpful for:

- Writers, particularly those who think creativity should just happen freely with minimal planning, yet who never seem to be able to finish their longer term projects. This may satisfy some of your "But why do that?" when it comes to developing a better practice of managing and planning your project.
- Writers in the middle of a long-term project who need a boost/ pat on the back/ "Get back in the ring, Rocky!"
- Writers who find themselves stretched thin between too many creative projects/expectations (me! I found the book helped me gain a new perspective of my situation and things I can or should try to do to simplify things).
- Writers who are motivated more by external motivation/ accountability rather than internal (Gretchen Rubin calls these folks "obligers"). Korkki seems to be an obliger, and some of the strategies she implements will be helpful to other obligers.

Alicia McKenzie says

This book is perfect for creative people working on a project that is taking a very long time to complete. Phyllis Korkki is a great example of persistence and strong desire enabling a person to finish their dream project. I am so happy I read this because it has helped me believe that I will finish writing my long gestating fantasy novel.

Jeremy Candelas says

Korkki explores an interesting subject, and yet her book is incredibly lacking. The writing often comes across as redundant, and is packed with obvious filler material. The author writes in a meta-style,

consistently referring to the fact she is finishing the chapter in the eleventh hour. That was evident in the writing itself, however. It seemed that Korkki lacked passion in finishing her own "Big Thing."

Susan says

Let me save you the time. Set deadlines and get someone to hold you to them if that is what you need. Meanwhile, get enough sleep, sit up straight, and breathe deeply.

Yaaresse says

This is a case of seeing something on the library's acquisition list and thinking, "OK...let's see what this can possibly be."

And now that I've read it, I can only think, "WTF was that?"

And my other question is "How is it that talented writers with manuscripts in hand can't get a foot in the door of an agent's office/publishing house, but HarperCollins was willing to offer a contract and cut an advance for THIS? How do you sell the idea of a book about writing a book when you've never written a book?"

As others have pointed out, it is very meta. But it's not meta in the artistic, interesting way. It's basically 238 pages of "I always wanted to write a book, and so I am writing a book. I don't really have any ideas for a book, so I'm going to write about how I haven't written as much as I said I would, so my editor (!) is imposing chapter deadlines. What a drag, but it got me to finish this chapter. Meanwhile, I can't write and procrastinate at the same time, so this is *hard*. And now I'm going to go "research" why I can't finish my book by hiring a posture coach and a breathing coach, etc. And since I don't really want to do anything they suggest even when it's helpful, now I'm going to go bug busy people who actually have done things and whine to them about how hard it is to write this book. Maybe I'll ask their advice about how I should make myself finish this book. And I'm doing all this so I can say I finished a Big Thing. So how many pages do I have to write to say I wrote A Book. "

And that, my friends, is the book. It's like spending three hours on the phone listening to your least favorite sister-in-law grouse about how she doesn't have time to talk on the phone anymore.

I think the only reason I finished this is because it was just so very weird and weirdly pointless. Even the so-called "research" parts aren't very informative. They are the kinds of things you see on BuzzFeed filler pieces or Reader's Digest. And they take the form of "I asked her _____. And she said, _____. And then we talked about how I was trying to write this book, but it was *hard*"

I guess someone, somewhere might be inspired to something after reading this, but I have to admit my main feeling after finishing it was malaise and a deep pessimism about how publishers choose what books to publish.
