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Salvia (sage) 'Hot Lips' in the Garden, Douglas E. Welch

For the weekend...

from Douglas E. Welch

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Issue #15: March 18, 2022

Contents:

- Essay: One million reasons to say no, but one reason to say yes
 - Video: Where do math symbols come from?
 - The books you need for your 2022 New Year's Resolutions
 - Snowball Fights in Art (1400–1946)
 - For Enslaved Cooks, Persimmon Beer Combined Ingenuity and Joy
 - Book: Honour and the Sword: The Culture of Duelling
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Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have been running a Discord community for friends and family.

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Photo by Michèle Eckert on Unsplash

One million reasons to say no, but one reason to say yes

When you were trying to develop a new idea or develop, an interesting solution to a problem, a new product, or just trying to make people's lives a little bit better, there is one large roadblock that always gets in the way. Those million reasons to say no.

It is human nature that everyone, yourself included, will immediately develop a million different reasons, why your idea will not work. This is easy, as there are often many roadblocks to solving a problem. You can attack the idea from any number of directions. You can talk about the cost. You can talk about the lack of technology. You can talk about the vagaries of human nature. You can talk about the problems with legislation. Over and over and over. There will always be more than one million reasons to say "no" to the next great idea, the next great solution.

When I am having a discussion like this I try to turn the conversation around. Collectively we all know about these million reasons to say "no". Most of them are very obvious and there are so many of them. What I ask them to do instead, is look for the one reason to say "yes" to the idea. The one reason the idea will work. The one reason the idea must be one. The one reason that will make it all happen.

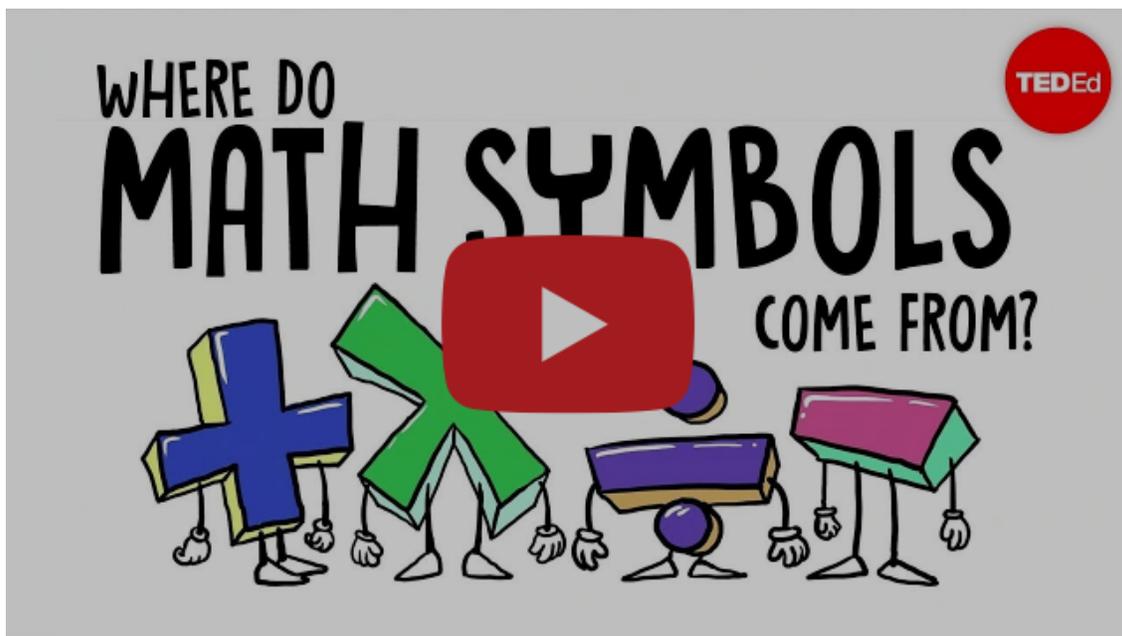
Changing the direction of your conversation about any new idea can go a long way towards developing newer, faster, better, stronger, ideas. Sometimes we have to set aside our desire to be smart and point out all the flaws with the particular idea. It's low-hanging fruit and easy to do. Developing the one reason to say "yes" is difficult work often fraught with frustration and failure, but it can be extremely rewarding if you work through it.

You might think starting with all the reasons "no" might be useful. You can address each one in turn. Showing how you can circumvent, overcome, or go around it. The trouble is, of course, that the number of reasons to say "no" it's always almost infinite. You could talk about them forever. You need to dismiss these "no" reasons immediately upfront and start looking for a reason, one reason, that makes you say "yes". Otherwise, it is too easy to wallow around in the no-zone and never accomplish anything.

Remember, your goal is to make something great. Focusing on all the reasons you can't do it is self-defeating. You are giving up before you even get started. In the name of being a realist, you doom yourself to the oppressive status quo that is so easy to maintain. Doing nothing is always easier than doing something, but it is often infinitely more destructive. It allows problems to fester and grow while we "piddle, twiddle, and resolve" as John Adams sings in 1776. It gives us the illusion of doing something when, in fact, we are doing worse than nothing at all.

The next time you were involved in a project or trying to come up with your next great idea, think about the "yes." Think about the best reason to create this idea even if the problems seem insurmountable. Sometimes they will be, but we are always at our best when we seek the best solutions even in the face of one million reasons to say no.

Video



TIM HARFORD

Articles ·

The books you need for your 2022 New Year's Resolutions

27th December, 2021

The books you need for your 2022 New Year's Resolutions

via Tim Harford

The self-help genre gets a bad press, and not without reason, but there are a few self-help books that I've read, enjoyed, and felt wiser as a result.

The Tao of Pooh by Benjamin Hoff. I found this wise, witty little book served as a touchstone throughout my years as a student. "You'd be surprised how many people violate this simple principle every day of their lives and try to fit square pegs into round holes, ignoring the clear reality that Things Are As They Are."

TED Talks by Chris Anderson is the best book on public speaking I've ever read, and I've read a lot of books on public speaking. While I admire what Chris has done with TED, I expected to disagree with a lot of his advice. Nope; he won me over.

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Snowball Fights in Art (1400–1946)

via The Public Domain Review



Few seasonal activities are as universal — across time, place, or culture — as the snowball fight. As many of us head into the cold, winter months, hoping for a holiday season with frosted trees or icicles dripping like stalactites from the eaves of homes, we might also long for that slightly slushy grade of powder that makes for perfect packing. Snowmen and angels can be created later. And perhaps there will be sledding: on toboggans (for connoisseurs) or cafeteria trays (for the crafty). Yet nothing signals the year's first snowfall quite like an apple-sized projectile cutting a parabolic path — through crisp evening air, the haloed light of streetlamps, and exhalations of foggy, illuminated breath — to make direct contact with an unsuspecting hat or coat.

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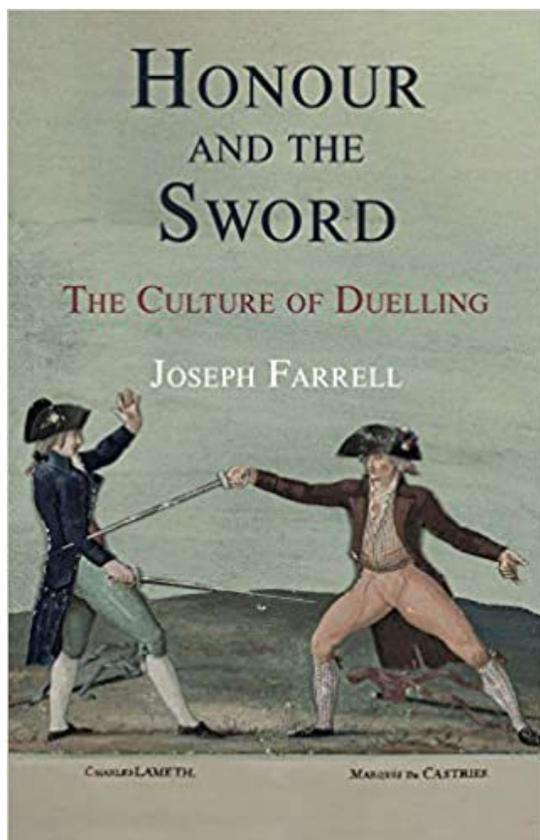
For Enslaved Cooks, Persimmon Beer Combined Ingenuity and Joy.

from Atlas Obscura

MICHAEL TWITTY, THE JAMES BEARD Award-winning culinary historian, estimates he has brewed his grandmother's persimmon beer about a dozen times. Made by fermenting *Diospyros virginiana*, the diminutive North American persimmon, with sugar, honey, and yeast, persimmon beer is more akin to fruit wine or liqueur than anything brewed with barley, malt, and hops. Twitty continues to make his family recipe for its sweet-tart flavor and striking amber hue imbued by red pine straw. More than anything, though, he continues the tradition of fermenting this gently boozy elixir because of its deep ties to Black American history and its power to start conversations.



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Honour and the Sword: The Culture of Duelling

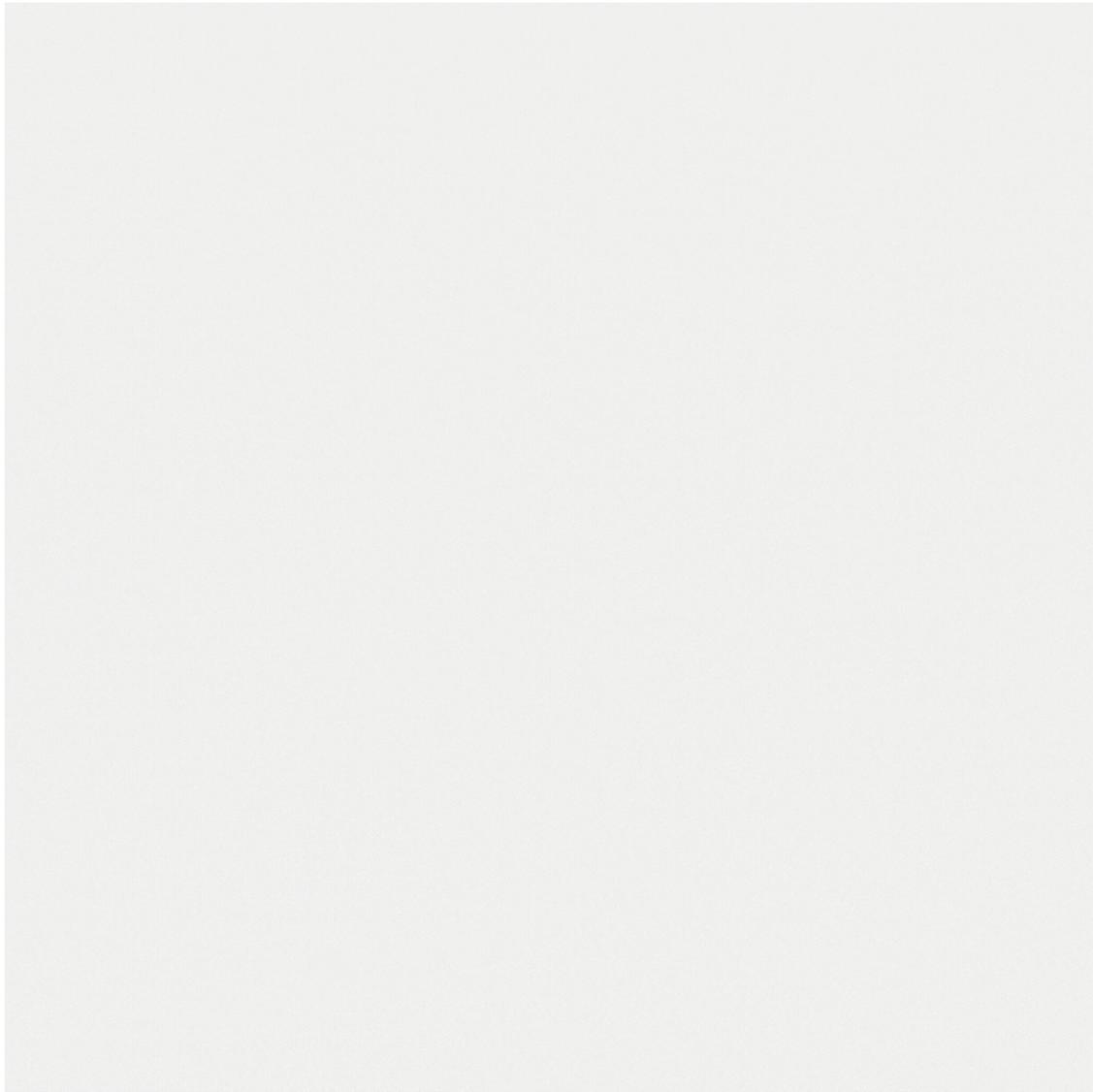
by Joseph Farrell

The popularity of the musical, *Hamilton*, featuring the death of Alexander Hamilton in a duel with Aaron Burr, then Vice President of the United States, has revived interest in duelling, but also aroused incredulity that such events could ever have occurred. Where did the custom originate, and why did it spread so quickly all over Europe and the Americas? Duelling was once commonplace. Prime ministers and poets, artists and journalists, and even some ladies went out to the 'field of honour'. Casanova fought with a Polish nobleman in Warsaw, the Duke of Wellington duelled with an English earl in Hyde Park and the Russian poet Pushkin died in a duel in St Petersburg. There were many enigmas associated with the phenomenon. As well as displaying skills with the sword or the pistol, a duellist had to silence problems of conscience. Could duelling be squared with the commandment against killing one's neighbour? Did the fact that both parties

were inspired by a gentlemanly code of Honour make the duel superior to a vulgar brawl? The moral justification of duelling intrigued thinkers and intellectuals. Dr Johnson returned to the issue several times, while Rousseau was baffled by the question. Duels added drama to mediocre novels or plays, but featured in the theatre of Shakespeare and later in the work of such masters as Walter Scott, Conrad, Chekhov and Pirandello. Duelling has been too long regarded as an embarrassing sideline in western culture, but for centuries it was an integral part of history. Joseph Farrell attempts to clarify what the duel actually was and why men ever behaved that way. Exploring the social and cultural forces that encouraged what now seems an extraordinary anachronism, he traces the international evolution of the duel - and its many representations in literature and art - from Renaissance Italy to the whole of Europe, including Britain, and onto the US.

[Read a review in the London Review of Books](#)

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