

How to Live Forever and Get Rich Doing It | The New Yorker

By [Tad Friend](#) August 4, 2025

At the Abundance conference, Diamandis's audience seemed receptive to his reminders that "the two biggest wealth-creation opportunities are A.I. and longevity." Part of his appeal is his insistence that extending your own life and growing richer in the process will ultimately benefit the species. He conceived of an "accredited-patient program," an F.D.A.-backed system that would allow select people to invest in treatments unavailable to the general public. "My basic idea is I have enough money, and I'm of sound mind—I'm gonna try it!" He contends that the longevity-pursuing risk-takers he lives among are actually selfless. "Any negative effects from technologies that don't work will be experienced by the wealthy," he said. "You could see it as their sacrifice for others—both financial and, eventually, biological."

Joe Polish, who helped launch A360, told me that its audience found Diamandis's optimism reassuring, but that "what actually drives the Abundance events is scarcity and fear of missing out: *I'm going to be left behind by A.I. or robotics or the fountain of youth*. Even the super-wealthy people there are scared shitless and trying to buy their stairway to Heaven. And nearly all of them are deathly afraid of death."

Most of us just want to remain in decent health and last a bit longer than the actuaries predict. The implications of extreme longevity—of a transhuman future in which we have four careers, six replacement kidneys, and eleven spouses on pods orbiting Mars—are too much for us to absorb. But Diamandis is ready for it all. Dan Sullivan, who co-hosts a podcast with Diamandis called "Exponential Wisdom,"

said, "Peter really believes that immortality is a reality. I told him, 'Living to one hundred and fifty-six seems reasonable, but living to seven hundred? I don't know, Peter—I think you're going to get lonely.' "

Our awareness of death has an upside: it imbues our lives with beauty and meaning. Immortality would redefine the nature of both empathy and morality, because it would strip us of a common fate. I once asked Diamandis about the oppressive consequences if a deathless Jeff Bezos amassed seventy trillion dollars, or if a Vladimir Putin stayed in power for a century. "Another way to look at that scenario is 'What are the *benefits*?' " he responded. "Having some visionary single decision-maker allows you to be Queen Isabella funding Columbus. I fantasize about well-meaning wealthy leaders guiding humanity with pure intent, giving top scientists the capital to take tenfold actions." Then he grinned, aware from his own fund-raising how fantastical that fantasy was.

Cartoon by Greg Nussbaum

Bob Richards, a close friend of Diamandis's, told me, "Peter believes that technology will lead us to be kind to each other, to be explorers and artists, not militaristic and greedy and self-serving, the way we are now. But just living forever is not going to change that."

Diamandis told me that our hardwired inclinations toward selfishness did trouble him sometimes, in the middle of the night. He added, softly, "I am hopeful that when there is no scarcity, the better angels of our nature will prevail."

Nearly every longevity advocate believes at least two things that can't yet be proved: we will soon discover the secret to eternal life, and we will be better off once we do. Bryan Johnson, like many others, maintains that A.I. is on the verge of unlocking the medical obstacles to immortality. But, he acknowledged, "I don't think that anyone knows" exactly how it will do so. Faith without proof is a

religious outlook, and Johnson announced earlier this year that a religion is what his Don't Die movement would become. "The words 'community,' 'ethical framework,' 'philosophy'—humans won't devote their whole identity to them," he told me. "Religion, for better or worse, is a framework that has motivated people to do phenomenal things."

Diamandis bristles at this idea, worrying that framing the quest as a religion will "discredit longevity in people's minds." Yet he knows that his own prognostications are impervious to fact checking. "Some people tell me, 'Well, you've created a religion around abundance,' " he said. "And there are elements of faith in that mind-set." During A360, Diamandis interviewed his own avatar, which had supposedly time-travelled back from 2082. The avatar, which resembled a young Rafael Nadal, reported that the Singularity took place on schedule and that artificial intelligence "essentially solved all material-scarcity problems," so that "the jobless became the free, living better than 2025's billionaires."

Implicit in this narrative is the belief that technocrats aren't hogging resources for vanity projects; they're fixing the world. One *XPrize* Healthspan donor, Daniel Krizek, a biotech-fund manager who plans to invest a billion dollars in longevity, espouses the values of effective altruism. That principle, popular in Silicon Valley, holds that philanthropists should save the most lives they can, including the billions of future lives that might be enabled by a particular action. "You could put a trillion dollars into Africa and feed the continent forever," Krizek told me, "but I believe it's better to spend the trillion on going to space, because all the scientific advances that come from that will save many more lives in the future." Bryan Johnson's movement aligns with this belief: his ultimate goal is "species maximization—trying to get life in this part of the galaxy to flourish."

Unlike some of his peers, Diamandis is eager to save current lives on

Earth as well as future lives in space. He told me, "I think there is a single tide that floats all boats. A.I. will feed the hungry, solve the climate crisis, *and* get us to space."

At seventy-seven, Ray Kurzweil takes eighty supplements a day, has an artificial pancreas to manage his diabetes, and appears to be in great shape. As he waits for technology to tide humanity onward, he is bewildered that some people have other plans. He used to have lunch with the economist Daniel Kahneman, who won a Nobel for his work on how irrational factors cloud our decisions. Over lunch in late 2023, when Kahneman was eighty-nine but in decent health, they debated the wisdom of extending your life. "We're at a point where problems can be reversed," Kurzweil said. "Your kidneys are failing? Well, so what? It could be solved next week." Kurzweil told me that Kahneman wasn't persuaded. "He said, 'Look at history! Billions of people have lived, lost most of their capabilities, and then died! Nobody's escaped that!' " Three months later, Kahneman wrote to his family and friends that he had decided to die by assisted suicide: "I have believed since I was a teen-ager that the miseries and indignities of the last years of life are superfluous, and I am acting on that belief." Kurzweil sighed, recalling the loss. "People really don't want to be nonfunctional. But it's *death* that's the tragedy. Death is the loss of information, beauty, love—everything we know!"

For many biohackers, the ultimate goal is simply the preservation of their own consciousness. One constraint on retaining information forever is that our neurons mostly don't replicate themselves; they just shrink, deteriorate, and die. But Kurzweil has a fix for that, too. Decades back, he predicted that we'd soon be able to scan and copy our connectome—the intricate web of a hundred billion neurons that constitutes the human brain.

At A360, a nanotechnologist named Michael Andregg declared that Kurzweil's prophesy was all but realized. Andregg co-founded a

startup called Eon Systems. His hypothesis is that, because consciousness arises from bioelectric signals, you'll be able to turn your digital brain on in the cloud and experience a thoroughly satisfying life up there (or out there, or wherever), because A.I. will predict your neuron's next signal: brain autocomplete. He showed an emulated fruit fly whose connectome had been copied to a Kinko's level of fidelity. It skittered around onscreen, in a somewhat staccato fashion, and it knew enough to groom itself and to avoid bitter tastes (though how there could be bitter tastes in the digital realm was never explained).

Andregg said that the human connectome was only a million times more complex than a fruit fly's, so all we have to do is model our brains' structure and activity and, voilà, emulation. We could be scanned and wake up in a digital body by 2030. "This is a whole new body, a whole new brain—this is transcendence!"

No one can fully emulate a *C. elegans* worm yet, despite fourteen years of trying; the best program can't even make the worm move backward. Yet Andregg told me that the difficulties he foresaw were chiefly psychological: "The first person to do the upload, it will be destructive. We pause you, lock down all your proteins, and slice your brain with a big deli slicer—but much finer, at the hundred-micron level." Nonetheless, he said, "We have at least ten volunteers who want to be the first to do it. Well, the second."

When I asked Diamandis about the plausibility of whole-brain emulation, he pointed out that Andregg was featured in the "Moonshots" part of his program. He was ambivalent about eventually uploading his own connectome: "Destroying myself to upload feels like suicide. And if I'm somehow still here after the upload, destroying myself because my peer in the cloud says, 'I'm good, you can kill yourself'—I'm not sure I'm ready for that." Uncharacteristically, he acknowledged having qualms about

Kurzweil's nanobots, too, particularly if they cross the blood-brain barrier. "I'd *probably* do nanotechnology," he said. "But it begins to enter a reengineering of the brain, and of our personas. You have to ask, 'At what point do we stop being human?' "

In May, at an auditorium near Gramercy Park, in Manhattan, *XPrize* Healthspan introduced the hundred semifinalists who'd advanced from the more than six hundred teams that signed up. Before the ceremony, in a conference room upstairs, Diamandis and Jamie Justice gave thirty investors a preview of the competition and urged them to fund teams that fired their imaginations.

"We aren't just going to slow aging," Justice said, "but to improve function in just one year."

Diamandis clarified: "Effectively a functional reversal. I want to get the word 'reversal' in there."

Downstairs, he welcomed a standing-room-only crowd by asking, "Who wants an extra twenty years of healthy life?" Everyone, pretty much. "Who wants more than that?" Woo! He went on, as if the prize had already been won, "That twenty years will be the bridge to the next twenty years, and that twenty years will be the bridge to the twenty years after that!"

The semifinalists, from more than thirty countries, were pursuing an extraordinary array of approaches, including A.I.-based short-chain fatty-acid modulation; extracellular vesicles derived from cow plasma; ultrasound to target senescent cells; kidney-strengthening tinctures; olfactory enhancement with forty odors, including eucalyptus and lavender; coffee that targets the mitochondria with exogenous ketones; and a longevity village called FuturVille, where the health practitioners are holograms. Perhaps because the testing period doesn't begin until 2026, the room shimmered with the optimism of a hundred as yet undisproved hypotheses.

Aubrey de Grey was present, delighted that the competition he'd suggested nearly twenty years earlier was robustly under way. And yet, he told me, the tests for strength, cognition, and immune function that will determine a winner "are unlikely to be sufficiently spanning of all the pathways of aging that they would increase life span. For life span, every pathway has to be delayed. If you delay changes in ninety per cent of the pathways, you're still going to die—and probably right on schedule."

Even many of Diamandis's close friends don't quite believe that we'll reach longevity escape velocity anytime soon. Dave Blundin, his partner in an A.I. venture fund, told me, "When you're Peter's age, you're right on the longevity cusp. That's the tragedy of the whole Peter story—he could live forever, or he could miss by a year and not live any longer at all. It'll be close."

When I asked Diamandis about his friend's observation, he looked stricken, as if Blundin were consigning him to an early grave. "I acknowledge that a lot of the initial research hasn't panned out, that rapamycin, caloric restriction, *NAD+* are individual pebbles dropped in an ocean of biochemical complexity," he said. "We don't really understand the biology of aging yet." He fell silent, running projections. "If we're not able to move the needle so everyone gets twenty to thirty more healthy years in the next twenty-five years, I'd consider that a failure."

Then he brightened: "That's about the buffer in years that I'm going to need to get to the moon." He mentioned one more seminal book, Robert Heinlein's sci-fi collection "The Man Who Sold the Moon." The man in question, D. D. Harriman, longs to go to the moon, but his vision and salesmanship are so vital to the moon-colonization program that his colleagues maneuver to keep him on Earth. "Anyway," Diamandis explained, "Harriman finally sneaks up to the moon on an illegal flight and dies there." He laughed. "I don't want to

die on the moon, exactly. But I'd love to start a city there, a base we could mine asteroids from! The last time something like this happened is when the lungfish crawled out of the ocean onto land." Diamandis looked off, somewhere between ahead and above. "The equation of humanity moving into the cosmos is complicated," he admitted. He knew that it might not happen, or be optimal for all of us if it did. "But it still gives me permission to dream." ♦