... been less fearful of change, and lived more boldly.

... laughed more, and didn’t take themselves so seriously.

... taken the chance to say -

I love you one more time.
IMPORTANT BECAUSE

THE REGRETS OF THE DYING PROVIDE CRITICAL INSIGHT FOR OUR FUTURE.

To influence technology and AI moving forward, we need to understand how humans experience meaning in life.
Leaders are looking to instill higher purpose in their organizations. 90 percent of executives declared purpose is critical for their company. Yet fewer than half the executives surveyed said their organization actually operates in a purpose-driven way from day-to-day and only 28% of employees fully understand their company’s purpose.
Trust in our businesses, media, government and NGOs is at an all-time low, and the average level of trust in all these institutions combined was below 50%.

55% of CEOs across industries have expressed concern about the lack of trust in their business. In one study, 45% of employees indicated a lack of trust in leadership was the biggest problem affecting work performance.
“I try to live my life where I end up at a point where I have no regrets. So I try to choose the road that I have the most passion on because then you can never really blame yourself for making the wrong choices. You can always say you're following your passion.”

DARREN ARONFOSKY

“We spend so much time being afraid of failure, afraid of rejection. But regret is the thing we should fear most.”

TREVOR NOAH
BOLDNESS

PEOPLE WISHED THEY WERE LESS FEARFUL OF CHANGE, AND WERE BOLDER.

“If it doesn’t scare you, you’re probably not dreaming big enough.”

TORY BURCH
People believe they have changed in the past, but don’t forecast change in the future.

CHANGE IS OFTEN PAINFUL TO IMAGINE, YET ADDS MEANING TO LIFE AND FUELS FORWARD SUCCESS.

In a culture that values happiness and feeling good, overcoming fear (of change) is challenging.
“We all get no every day. If I took no and went home and didn’t try again, I wouldn’t be sitting here today, I wouldn’t have all of the things that I’ve done.”

Desiree Gruber

“It is possible to experience an awakening in this life through realizing just how precious each moment, each mental process, and each breath truly is.”

Christy Turlington Burns
(ONE) SOLUTION:
Awe to be more bold: awe alters how we understand the world.
“We undoubtedly have a role to play in addressing the challenges of the modern food system, from climate change and resource scarcity, to packaging waste and income inequality.”

RAMON LAGUARTA

“We know that if we stop being creative and innovative, it’s all over—even for the powerful fashion houses that have been here for years—because, in a way, we are in the business of creating happiness.”

PIERRE-YVES ROUSSEL
Awe,
a feeling of reverence that
overwhelms you, all
encompassing.

Individuals who experience
daue are...

less impatient
more willing to volunteer
less materialistic
And experienced greater life satisfaction

Awe expands people’s
perceptions of time and
anchors people to the
present.
You feel awe when you lose yourself in a piece of art, a film, stars, music.

Your sense of self is small; your world is vast; you are filled with beauty. But it can be negative too: terrible beauty.

Mystical experiences lead to increases in the personality domain of openness.

Awe is associated with unique facial features- widened eyes, lifted eyebrows, often an audible inhale.

Awe opens you up and resets you, shifting your awareness away from the day-to-day and altering how you understand the world. Two appraisals drive this: perceived vastness, and a need for accommodation.

Physical changes in space can evoke awe.
HUMOR
People wish they let themselves laugh more, and didn’t take themselves so seriously.

“A bird in the hand is worth plucking, frying, and sticking between two bits of bread.”

ED BURNS
People hold the false belief that humor is in opposition to serious. If we take our work and our mission seriously, the presence of laughter and lightness betray that mission. Perhaps because of this, people fall off a “humor cliff” when they enter the workforce, according to a global study of 1.4 million people.

In reality, humor is a superpower in business (and life).

*(One) Solution:* Be more generous with laughter.
Humor makes us more powerful and get (more of) what we want.

Humor makes others view us as more confident, competent, and higher in status.

In a negotiation simulation, the use of humor by the “seller” resulted in an 18% higher willingness to pay, as well as increased enjoyment of the interaction.

Laughter sparks trust, helps us connect more meaningfully with others, and solidifies relationships over time.

The implications of this trust boost are significant in a time when 58% of employees would rather trust a stranger than their boss.
Humor makes teams more creative and effective in good times, and more resilient in hard times.

Teams that use humor have better communication, problem-solving, and performance. Even just the anticipation of laughing makes people more creative and resilient by decreasing stress hormones.

HUMOR UNLEASHES MORE LEVITY IN THE WORLD. IT MAKES US MORE HUMAN AND INTERCONNECTED.
Perhaps most of all, people wish they had taken the chance to say - I love you - one more time.

People believe that love is scarce, a sentiment, limited in definition.
“People don’t really talk about falling in love anymore. And yet falling in love is the great engine that drives all the best art – or falling out of love or being heartbroken – drives all the best books, drives all the best music, and yet we’ve sort of stopped talking about it.”

Joanna Coles

“I seek, see and express love everywhere.”

Natalia Brzezinski
(One) Solution: Operationalize love, or feeling valued.

Love, operationalized as feeling valued and aligned with higher purpose, associated with concrete benefits.

Studies show breathing meditation can impact meaning of happiness, as well as the choices we make.

Meditation impacts prosocial emotions and behaviors.
“Art to me is a humanitarian act and I believe that there is a responsibility that art should somehow be able to affect mankind, to make the world a better place.”

JEFF KOONS

"You never know where you’ll encounter love."

LESLIE BLODGETT
In Closing...

In times like these, we need leaders to bring more humanity to their work.

When we have more boldness, humor, and love in our lives, that seeps into our business.

The companies and leaders who do this will re-define purpose of their organizations.

And the individuals who do, will cultivate more meaning in their lives.

So their lives will be lived with fewer regrets.

Do one thing that evokes awe. Laugh more generously. End on love.
with love,

JENNIFER AAKER
General Atlantic Professor at Stanford
jaaker@stanford.edu

COURSES
DESIGNING AI TO CULTIVATE HUMAN WELLBEING
RETHINKING PURPOSE
HUMOR: SERIOUS BUSINESS

BOOKS
THE DRAGONFLY EFFECT
HUMOR, SERIOUSLY (SEPT 2020 RELEASE)
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