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WHY IS GETTING THE PERFECT RATIO OF MILK TO CEREAL SO IMPORTANT?

NEIL PASRICHA GIVES US THE ANSWER.

I'm talking to Neil Pasricha on a very awesome morning. It's sunny, I just had a successful walk with my puppy, and Pasricha's bestselling *The Book of Awesome* just hit new international markets. When asked if he ever foresaw his success, Pasricha laughs and replies, "No, not at all," and launches into the story of how a simple idea turned into a global inspiration.

In 2008, Pasricha began a daily blog that counts down awesome things. From building a stack of pancakes that looks like the picture on the box to babies falling asleep on you, 1000awesomethings.com is a warm reminder that there is good in the world. Two years ago, there was a definite absence of positive in Pasricha's life. As his marriage floundered, and his best friend committed suicide, Pasricha felt mired in his own depression. "I was in a bad place. My head was filled with negative thoughts so I started to write to feel better."

As it turned out, his mindset that "it's the small things that matter" resonated strongly with people everywhere. Joking about his traffic doubling when his Mom forwarded the link to his Dad, Pasricha's blog quickly got picked up by social media sites like Digg and now attracts 40,000 hits a day. Despite winning two Webby awards and a book deal, the greatest thing about Pasricha's achievement is the fact that Awesome Things has become a shared community. Reading through his fan mail, the real success is Awesome Things' ability to connect people through the universality of optimism. One reader forwards a photo of his home-made *Book of Awesome* ice cream sandwich to mark the awesomeness of a "sinful dessert", while another inspires with her journey to regain independence after a brain tumour removal surgery.

Although Pasricha maintains creative control, he downplays his role as a Happiness Guru. "I'm flattered and lucky, but adamant that this won't change my life - I still drive a Pontiac and work in the suburbs." Pasricha loves that people send in photos and letters, but is quick to note that "it's not about the book, it's not about me. People do this because they hit this point where they realize that life is about the small things, and that they aren't dependent on external pleasures anymore."

So, what exactly is "awesome?" For starters, a positive attitude can make all the difference, as Pasricha is all too aware, especially for those struggling with inner demons. *Awesome Things* is by no means a how-to manual for happiness nor are all the entries particularly profound in a traditional sense, yet they remind us to remain mindful of the small things that make each day special. On being positive, Pasricha says, "you're not taught it; it's already a part of you." Being

aware of life's awesomeness simply means "embracing your inner three year old—because they see the world with wonder, for the first time."

A Toronto resident, Pasricha brings awesome back home. "I love Toronto; it's a fantastic city." He continues, remarking that "we all won a lottery to live here. We're so rich in a cultural sense; it's great knowing I can talk to a taxi driver from Lahore and then meet my friend from Australia for a drink." And speaking about the diversity of Toronto's neighbourhoods, Pasricha appreciates the beauty of "everyone loving the other neighbourhood for what it offers just as much as their own."

Pasricha's buoyant voice asks after my puppy as we sign off, and I relate tales of chasing squirrels, burying noses in flowers, and stomping in puddles. Sharing the small stuff with a rambunctious puppy? That's awesome.