



Room4More

THE BUILT4MORE NEWSLETTER

On growth, change, and what coaching actually is. Signal over noise.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Part of my week is spent listening to what the big podcasts are telling the people I work with. Most weeks they disagree with each other, which is reassuring. This week five of them said the same thing, without comparing notes — and it's a thing a coach has to be honest about, because it's aimed at people like my clients, and on some evenings at me: there is a kind of working-on-yourself that keeps you exactly where you are.

Telling that kind apart from the kind that works is this issue.

The most self-improvement man alive spent Friday arguing against self-improvement.



On Friday, Jay Shetty — former monk, host of one of the biggest self-improvement shows on earth — sat down alone with a microphone and made the case that the self-improvement project has become the thing blocking the change it promises.

His claim is precise. The people who stay unhappy despite the journals, the therapy, the reading list and the 6am routine are not under-doing the work. They have worked on only themselves, for too long. And the reason they can't see it is that the two activities involved are indistinguishable from the inside:

“Reflection helps you move forward, while rumination convinces you that you’re stuck. Before long your mind becomes like a room with mirrors on every wall. Everywhere you turn, you keep running into yourself.”

JAY SHETTY · ON PURPOSE · 21 AUGUST 2026

He wasn’t alone. The same week, on different shows, with no coordination: Rich Roll described people who transformed once, built an identity out of the transformation, and have been signing up for another Ironman ever since — running the machinery of change with no change left in it. Peter Crone put the ceiling on it in one line: you can use force to temporarily override habit, but you can never violate identity.

Five shows, one week, one wall. And the wall is not laziness, not resistance, not a lack of commitment. It’s the project itself, pointed the wrong way for too long.

— COACHING, DECODED

02

Reflection has an exit. Rumination has a mirror.

THE MYTH

If you’re still stuck, you haven’t gone deep enough. One more layer of insight, one more honest look, and it will finally release.

WHAT’S ACTUALLY GOING ON

Two different activities are wearing the same clothes. Reflection and rumination use the same notebook, the same honest questions, the same serious face at the same kitchen table. Both feel like diligence. From the inside, there is no felt difference at all — which is why capable, committed people can spend years in the second one, certain they’re doing the first.

The difference shows up at the end. Reflection closes: it finishes with one thing to do differently, and then it finishes. Rumination reopens: it ends where it started, with a slightly better-worded description of the problem — and the problem is always you. Check your last month of honest looks against that. Did they produce next steps, or better descriptions?

Here's the mechanism, and it isn't mystical. Attention behaves like a flashlight: whatever it points at fills the frame. Point it at your own condition every morning and your condition is what the world turns out to be made of. The mind is obliging — ask it daily what's wrong with you and it will keep the findings coming. Not because they're true. Because you asked.

Shetty's second line on Friday quietly explains where the exit is:

“Most people aren't unhappy because they don't feel important. They're unhappy because they're not sure who they matter to.”

JAY SHETTY · SAME EPISODE

The exit is not a better technique. It's another person. Contribution, being useful to someone, being witnessed. A mirror — however honest, however well-lit — cannot need you. Someone else can.

And to be clear about the target, because this is a coach writing: the argument is against solitary rumination, not against getting help. Therapy is two people. Coaching is two people. The room with the mirrors has a population of one — that is what makes it the room with the mirrors.

You haven't worked on yourself too little. You've worked on only yourself, too long.



REFLECTION

Ends with one thing to
do differently.

Then it ends. The week changes.



RUMINATION

Ends with a better
description of the
problem.

Then it starts again. The week
doesn't.

*From the inside the two feel identical. The difference only shows at
the end.*

THE 2-MINUTE TRY

03

2 MIN · TRY IT NOW

One thing off the books

This week, do one thing that is entirely for someone else — and that cannot be logged, tracked, counted or posted. No journal entry afterwards. No mention in your next session. No telling your partner over dinner, however casually it would come out. It joins nothing.

The two minutes are for choosing it. Small is fine — small is probably better, because big ones are harder to keep quiet.

One warning, and it's the whole exercise: the moment the giving becomes a technique — something you do in order to feel less stuck — it's just the mirror again, with better manners. If you catch yourself

checking afterwards whether it worked, that's the flashlight swinging back. Let it be for them, and let it stay off the books.

SIGNAL FROM THE NOISE



Three voices, one week, all in the room.

Shetty's argument would stay a podcast take if real people weren't living inside it the very same week, in their own words. Here are three. The handles are anonymous; the words are verbatim. And one thing said plainly before them: at least one of these people is in therapy, and nothing on this page argues anyone should stop — what's described below is what happens *alone*, between the sessions, not inside them.

"I over-reflect. Reflecting has not worked for me as I already over-analyze myself and intellectualize everything. The problem seems to be with my beliefs/emotions."

BETWEEN SESSIONS • R/THERAPY • 18 AUGUST

He is inches from the distinction. He already knows analysis hasn't moved anything — and notice that knowing this is itself another reflection, and it too ends where it started. What he's describing isn't a lack of insight. It's insight running on a closed loop, and no loop has ever been exited by going around it faster.

"I've gotten good at making my life more efficient, but not very good at actually enjoying the time that efficiency gives me. Maybe being productive and actually having free time are two completely different skills."

AN OPTIMISED WEEK · R/SIMPLELIVING · 970 POINTS

He built the evening the project promised — automated, systematised, deleted — and then stood in it. My guess, and it is a guess: what the evening is missing isn't a skill. It's someone the evening is for. Judging by the 970 upvotes, a lot of people are standing in the same evening.

"I'm 51 in a committed relationship for 20+ years. Same good job for 25 years... No debt... Daughter successful launched. I'm bored. Life is monotonous. I want to... just leave... I've done nothing notable in my life."

51, SOLVENT, RESTLESS · R/GENX · 802 POINTS, 970 COMMENTS

The comments split between "just leave" and "get your bloodwork done." The sentence neither camp answered sits in the middle: *I've done nothing notable in my life* — written directly above a daughter raised and doing well on her own, and a partner of twenty years. That's what a mirror does to a ledger: the things done for others don't reflect. Whatever the answer to his restlessness is, it isn't in the room he's checking.

"A person can be working on themselves in the next room for years. From the inside it's diligence; from the kitchen it's absence with a good reason. And the family adjusts around it, quietly, the way families do. The



people who love you were never waiting for the finished version of you. They'd take the current one, at dinner."

BARBARA NEUFELD

Built4More coach · marriage & family systems

— BEFORE & AFTER

04

BEFORE

"I could tell you exactly why I was stuck. I had five years of journals — indexed. Every entry ended the same way: something to look at next week."

AFTER

"I still keep the journal. But Tuesdays I'm at my brother's now, helping his kid with maths, and nobody there has read a word of it. Strange thing to report: the week has more rooms in it."

The journals didn't change. The week did.

— OVERHEARD IN A SESSION



“I can explain myself perfectly. I was honestly hoping you’d ask me about something else.”

It sounded like a complaint about coaching. It was the opposite — the first sign of the door. After years of being their own full-time subject, what many people want most isn’t another insight about themselves. It’s permission to look somewhere else, granted by someone who heard them anyway.

— THE MAILBAG

05

Q “You’re a coach. Coaching is working on yourself. Isn’t a newsletter against self-work sawing off the branch it’s sitting on?”

A If the argument were “stop examining your life,” it would be. The target is narrower: self-work done alone, on a loop, past the point where it returns anything. Two things make sitting with a coach — or a therapist, or one honest friend — categorically different from the mirror room.

First, population. There are two people in it, and the other one can tell reflection from rumination from the outside, which you cannot do from the inside. That distinction is most of what you're paying for.

Second, direction. The work is supposed to end facing outward — toward what you're for, not just toward what you're like. An engagement that only ever produces more material about you isn't deep. It's stuck, with company.

The mirror room isn't a problem because you're in it. It's a problem because you're the only thing in it.



“Most of the people who reach out to me have done years of honest work on themselves. They can describe their own patterns beautifully — and somewhere along the way, the describing became one of the patterns. So the first session is rarely about finding new insight. It's about being heard by someone who isn't them.”

PHILIPPE WAGNER

Founder, Coach

— ONE GOOD QUESTION

What would you do for someone this week if
it could never count as progress?

Don't answer with the part of you that keeps score — it will nominate something visible. The question is asking for the other kind: the act with no witness and no entry. If nothing comes to mind at first, that's not a verdict; it's just how long

the flashlight has been pointed the one way. The way out of the room is a door, not a better mirror.

Normally I'd ask you to hit reply with your answer. This time that would ruin it — the whole point is that nobody hears about it, including me. So reply with the other thing instead: how long have you been in the room? Just hit reply; it comes straight to me, and I read every one.

— WHERE TO FROM HERE

Curious what this looks like for you?

The first conversation is exactly that — a conversation. No pitch, no homework, no framework to memorize. We start where you are and look honestly at what's in the way.

Start a conversation

Four moments we tend to work with. If one of them sounds like where you're standing, that's a good place to begin.

Living Abroad

Leaving Finance

Founders & CEOs

Relocating Partner



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