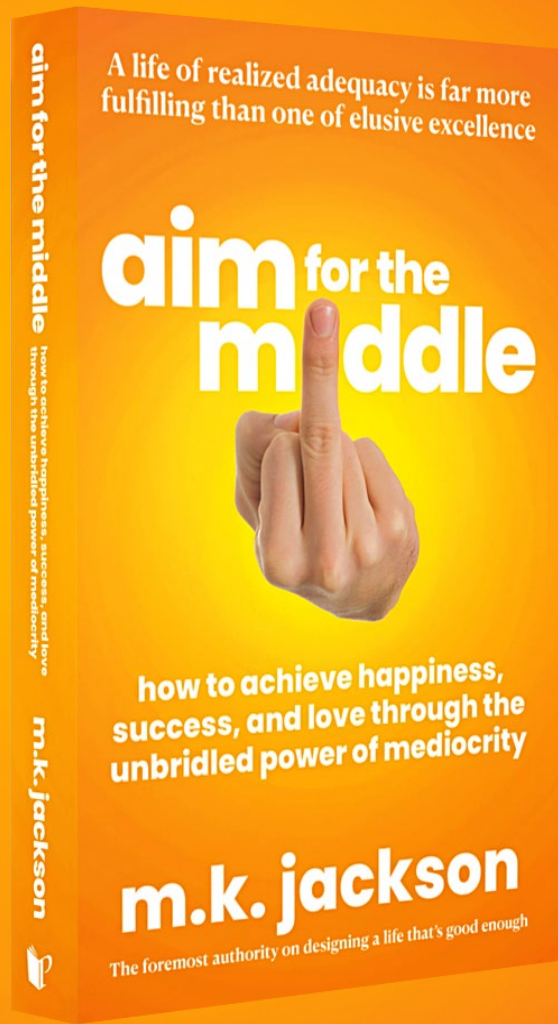




If you're
unhappy,
unsuccessful,
and unloved,
it's because
you're trying
way too hard.

epk



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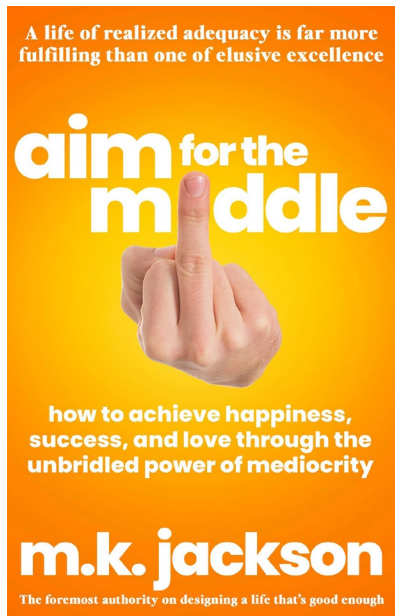
aim for the middle

**how to achieve happiness, success, and love
through the unbridled power of mediocrity**

one-sheet

Aim for the Middle challenges the cult of excellence, arguing that mediocrity, not ambition, is the foundation of sustainable success and happiness.

overview



We spend our lives obsessed with biohacking, relentless productivity, and the endless cycle of self-improvement programs, only to end up more burned out than ever with fewer results than promised.

Author M.K. Jackson questioned that disconnect. If working harder and aiming higher are supposed to produce greater success and happiness, why does the payoff so often fall short of the effort?

Blending memoir, satire, and cultural commentary, *Aim for the Middle* makes the case for a more individual approach to fulfillment—one that embraces the mediocre, rejects effort without meaningful reward, and

recognizes when enough really is enough.

It's a rational response that reframes mediocrity not as something to avoid, but as a practical strategy for achieving authentic success and happiness.

one-sentence overview

The anti-self-help manifesto that argues happiness and success come not from overachieving, but by embracing the liberating power of mediocrity.

elevator pitch

A hilariously takedown of the self-help industrial complex, *Aim for the Middle* urges readers to abandon the exhausting pursuit of excellence and embrace mediocrity as a far saner path to happiness, success, and love.

highlights

- Dismantles the modern obsession with optimizing every corner of life through a searing cultural critique of over-achievement
- Re-frames the narrative of survival using lived experience of medical crises, loss, and personal reinvention
- Exposes the absurdity of one-size-fits-all life systems as a comedic alternative to the self-help industrial complex
- APrioritizes emotional sustainability by replacing hollow perfectionism with genuine adequacy and intention

author bio

M.K. Jackson is a Los Angeles-based writer, humorist, and self-described existential fatalist.

Blending sharp satire, profane humor, and unflinching emotion, he writes about mortality, grief, ambition, self-delusion, futility, and failure, usually through the peepholes of analogy, nostalgia, and absurdity.

Jackson has authored countless resumes, several essays, and the book *Aim for the Middle: How to Achieve Happiness, Success, and Love Through the Unbridled Power of Mediocrity*, a satirical, takedown of the self-help industrial complex.



aim for the middle

how to achieve happiness, success, and love
through the unbridled power of mediocrity

book overview

aim for the middle: how to achieve happiness, success, and love through the unbridled power of mediocrity

by m.k. jackson

The satirical takedown of the self-help industrial complex that proves a life of realized adequacy is far more fulfilling than one of elusive excellence.

elevator pitch

Aim for the Middle is a satirical guide that challenges self-help culture's obsession with constant improvement, arguing a data-backed case that success and happiness aren't achieved by chasing excellence, but by choosing the more sustainable middle ground of mediocrity.

author bio

M.K. Jackson is a Los Angeles-based writer, humorist, and self-described existential fatalist. Blending sharp satire, profane humor, and unflinching emotion, Jackson writes about mortality, grief, ambition, self-delusion, futility, and failure, through the peepholes of nostalgia, and absurdity.

key selling points

- A satirical takedown of the self-help industrial complex and its relentless demands for improvement.
- A counterargument to the cult of excellence for anyone exhausted by investing more and getting less in return.
- Get more of what matters by wasting less on what doesn't.
- Irreverent satire, absurdist humor, and deeply personal memoir in a book that takes mediocrity far more seriously than anyone reasonably should.

audience

- Adults seeking realistic approaches to personal growth
- Fans of humorous nonfiction
- Readers dealing with transition or reinvention

comparable titles

- *The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a F*ck* by Sarah Knight (2015)
- *Stand Firm: Resisting the Self-Improvement Craze* by Svend Brinkmann (2017)
- *F*ck Feelings* by Michael Bennett & Sarah Bennett (2015)
- *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* by Mark Manson (2016)
- *How to Be Fine: What We Learned from Living by the Rules of 50 Self-Help Books* by Jolenta Greenberg & Kristen Meinzer

book information

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Author: M.K. Jackson

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aim for the middle

how to achieve happiness, success, and love through the unbridled power of mediocrity

why this book now?

the high price of aiming high

The formula for success has remained remarkably consistent: work hard, aim high, keep climbing, and the rewards will follow. The entire self-help industrial complex has built itself around that promise. But for the average person, does all that effort produce results proportional to the cost?

That question sits at the heart of *Aim for the Middle*. The book challenges one-size-fits-all prescriptions for achieving happiness, success, and love with a different answer: *bring your expectations and aspirations into line with your actual abilities and potential*.

Not everyone is destined for the same level of excellence. By making an unapologetic case for the average, the adequate, and yes, even the mediocre, the book argues that knowing who you are—and what you can reasonably expect from yourself—is the surest route to authentic fulfillment in life.

conversations shaping the book

The Changing Price of Ambition

More people are questioning what achievement costs—and whether the payoff is worth it.

The Collapse of One-Size-Fits-All Success

Traditional measures of success increasingly fail to reflect how people actually want to live.

The Cultural Fear of “Good Enough”

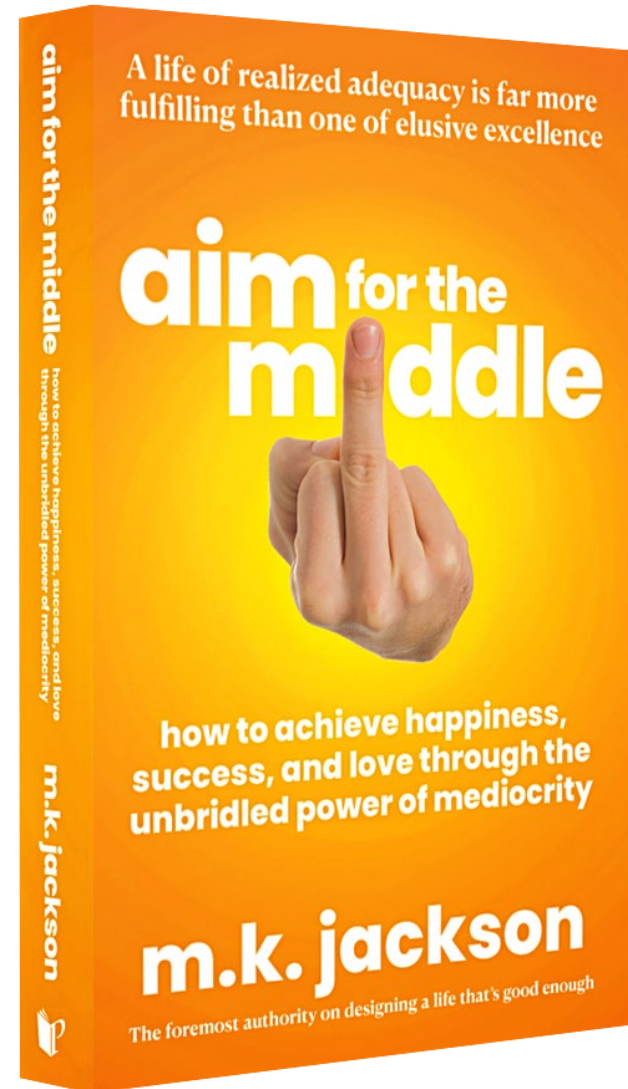
We celebrate excellence reflexively, rarely asking what it costs or whether we need it.

The Economics of Effort

Working harder only makes sense when the additional effort produces meaningful returns.

Who Gets to Define a Successful Life?

The book challenges inherited definitions of achievement and asks readers to set their own terms.



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inside the book

the case for mediocrity

Aim for the Middle: How to Achieve Happiness, Success, and Love Through the Unbridled Power of Mediocrity is M.K. Jackson's satirical takedown of the self-help industrial complex and its one-size-fits-all prescriptions for a better life.

After two brain surgeries, divorce, a layoff, financial collapse, and the death of his mother forced him to rebuild his life, Jackson went looking for an alternative to the high-effort, low-return machinery of goal setting, journaling, affirmations, and getting up extra early every damn morning just to fit in all the extra work.

What he found was liberating: *The Mediocrity Principle*—scientific evidence that mediocre performance isn't a failing, deficiency, or even laziness, rather it's our *default*... humanity's cosmic birthright. With the oppressive weight of overachievement lifted from his shoulders, Jackson discovered both personal relief and a larger philosophy: accepting the reality of our own abilities and limitations as the pathway to success, happiness, and love.

Blending memoir, humor, and cultural commentary, *Aim for the Middle* chronicles Jackson's meteoric rise to the middle and makes an oddly commonsensical case for abandoning the pursuit of elusive excellence, embracing our limitations, and discovering how a life of realized adequacy can lead to greater happiness, success, and love.

thesis

Aim for the Middle challenges the cult of excellence, arguing that mediocrity—not ambition—is the foundation of sustainable success and happiness.

logline

A satirical takedown of the self-help industrial complex that proves a life of realized adequacy is far more fulfilling than one of elusive excellence.

elevator pitch

Aim for the Middle is a satirical guide that challenges self-help culture's obsession with constant improvement, arguing a data-backed case that success and happiness aren't achieved by chasing excellence, but by choosing the more sustainable middle ground of mediocrity.

synopsis

Aim for the Middle: How to Achieve Happiness, Success, and Love Through the Unbridled Power of Mediocrity by M.K. Jackson is a ribald takedown of the self-help industrial complex and its impractical one-size-fits-all methods.

After surviving two brain surgeries, divorce, a layoff, financial collapse, and the death of his mother, Jackson was forced to rebuild his life from the ground up.

Unmoved and unconvinced by the boilerplate high-effort, low-return self-improvement playbook, he sought an alternative to the relentless goal setting, journaling, affirmations, and getting up at some ungodly hour just to do it all.

What he discovered was liberating: **The Mediocrity Principle**—scientific evidence that mediocre performance isn't a failing, a deficiency, or even laziness, but humanity's default condition.

Freed from the burden of exceptionalism, Jackson developed a more realistic philosophy: that a life of realized adequacy is far more fulfilling than one of elusive excellence.

Blending memoir, satire, and cultural commentary, *Aim for the Middle* chronicles Jackson's meteoric rise to the middle, making the case that authentic success, happiness, and love are found not by endless effort to overcome our limitations, but by understanding, accepting, and even embracing them.



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The book examines the areas of life where we invest the most—and too often get the least in return.



SUCCESS

Why achievement can cost more than it returns—and how realistic expectations change the equation.



HAPPINESS

Why pursuing happiness too aggressively can make it harder to recognize when you already have it.



LOVE & RELATIONSHIPS

How unrealistic expectations of romance, compatibility, and perfection can undermine otherwise worthwhile relationships.



EXPECTATIONS

What happens when aspirations exceed ability—and why knowing yourself matters more than endlessly trying to reinvent yourself.



EFFORT VS. REWARD

How to recognize diminishing returns, stop confusing effort with progress, and invest energy where it produces meaningful results.



THE SELF-HELP INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

A satirical examination of universal formulas that promise extraordinary outcomes to ordinary people—usually with another book, course, or program attached.



aim for the middle

how to achieve happiness, success, and love through the unbridled power of mediocrity

m.k. jackson the world's leading authority on good enough

too much

M.K. Jackson is a Los Angeles-based writer, humorist, and self-described existential fatalist who has authored countless resumes, several essays, and numerous unfinished books, including *Baby's First Exorcism*, *Testicular Manslaughter*, and *100 Years of Mold and Mildew*.

Blending sharp satire, profane humor, and unflinching emotion, Jackson writes about mortality, grief, ambition, self-delusion, futility, and failure through the peepholes of analogy, nostalgia, and absurdity. His work is best described as low-expectations systems thinking with supporting evidence.

After surviving two brain surgeries, divorce, a layoff, financial collapse, and the death of his mother all in quick succession, Jackson rejected the self-help industrial complex's exhausting lie that every human being is destined for greatness—if they work hard enough at it. He turned that realization into his first book, *Aim for the Middle: How to Achieve Happiness, Success, and Love Through the Unbridled Power of Mediocrity*—a satirical, ribald argument that success, happiness, and love are not reserved for extraordinary people, but are available to anyone willing to embrace their ordinary, imperfect, and decidedly mediocre abilities.

Jackson holds a Bachelor of Arts (can't get a job with it, can't teach with it), a Master of Fine Arts (can't get a job with it but can teach with it), and a Doctor of Divinity (can't teach with it, can't get a job with it, but can officiate weddings with it).

He currently resides in Los Angeles, California with his childhood friend, a large anthropomorphic white rabbit.

He is available for weddings.

(Jackson, not the rabbit.)

not enough

M.K. Jackson is a Los Angeles-based writer, humorist, and self-described existential fatalist.

Blending sharp satire, profane humor, and unflinching emotion, he writes about mortality, grief, ambition, self-delusion, futility, and failure, usually through the peepholes of analogy, nostalgia, and absurdity.

Jackson has authored countless resumes, several essays, and the book *Aim for the Middle: How to Achieve Happiness, Success, and Love Through the Unbridled Power of Mediocrity*, a ribald takedown of the self-help industrial complex.



The only known photograph of the author (seen on the right).
Original 1970s Polaroid black and white snapshot.



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story ideas that don't require too much effort

1. What If You're Just Not Destined to Be Exceptional?

Self-help rarely acknowledges differences in ability, circumstance, or potential. The book asks what happens when people build their lives around who they actually are.

2. Is All That Effort Actually Paying Off?

We are taught to admire effort without questioning its return. Aim for the Middle asks whether the results we achieve are worth what they cost us.

3. The Cultural Fear of Being Average

Why has "average" become an insult when, statistically, it describes most of us? Jackson examines the pressure to distinguish ourselves in every area of life.

4. When Does Ambition Become a Bad Investment?

More effort does not always produce proportionally better results. The book explores diminishing returns and the point at which striving begins to cost more than it delivers.

5. The Problem with One-Size-Fits-All Self-Help

Advice designed for everyone must ignore the differences between us. Jackson questions universal formulas that promise the same extraordinary outcomes regardless of individual ability or circumstance.

6. Why "Good Enough" Is So Hard to Accept

Knowing when enough is enough requires judgment, not surrender. The book examines why people continue pursuing marginal gains long after the cost has overtaken the reward.

7. Are We Chasing Happiness Too Hard?

The pursuit of happiness can become another demanding project with goals, measurements, and expectations. Aim for the Middle asks whether the chase itself can get in the way of recognizing a good life.

8. Have Unrealistic Expectations Made Love Harder?

The search for ideal partners and exceptional relationships can make perfectly worthwhile ones seem inadequate. The book applies its middle philosophy to romance, compatibility, and expectations.

9. The Self-Help Industrial Complex Needs You to Remain Dissatisfied

An industry built around personal transformation depends on convincing people they are never quite finished. Jackson examines the business of perpetual self-improvement and the promises used to keep consumers coming back.

10. Can Mediocrity Actually Be a Rational Life Strategy?

The book's most provocative argument: accepting limitations and calibrating expectations to actual ability may produce better results than endlessly pursuing excellence.



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discussion topics that're adequate for the purpose

1. The Five Pillars of an Adequate Life

The book presents a framework showing readers how adequacy—in work, health, relationships, personal growth, and emotional maintenance—is not only achievable but blissfully sufficient. It's success on one's own terms.

2. Aspiration Asphyxiation: When Trying Too Hard Starts Choking the Life Out of You

A signature concept from the book. When your goals, dreams, and self-improvement plans require more oxygen than you have available, the result isn't transformation—it's emotional hypoxia.

3. Lowering Your Standards Isn't Giving Up—It's a Sanity-Preservation Strategy

Aim for the Middle reframes “lowering the bar” as an intentional move toward a more humane existence. Most of us don't need to be better—we just need to stop making ourselves miserable in the name of self-improvement.

4. Self-Improvement Is Not Designed for 99% of Us

The self-help industrial complex's one-size-fits-all formulas ignore the fact that people have wildly different capacities, resources, energy levels, and life circumstances. Aim for the Middle argues for a path built on realism, not fantasy.

5. Why Mediocrity—Done Properly—is the Most Compassionate Way to Live

The book's message is not “be lazy.” It's: stop brutalizing yourself with impossible standards. Mediocrity, in Jackson's worldview, is simply the art of living within your limits without apology—and discovering that *good enough* always beats *never enough*.

6. The Effort-to-Reward Equation

How to recognize when additional effort is producing meaningful results—and when you are simply working harder for less.

7. Who Decides What Success Looks Like?

The difference between inherited expectations and a definition of success based on individual ability, circumstances, and priorities.

8. The Trouble with Excellence

How excellence became the default expectation rather than an exceptional outcome—and what that expectation asks of ordinary people.

9. Knowing Your Limitations

Why an honest assessment of ability and potential can be more useful than endlessly being told you can become anything you want.

10. Happiness Without the Treasure Hunt

Why happiness is often treated as something waiting at the end of achievement rather than something that can exist within an ordinary life.

11. Love, Standards & The Search for Better

How expectations of ideal partners and exceptional relationships can prevent people from recognizing the value of imperfect but worthwhile ones.

12. When Enough Is Actually Enough

Why recognizing sufficiency may be one of the hardest judgments to make in a culture built around more.



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q&a with m.k. jackson

Q1: What inspired you to write *Aim for the Middle*?

A: Exhaustion—I hit a point where self-help felt more like an unpaid internship. I wanted a book that told people, “You don’t have to fix your whole life; you just have to stop making it harder.” You aim for the middle, because that’s where the bullseye is. The middle is the sweet spot. It’s accessible, obtainable, comfortable, and reasonable. The middle the perfect place to be.

Q2: What’s the main argument of the book?

A: That excellence is overrated, perfection is over pursued, and mediocrity—done consciously, intentionally, and with purpose—is a saner, kinder, more livable approach to happiness, success, and love. Realized adequacy beats elusive excellence every time.

Q3: Why do you think so many people feel pressured to be exceptional?

A: Because the world is full of people selling us snake oil that promises to make us a genius, an instant millionaire, or a better version of ourselves—complete with boundless energy and no digestive issues. But not everyone is destined for the same level of greatness. And that’s okay.

Q4: You speak rather... *critical* about the self-help industrial complex. What’s wrong with it?

A: It presents a one-size-fits-all solution, when not everyone is the same size. We are not all equally capable of achieving the same high-level results. It tells you if you don’t achieve your goal, the problem is you didn’t focus or work hard enough. But I think the problem is you had the wrong pursuit for your abilities. No matter how hard I work, I know I just don’t have what it takes to be a doctor, so that’s not my pursuit. I always say: I can’t cure cancer, but I can cure a ham. See the difference?

Q5: What do you mean by “Aspiration Asphyxiation”?

A: It’s what happens when your goals demand more oxygen than your life can supply. You’re not inspired—you’re suffocating. The fix isn’t more work, or more time, or more resources; it’s loosening the grip on the dreams that are keeping you down.

Q6: What do you hope readers take away from this book?

A: Relief. Permission. The sense that they’re not broken for being tired. And the understanding that “good enough” isn’t defeat—it’s freedom. In a relentlessly over crafted, exhaustively fine tuned marketing slogan: *A life of realized adequacy is far more fulfilling than one of elusive excellence.*

Q7: Who is this book for?

A: Anyone exhausted by perfectionism, skeptical of the cult of relentless achievement, or just tired of being told to “optimize” things in their life that really can’t be optimized. Also, anyone who suspects that much of what passes for “self-improvement” might benefit from a little more scrutiny—and considerably less effort.

Q8: If someone wants to start “aiming for the middle,” what’s the first step?

A: Start by asking a simple question: Is what I’m putting into this actually commensurate with what I can reasonably expect to get out of it? If not, save your best effort for the things that actually deserve it. Most things, you’ll discover, are perfectly happy with your B-minus work.



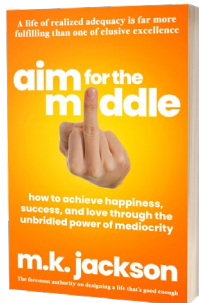
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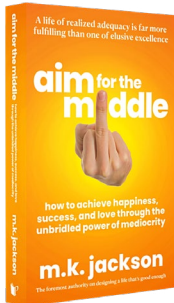
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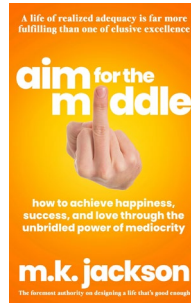
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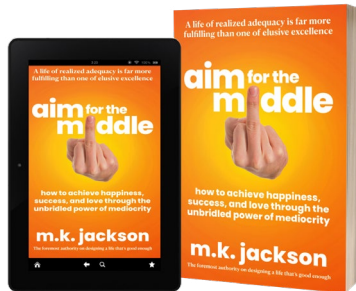
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reader reviews



Hilarious! A crushing indictment of our obsession with overachievement!

In *Aim for the Middle*, Jackson dissects our obsession with overachievement and culture of “if you ain’t first you’re last.” Beautifully described using his own personal life experiences and myriad pop culture references the reader is taken on a journey of personal discovery and left pondering the true meaning of success.

Using a series of simple exercises, the reader is then able to distill the true meaning of happiness and fulfillment. And that is ready to be achieved. In the middle.



Fantastic advice that puts a smile on your face

Too often, self-help books are too self-righteous... That’s why I really enjoy a book that not only tries to help you but also makes you feel better about being mediocre.

Highly recommend to those that struggle with the self-help industrial complex and want to break free from the shackles of excellence.



Why try so hard?

Aim for the Middle is funny and irreverent but also reveals the personal journey that led Jackson to arrive at this somewhat startling premise. I found the book to be very reassuring that I hadn’t wasted my life by failing to achieve the dreams of my youth.

Aim for the Middle shows us that very few of us will ever achieve greatness and that’s perfectly okay.



Skip the Self Help Aisle

For anyone tired of questioning the cards they have been dealt, the length of the stick, or stream in which they are swimming, this guy has a master plan to save you time, effort and grief - and an amazing story.

Tragedy woven with insights and observations - acerbic and hilarious in equal measure - take you on a relatively painless journey to better frame your goals, life and relationships. They are Lessercises, after all.

Thoughtful. Moving. Insightful. Helpful. Hella hilarious. Bonus Pineapple Upside down cake recipe included.



A must-read for anyone looking to break their addiction to self-help books!

Original, honest and at times, laugh-out-loud funny. Engaging and entertaining, Jackson endears himself to the reader by bravely revealing his own personal struggles to find happiness and success while taking us on his hilarious journey of self-realization and acceptance.

This book will make you laugh, it may make you cry, but more importantly it will make you think: maybe Instead of aiming for the stars, we might be better off aiming a little lower in the atmosphere...



Hilarious and helpful!

This book is truly entertaining. I found it very educational and in a very funny, humorous way.

This author knows how to turn a phrase. I enjoyed working through it and finding out more about myself. Definitely a must read!



aim for the middle

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request a review copy

Reviewers, journalists, booksellers, librarians, podcasters, and media professionals may request a complimentary review copy of *Aim for the Middle*.

Thank you for your interest. We appreciate your time, your platform, and your willingness to engage with the book's unconventional relationship with achievement.

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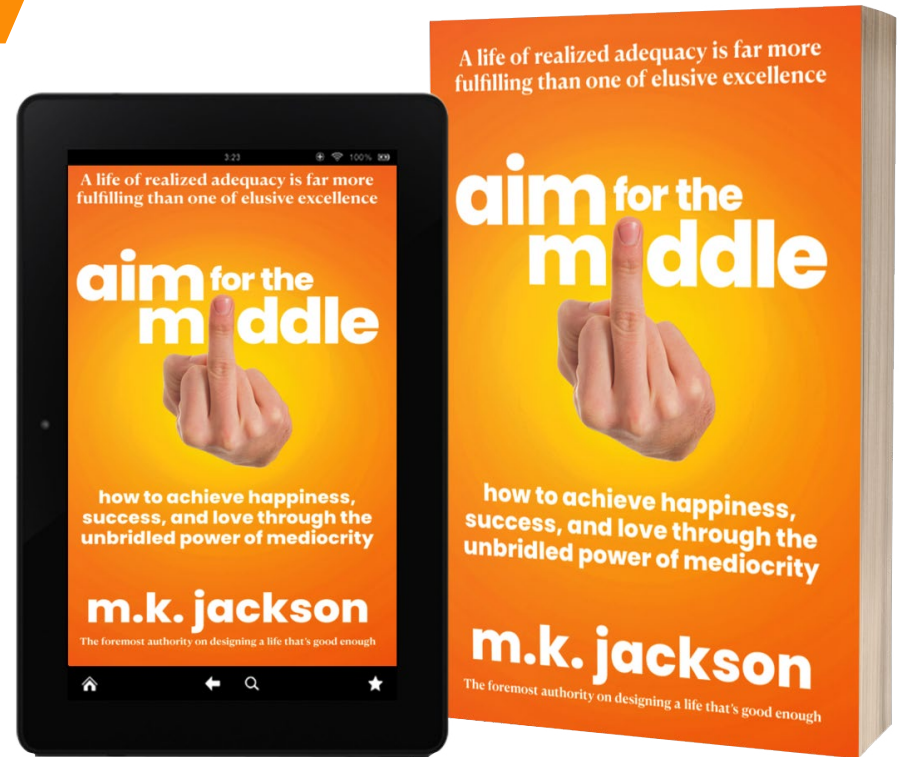
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- 10 to 21 days (international)



**Interviews with M.K. Jackson
arranged upon request.**



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Old School

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M.K. Jackson Newsletter

A brief but impactful read to start off the end of your week with a slang. Chockablock with news and reviews, updates and excuses, insights and delights.

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