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Harsh **21** Life Secrets

No One
Ever Told You

A person's hands are shown holding a single, glowing puzzle piece. The puzzle piece is white and emits a bright blue light, making it stand out against the dark background. The person's hands are also slightly illuminated by this light. The background is dark and out of focus, showing the silhouette of a person's torso and arms.

Blaz Kos

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Blaz Kos



I am on a life mission **to make the world a more organized, innovative and transcendent place** to be by helping individuals, organizations and communities achieve their peak potential and an entirely new level of performance.

I have helped many individuals, companies and organizations create, deliver and capture real value by becoming lean and agile.

I am obsessively passionate about **hi-tech start-ups, mass media, personal development and making the world a better place**. I have spent the past ten years of my career developing the start-up, entrepreneurship and venture capital ecosystem in Slovenia and Eastern Europe. Here are some highlights from my previous work with startups and startup ecosystems:

- Helped to establish the university incubator (600 m²) at the biggest university in Slovenia
- Established the first and biggest angel network in Slovenia with 40+ investors and 12+ investments
- Helped establish the first business angel network in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia
- Was an investment manager at a 6,000,000 € seed VC fund
- Advised the Slovenian government on business and start-up environment development
- Was in the management board of the biggest technology park in Slovenia – 66,000 m²
- Established the first franchised co-working space at 7 locations in Slovenia – 7 x 200 m²
- Running my own consulting company Venturelab Ltd.
- Co-organizing one of the biggest two day CEE conferences for entrepreneurs, PODIM
- Established and running two start-up accelerators with a 4,800,000 € public-private fund – Start:up Geek House and Go:Global Slovenia
- Author of the Agile and Lean Life Blog / ALL Movement

Over the past 10 years **I have lectured at more than 600 events across the Central and Eastern Europe and mentored over 300 start-ups**. My lectures used to be on traditional business topic like business planning, financial forecasting, analyzing the market, raising funds etc., but today I lecture mainly about new techniques such as lean and agile startup and how these techniques can be used in our lives as a personal development and productivity enhancement strategy.

By organizing the big regional conference PODIM, **I got the chance to get to know “lean start-up” authorities** such as Ash Maurya, Robert Fitzpatrick, Gregory Bernarda and others. Besides the PODIM conference, there are many other cool events I helped organize; events like Startup Weekend, mini Seedcamp, Wayra CEE tour and so on.

Besides hi-tech start-ups I am also a personal development enthusiast. I was born in a broken-up family without any help, and the only way to a brighter future was for me to begin developing my skills and competences with no mercy, including changing my inherited mindset and attitude towards life.

I have a long way to go, but I am still very passionate about helping others achieve their personal and professional goals. I have no difficulty with sharing my struggles and what I have learnt along the way, with no deceitfulness/and taboos. Thus **I can add around 100 workshops and a few hundred consultations to totally different people on personal development topics** like career planning, time management, goal setting etc.

As a part of my social responsibility, I had initiated and **co-founded a network of 150 most talented and socially proactive representatives of Generation Y** (the Ypsilon Institute), with a mission to give as many opportunities to young people as possible.

My consulting clients at Venturelab Ltd. are: Educational institutes, such as universities and research institutes, start-up companies, small and medium enterprises, investors, governments, chambers of commerce, sometimes big companies and individuals who need help with achieving their goals.

In my everyday life, I am a productivity freak, always working on two monitors. I cannot imagine my life without technology, gadgets and creating new cool products and services. I feel at home in Zen Buddhism, but find it incredibly difficult to practice as I am drawn to extremes. **Therefore I prefer to spend all my free time thinking, analyzing, creating, innovating or hiking high up in the mountains.** I don't like watching TV, shopping, small talk, parties and any kind of clutter. I can't stand hypocrisy, unfairness, violence and exploitation. I believe that what is happening to us in life and where we are is just a mere reflection of our inner world.

To read more of my blog posts visit:

www.AgileLeanLife.com

Foreword

As a kid, **I thought that most adults have figured out how to live and manage life. I was dead wrong.** Unfortunately, most people only have a vague idea of how the world works – and to be fair, it's not an easy subject to face or understand, neither emotionally nor logically. On top of that, the educational system leaves out all the important topics and practical questions about life. *You learn that mitochondria are the powerhouse of the cell, but you don't learn how to optimize taxes or build quality relationships.* If you aren't super lucky for having highly (not necessarily formally) educated parents who have healthy life foundations and pass them on to you, you're on your own.

As a consequence, most people don't acquire knowledge for successfully managing life or take any necessary responsibility, but rather only try to get by, and when life situations get difficult, they usually buy themselves new things with new debt to ease the pain or resort to addictions, hoping that problems will just go away; but **if you ignore problems, they only grow bigger until you get trapped without an exit.** A few wrong steps and you're stuck in a money rat race (sometimes even rat rape) or an emotional cage, feeling sorry for yourself for the rest of your life.

If you don't understand how the world works, the kind of changes and paradigms we're expecting in the future, and **if you make a few big wrong decisions** (spouse, industry you work in etc.) **or a series of small wrong decisions in life** (everyday diet, harmful habits like smoking or drinking etc.), **you can find yourself in the land of the living dead very quickly.** You become a zombie. You exist, but you don't live. You're trapped. It can be only one of the life areas that you don't pay enough attention, be it wealth, health, relationships, emotions, career, competences and maybe even spirituality, and you start turning into a zombie; step by step, without even being aware of it.

The purpose of this eBook is to expose a few harsh life secrets that probably no one ever told you. **If you're asking yourself why no one ever really told you about all the hard things, it's simple: because the truth hurts; the truth is a luxury.** If you're soft and naïve by nature, it hurts that much more. Life isn't easy and to survive more easily, we embellish many things, telling ourselves big lies or distorting reality. Many lies are also necessary so that the public system and civilization work. At first, it may hurt to hear about a few aspects of the hard truths, but it's important that you embrace them, because understanding how life really works will help you make much better decisions about your future. You can actually avoid becoming a zombie.

And I don't want to sound too pessimistic or harsh. Life can be beautiful. The world has so much to offer. You have so much to offer to the world. **But if you want to live an extraordinary life, you need an extraordinary kind of thinking.** If you choose the average path, the path that the society pressures you into, you get an average life. Life in a can that the society has squeezed you into, killing all your true dreams and hopes, pushing you into average. Because average is safe: somehow safe for you, even if you aren't happy, safe for the society and safe for other people in your life, because as an average, you don't remind them that there's much more to achieve in life.

But who wants to have average payment, average health or average sex? Average sucks. Even if we go from average to good, it more or less sucks and is preventing you from reaching great. Good is an enemy of great. There are no two words in the English language more harmful than "good job", because you want to do an extraordinary job, an outstanding job, especially when living and managing your life; and you have to do it right the first time, because you don't have a second chance.

In order to take the right path, you first have to embrace a few hard life truths. Once you do that, you can start building strong life foundations by acquiring knowledge, with fast personal development, constant improvement and by experimenting with what fits you best in life in different areas. **If you want to live an extraordinary life, you have to choose the hard road. But with time, the hard road becomes easy and the easy road becomes hard.** You reap what you sow. Good luck!

Did the word zombie catch your eye? Find out more about why you don't want to become a zombie at <http://agileleanlife.com/zombie-life/>



Here are the 21 harsh life secrets no one ever told you:

1. Sorry, but you've been lied to
2. It takes a lot to achieve anything remarkable, but it's worth it
3. The media world is distorting your picture of reality and making you feel bad
4. Your job is not to do remarkable things, but to do everyday things remarkable
5. Still you should focus and become remarkable in one thing
6. Your starting point matters very much, so compete only with yourself
7. Your environment matters a lot, so choose carefully
8. Don't take given things for granted
9. If you don't know what you want, life will kick you around
10. Now that you know, it can only be your fault, so take full responsibility
11. You have power to choose in every single situation in life
12. Success and happiness are two totally different things
13. Nobody cares
14. But haters gonna hate
15. The world has changed so much and it will change even more, so prepare yourself
16. Being good doesn't mean life will spare you problems
17. We can't completely resist biological forces even with high moral standards
18. Politics are a large part of life
19. People don't change
20. If you are not honest to yourself, it's like kicking yourself in the balls
21. Different is not always better

1. Sorry, but you've been lied to

Only finishing college (sometimes even with perfect grades) doesn't guarantee you a safe and secure job or promotions for the rest of your life. If you pay a big tuition fee, it's even possible that everybody is profiting but you. Putting your savings into a popular mutual fund doesn't mean you'll actually get rich and make a good return on your investment. There's a much higher probability that everyone else will earn money out of your investment; everyone from your broker to fund managers, but not you. Such good times when everything was simple are gone. Let's continue.

Falling in love doesn't guarantee that you'll live happily ever after in a marriage. Only investing and trying hard in a relationship without mutual respect or getting anything back won't make you a good partner, but a fool easy to exploit who will soon become a boring and uninteresting partner. If you're a vegetarian, that doesn't mean that you won't have any health problems in life, maybe you'll even have more, depending on your emotional state, genes and how much sugar you eat. Being a good and religious person doesn't mean that life will spare you challenges and problems.

There are no fast cures for anything important in life, no miracle diet, no miracle product, no magicians who can instantly solve your problems. I'm not saying you shouldn't go to college. I'm not saying don't invest money. I'm not saying you shouldn't fall in love and have many quality relationships with friends and family. I'm not telling you to not live a healthy lifestyle or to not be a good person or to not follow a certain religion that makes you a good person. **What I'm saying is: don't choose the easy path. If you choose the easy path, you'll get screwed.** If you don't know who the sucker in the room is, you're the sucker. And if you choose the easy path, you definitely become the sucker in the long-term.

Finishing college and hoping that the government will provide you a good job is an easy path. Signing up for monthly investments into a popular mutual fund or a life insurance investment policy when a brokerage firm calls you and promises you big returns is an easy path. Falling in love is easy, working hard for a relationship for decades to stay happy together is not. Being a good person is easy, but being a good person and standing up for yourself when necessary is hard. **With time, the easy road becomes hard and the hard road becomes easy.** So choose the hard path.

But what is the hard road? **Usually it's doing the opposite of what other (average) people are doing.** First of all, you need to get madly educated about things they don't teach you at school. You need to acquire knowledge on how to manage life in all key areas – health, wealth, relationships, emotions and so on. But only getting educated isn't even remotely enough. You have to doubt and question everything you read and hear.

You need to test, experiment and find solutions that work best for your individual situation. You need to think with your own head. You need to take action. Based on all the knowledge you acquire and all the different things you try, you have to adjust solutions to your own situation and goals. That's the hardest part. You have to find your own way, you have to create the life you want, because the society won't do it for you.

Let me give you an example. If you're investing 100\$ into a mutual fund and you don't even know which fund it is exactly and what their investing strategy is, because your broker recommended the best one so it must be good, you've been lied to. That's the easy way. And most of the monthly 100\$ investment or whatever is going into feeding the system. If you're lucky, you'll make some return, maybe not.

Nobody knows where the markets will be in a decade, the only thing for sure is that people around you will be making money from your investment, whether you're making a return or not. Markets go up, markets go down, but fees stay. And fees stays because that's the easy way for you - it takes only an hour of your time for a salesman to convince you to invest; and a few signatures, to be more exact.

The hard way is getting financially educated – knowing everything from how markets work to certain types of investments (stock, bonds, ETFs), how to optimize taxes, what is active, passive and portfolio income, and so on. You have to understand your psychological money blueprint, you have to learn how to manage debt (as a leverage), how to optimize costs and so on. Money follows management. If you aren't managing your money on a daily basis and do regular personal accounting on a weekly or monthly basis, your money will go away. Money is like a lover: if you ignore it, it will go someplace else, where it is respected and gets attention. You should absolutely have people who give you advice and help you manage money, but you have to be financially educated, know what you're doing. The same goes for all other areas of life, be it health, relationships or any other area.

There's a somewhat inelegant way for emphasizing how life works, but this way you'll definitely remember it. **There's only one thing that grows in another person's hands! A penis.** For all other areas of life, you'll have to take charge if you want them to grow and if you want to see personal improvement. You can find two more examples below.

• For your optimal health, you have to acquire knowledge and understand different food types (proteins, carbohydrates etc.), different types of diets, and find the ones that suit you best, then you have to know the general principles of a healthy lifestyle, like drinking enough water, getting enough sleep, taking supplements you need and so on. You have to find sports that fit you perfectly, do regular exercise and take care of your core muscles and flexibility. When implementing any changes, you need to have a system for listening to your body and measuring real progress.

• For deep and quality relationships, you first have to learn how to love yourself and develop great capacity for love. You need to understand interpersonal connections, basic human psychology and the influence of biology. To have outstanding relationships, you need to be an outstanding communicator. You also need realistic expectation towards people and make sure that the center of your life is on you, not others. If you want to have awesome relationships, you'll have to learn how to have them, they don't just happen all on their own.

For a start, you should read 5 – 10 books for each area of life; and go straight for the best knowledge. If you want the final event in life, be it wealth, perfect body or perfect spouse, you have to first invest into the process. Everyone would like to have the final event, but nobody wants to invest into the process.



Here, you can find all the necessary information on what the big difference between the process and the event is and why the process is so important:

<http://agileleanlife.com/process-versus-event/>

2. It takes a lot to achieve anything remarkable, but it's worth it

If the easy path is somewhere between 1 and 6 on a scale from 1 to 10, the hard path begins at least at 107. There's such a big difference between the easy and the hard road, and that's the main reason why most people take the easy one. When people try to make the first step on the hard road, they figure out how much it takes and they simply give up.

Many times, they also feel guilty and humiliated, so they make fun or try to discourage other people who persevere on the hard path. They comfort themselves with slogans like "YOLO – you only live once" and similar. It takes so much to achieve anything remarkable.

• If you want to be "magazine-cover" fit it takes years of strict diet and hard exercise at least 4 - 5 times per week. If you haven't done any sports before that, it may first take years to get strong foundations by enhancing core muscles, getting flexible, improving posture etc. It can take 3 to 5 years of extremely hard work to be really fit and look good in the mirror with all ups and downs.

• If you want to get rich or be well off financially, you need a unique and extraordinary psychological money blueprint. You have to understand the ways to earn large sums of money, you have to know how to manage and invest money and take good care of it. It may take decades of hard work, frugality and failure before you become a millionaire.

• If you want to have a good relationship with your spouse, only falling in love and hoping that other things will work out isn't even close to enough. Both partners have to invest so much energy, effort, tolerance, ideas and hard work into a relationship. Every relationship is like a flower. You can water it for years but when you forget to water it one week, the plant will wither. It's the same in any relationship. It's not hard to put effort into a relationship in the first few months or even years when things are still new and fun, but with kids, job loss or any other challenges, things get much harder. And at the moment that you stop fighting for a relationship with attention, communication, mutual goals and mutual growth etc., every relationship takes a downside turn.

If it's so much hard work, is it worth it? Of course it is! As mentioned, with time the hard road becomes easier – you become better, your life quality improves, you see the results of your hard work and you live a life that everybody envies you.

It's definitely worth it to work hard as hell, not getting trapped in the money rat race (or even rat rape, where you own thousands and thousands of dollars to banks), shitty relationships (a.k.a. relationships) and wasting your time watching TV and eating chips to comfort yourself a little bit. **You only have one life and most people have many regrets on their death beds.** You don't want to be one of them. You want to live a remarkable life.

3. The media world is distorting your picture of reality and making you feel bad

You're exposed to thousands of ads each day. What do you see in all those ads? Happy, smiling, perfect people. **Thousands of happy, smiling and perfect people everywhere; like there's a parallel world.** All the ads are trying to convince you that if you aren't happy, smiling and perfect, all you have to do is buy a new product and your life will miraculously become much brighter. It sounds like a good deal, so you buy a new product, the same one you saw in the ad where people were smiling, being happy and perfect, and now you still aren't happy?

Sh*t. Then you go on Facebook or Instagram or any other social network. **What you see on all social networks are again happy, smiling and perfect people, the only difference being that now it's your (virtual) friends on the photos.** And they're all drinking cocktails on the beach, living the dream life. Everybody but you. I guess there must be something wrong with you.

Well, there's not. If you go to any major metropolis in the world and stop at any big metro station for a few minutes, you'll see the truth. Thousands of unhappy, not-smiling, far-from-perfect people. Real people. That's the real world. **Everlasting happiness is quite rare. Smiling people are quite rare. Naturally beautiful people are very rare.**

Ads are fake, they aren't real life. Even your friend's photos that you see on social networks are fake. They aren't real representations of how people live their lives. They're just short snapshots, wannabes, far removed from how real life looks. Everyday life is cleaning the toilet just after you took and posted a perfect picture of you enjoying life on your terrace and drinking coffee.

The point I'm trying to make is **that it may seem like almost everybody except you is enjoying their perfect lives, knowing how to really live, but that's bullshit.** It's a distorted representation of reality. Everybody faces challenges in their lives, everybody has shitty moments and 99.9 % of people are trying to figure out how to really properly manage and live their everyday life. Don't compare yourself and your life to people featured in ads or to other people's social network profiles.

You should have high standards in life, but don't have unrealistic standards that are enforced into your psyche by thousands of ads; by ads where everyone seems to be highly educated with a few PhDs, wealthy, ultra-happy, without any problems, everyone has a beautiful spouse and, on top of that, is an underwear model in their free time. That's so unrealistic. The same thing goes for most movies with happy ending and all overnight success stories you read about in the media. They happen, but they happen extremely rarely. That's not the strategy you should follow in life.

Only a few people are lucky enough to be born in rich families or with extraordinary beauty or with rare talents that pay off like winning the lottery. Only a few entrepreneurs, pop stars, athletes and YouTube stars are a really big hit overnight. But **for every overnight success, you have thousands of people who succeeded with years of hard work and next to them, you have millions of people who failed,** quit and went back to average lives.

Hoping to win the lottery is not a strategy you should follow. Feeling sorry for not having been born a superstar, supermodel or in an extremely rich family is also not a strategy you should follow. **Accumulation of mini everyday successes should be your strategy.** Compounding interests on your money, health, relationships and other areas of life day by day. A small single win each day (doing an exercise, saving ten bucks, writing "I love you" to your spouse, saying no to a desert etc.) leads to great progress over the years. And who knows, you may even get lucky on the way.



4. Your job is not to do remarkable things, but to do everyday things remarkable

To live a dream life, your job isn't to do remarkable things, far from it. You don't have to save the world or figure out how we can settle on Mars. You don't have to try to become the next Elon Musk or Brad Pitt or Mike Tyson or Taylor Swift or whoever. **What you have to do is make everyday things remarkable.** Everyday, you have to do something good for your health, emotions, wealth, happiness, relationships, and so on.

If you're consistent, disciplined and persistent at things that really matter in life, you will have a chance to become remarkable. Remarkable and happy.

Remember the quote: you should not fear the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, you should fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times. Every area of your life is one type of a kick and you should practice it every day; every day for the next thousand days. **By making everyday things remarkable, you take care of foundations** and once you take care of your foundations, you can start building high skyscrapers as your life masterpiece that everyone will admire.

Making everyday things remarkable especially means taking care of your health, money and relationships. **If you ignore them and only take care of them when they're broken, you don't deserve it at all;** and life will show you that sooner or later, so be smarter and never forget to take care and nurture your foundations.

Strong foundations in life are really important, otherwise your life can easily collapse. Here you'll find additional guidance for building strong foundations:

<http://agileleanlife.com/setting-strong-foundations/>



5. Still focus and become remarkable in one thing

Making everyday things remarkable means always taking care of your foundations first; **foundations that provide you with security, power, happiness, energy and fulfillment in life.** Strong foundations enable you to make one thing really remarkable; and in order to live a happy and dream life, you have to be really remarkable in one thing. Why?

There's one phenomenon in life called concentration. You've probably already heard that rich people get richer and poor people get poorer. That's true and there are two main reasons for that. The first one is the previously-mentioned accumulation – **compounding interests as the eighth wonder of the world.** Money simply makes more money. But you first need to make big money and that leads us to the second fact, which is that winners take it all.

Rewards in life are divided according to the Pareto principle or even more extremely concentrated. **That means 20 % of players on the market take 80 % of rewards or even more.** People who are at the top of something on the market don't only get a slightly bigger reward, they don't get just a little bit extra. They get a massively bigger reward, again and again.

That's why you want to be at the top of something. That's why you want to really excel in something. **You have to be remarkable in one thing and that will enable you to start accumulating.** Of course, you have to choose the right markets for that. The best market is the one where you can as a top expert offer scarce skills that are in great demand. As a plus, you'll also be able to take advantage of the halo effect, meaning that people will see you as a better performer in all other areas of life as well, and they'll want to work with you even more.

To become remarkable in something, you have to focus and constantly push yourself. You have to remove all waste from your life (time-wasting activities) and see time as your most valuable resource. After taking care of your foundations, most of your remaining time should go into becoming remarkable at one thing.

Time is the most precious resource you have. Read the only time-management guide you will ever need: <http://agileleanlife.com/best-time-management-guide/>

And don't forget that in order to become really remarkable at something, you need to have a talent, you have to care and you have to enjoy what you do. You need a powerful why that drives you through all the obstacles. If you don't enjoy it that much at first, enjoyment will come with mastery. So you can start becoming remarkable at something that you're really good at. Just follow your effort.

If you're interested in how to focus, read the following article:

<http://agileleanlife.com/focus/>

And here you can find an article on why and how to constantly push yourself:

<http://agileleanlife.com/push/>

6. Your starting point matters very much, so compete only with yourself

We all have different starting points. Your genes, your family and their wealth, the behavioral patterns you inherited, your country and schooling system etc., they all define your starting point. Research has shown that **most outliers in the world** (like Bill Gates or Mozart) and the best people in something (art, science, sports etc.) **had extremely strong support from their environment from a young age on.**

The environment especially helped them by guiding them and enabling them to be really focused. They, of course, put in all the hard work, but you can't practice the violin all day if you have bills to pay.

If you're born in a rich developed country and a wealthy family and so start living your adult life with finished higher level education from top universities, no debt and your own flat or one that your parents bought for you, you have a tremendously bigger potential than someone who was born in a poor family in a poor country that's collapsing economically. There are of course exceptions who innovate their way out of shitty situations and succeed massively, but they are very rare.

Your starting point matters a lot and if there's one thing that life really isn't fair about it's the starting points that people get. **Being born to the right parents in the right country is the biggest advantage you can have in life.** It doesn't make any sense to self-pity if your starting point sucks, but you have to adjust your goals according to your starting point. You can also comfort yourself with the thought that it could always be worse. Once a man wrote: "I cried because I had no shoes, until I met a man with no feet."

There are two more important things to take from this starting point lesson. The first one is that you should **compete only with yourself. Don't compare yourself to others.** There will always be someone better, faster, richer and prettier; maybe even without putting in any work. But who cares. Look at yourself from one year ago and look at yourself now. If you see any progress, you're on the right track. The grass is never greener on the other side, it's greener where you water it. As a plus, people will always be prepared to help you when you compete with yourself and only rarely when you compete with others.

You may work hard for months to lose a few pounds. And you've made it. You should be proud of yourself. But if you look at any magazine cover or compete with someone who has better genes and was born in a sporty family, you'll feel bad, even if you've made a big improvement and achieved an important personal goal. Always keep the right frame of comparing yourself only to your past self.

The second thing is that **your environment matters a lot: not only when and where you were born, but also later in life**, when you can actually make a choice and adjust the environment to your goals.



7. Your environment matters a lot, so choose carefully

Maybe you can't choose where you were born and to whom, but you can choose your environment in your adult life. **Whether you want it or not, you're largely the product of your environment even in your adult life.** When I talk about the environment, I especially mean your spouse, your friends, your home, your country, the company you work for and market trends.

One of the most important decisions you have to make in life is choosing your spouse. **Your spouse can make you or break you. Your spouse can bring out the best or the worst in you.** If you don't have someone who supports you and fights life challenges with you as a team, you'll never be strong enough to live a remarkable life. There's nothing more powerful than a well-synchronized couple fighting for the same goals. Only falling in love is far from enough, no matter how unromantic that sounds.

The same goes for your friends and your work environment. **You're the average of the five people you spend most of your time with.** If they're depressed, you'll be depressed. If they're ambitious, you'll be ambitious. If they're fat, you'll probably get fatter. If your friends mock you because you have big ambitions and high standards, you'll probably go back to average because of the social pressure.

So choose your spouse and your friends very carefully. Sadly, even family can be the one stifling your potential. There must be mutual support and respect in any relationship or a relationship can be a real burden stealing away your precious energy.

Learn more about why your environment is so important and how you can find the ideal environment for you: <http://agileleanlife.com/ideal-conditions-for-you/>

There are five elements of a healthy environment you should look for – talented people, technological advancement, high level of tolerance, total transparency and transcendent work (work with deep and important meaning). You can read more about it at <http://agileleanlife.com/5ts-elements-you-should-look-for-in-your-environment/>

Last but not least regarding the environment, the important fact is that markets always win. **No matter how good you are at something, if you're playing on the wrong markets at the wrong time, you're going to lose.** You want to have the markets on your side. Good markets are growing markets on their way to becoming big and stable. You want to choose your study field and industry on markets that have a bright future. It's not hard to figure out which markets those are. You have to be educated enough about the world to make the right choices.

The same rule that goes for the markets also goes for countries. That's the toughest one. If a country goes downhill or if a country is in a shitty state, it will definitely have a negative effect on your life. A political, economic or social crisis, poor infrastructure and poor technological development all have an influence on your potential and the quality of life. The shittier the situation, the less your real talent, creating value and competences will be appreciated. Sometimes life forces you to go where talent is really appreciated, if there's an option. If you live in a country that goes downhill and have options, consider all the options really carefully. Sadly people often have no options at all.

8. Don't take given things for granted

We can compare being born with beauty, money or talent to natural resources' discovery. But guess what, where people find a lot of natural resources, for example oil, one phenomenon often happens. It's called the Dutch disease or, in a different term, the resource curse and it means that **because of an abundance of a specific natural resource, other sectors become underdeveloped and less competitive.**

On top of that, corruption and mismanagement take place and new innovation is stifled. At the end, you can be in an even worse position than if you had none of the natural resources in the first place. It doesn't happen in all cases, you can still use natural resources in a much smarter way, but it can happen.

It's the same with the beauty, family wealth or talents (including intelligence) you have. All of them are very powerful given things or gifts. They can help you become a remarkable person or they can bring the Dutch disease into your life. It depends if you take beauty, family wealth and your talents for granted, if you see any of them as a shortcut to your goals. Even worse is if you enjoy easy passes because of those advantages and only fool around.

Beauty fades. Money gets spent. Talents rust. Stupid people who have those resources often waste them in their twenties and early thirties to enjoy life. Smart people invest those resources to create inner resources (competences, character etc.) and even more outer resources (status, personal wealth etc.) or they devote their lives to a good cause or whatever. Smart people don't choose the easy road, even if they're born with beauty, money or are extremely talented.

And what if you don't have any of these "natural resources"? Well, then you're playing life in a slightly harder mode. Born in a shitty country on top of that? Well, now you're playing in expert mode. You definitely have to put a lot more effort into achieving things, but since you compete only with yourself, that's okay. You'll become better faster, you'll understand more angles of life and thus be wiser. The important thing is that you don't fall into the victim mindset, but play the best game possible based on the cards you were dealt.

Here are a few extra lessons about taking things for granted. (1) If you win a few times, don't think that you can never lose. **Never become a narcissist, always stay humble.** (2) When you're climbing to the top, be careful how you treat people, because you'll meet them again on your way down. (3) Good times produce soft people and you don't want to become soft and naive in life.

9. If you don't know what you want, life will kick you around

There are actually only two ways of living life. One is **having and following your own goals and the second one is working for someone else's goals.** You can either live life on a reactive or a proactive basis. Being only reactive means that other people make choices for you, you only respond with emotional reactions. A proactive basis means that you set and fight for your own path. The reactive way is the easy way and becomes hard with time, while the proactive way is the hard one and usually becomes easy with time.

If you don't know exactly what you want, other people will decide for you. Your parents, your siblings, your bosses, the government, your friends, your priest if you're religious, the salespeople who are after your money, and others you encounter in life.

When you let other people decide for you, you maybe feel a little bit less under pressure, but you start neglecting your own needs sooner or later and consequently become totally depressed. Sometimes, you may get lucky and something good comes out of being in a totally passive role, but most often you'll be disappointed about where you land and where life (or other people, if you want) kick you.

Whatever you do, you should start with your endgame in mind. Learn how at: <http://agileleanlife.com/endgame-and-final-outcome/>

You do more than 10 interviews before you even land a job. That's 1,000 CVs sent to different companies. Hearing many times no or not even getting a response. In the process, your feeling of self-worth suffers and at the end, you land a job you don't even like.

Here's the second scenario. You analyze and prepare a ranked list of 30 companies you want to work for. Based on your analysis, you know what kind of competences each company is looking for and that their culture and values correspond to yours. You adjust your CV for each company to emphasize the right things. You don't only prepare a CV, you send each of them 100 ideas for how you can help them grow and a video about your competences and what you know about their company's goals and how you can help them and what kind of value you can provide. You go to conferences to meet company management or HR, you introduce yourself and so on.

The point is that you don't go work for the first company that replies to your appeal after you've sent out hundreds of CVs. Instead you build a strategy for how you'll get a job at the company you want to work for in a position you really know you can add value to, excel and prosper in an industry that has a bright future. You take an innovative and bold strategy to get there, proving how valuable you can be for the company.

The more exactly, accurately and sooner you know what you want from life, the easier you'll get it. Usually the most successful people in the world are the ones who know what they want to do in life from a very young age, and have the talent to really do it.

Here, you can find more about a great technique that can help you identify what you really want in life: <http://agileleanlife.com/search-mode/>

10. Now that you know, it can only be your fault, so take full responsibility

The fundamental difference between living an average or dream life is in taking responsibility for your own life and the things that are happening in it. It's much easier to blame the government or the markets or your parents for your suffering and troubles, but if you want to make a turnaround in your life, you have to take full responsibility for who you are, where you are and where you are going. **You have to take full responsibility for your thoughts, words, actions, emotions and goals.**

Having a mindset of helplessness, hopelessness or a victim won't take you anywhere. **Bitching, whining and complaining has never ever solved any problems.** Now you know it and you know what to do. You need to get madly informally (and probably also formally, depending on your situation) educated, you need to doubt and test everything on your own skin, you need to experiment and find the right things that work for you (diets, investment types etc.), you need to grow as a person and you need to fight constantly. You have to take care of your foundations and you have to become remarkable at something. You have to make a few key life decisions right and you need to develop healthy behavioral patterns.

Nobody else will fight for you. Everybody is on their own. People will help you for sure, if you ask for help and especially in situations where you compete with yourself, but at the end of the day, you're the one who needs to commit and perform. You're the one who needs to put in the effort and fight. You need to become the best version of yourself. You need to develop as many inner resources (competences, character etc.) as possible and make sure you know how to manage and grow the outer resources (money, status etc.) that you acquire in your lifetime.

The better you understand how life and different systems work (politics, taxes, financial markets etc.), the better decisions you can make. Much like you can easily become a victim of other people's goals, so you can also become an easy victim of a system. If you aren't educated enough, if you don't know how life works, there are many sharks out there who will take advantage of you.

Therefore you have to take full responsibility of your life and decide that you'll make a living masterpiece out of the time that's given to you. No one can prevent you from that, only you can become your own biggest enemy. Don't do that. **The one thing you should never do is go to war with yourself.**

11. You have power in every single situation in life

Taking control of your life means freedom. Freedom really sometimes brings an even frightening level of personal responsibility, but if you have enough knowledge and you make a few common-sense good decisions, **freedom is the most beautiful position you can have in life – because freedom means having choices, means having many alternatives.** Freedom is the opposite of being caught in a situation, be it mentally, emotionally or financially.

It doesn't matter what kind of a situation you find yourself in, you have the personal power to make a decision. Not your boss, not any politician, not your priest. You have the power to decide. You always have the power to make a choice (at least as an adult). If nothing else, you can always walk away. Except from debt – you can never walk away from owing money to banks or people.

But having the power of choice is a double-edged sword. If you know what you're doing, if you have your own goals, if you have the inner and outer resources, then being aware that you can always walk away gives you an additional feeling of power and personal freedom. **On the other hand, you can also abuse or misuse this power in a way that can easily backfire.** If you have no idea what you're doing, you just want to break free from responsibility and pressure, you can only walk away into more shit.

That's why we need so many public systems – from police to legal systems and other government interventions; to protect people from other people and even to protect people from themselves and from making bad choices (for example driving drunk). **It's definitely easier if other people or even a system make a choice for you, but as you've figured out, it won't really be the best choice for you personally.** It's probably only a compromise. And if you want it or not, compromises usually suck.

In addition to that, there are many corrupt people in the system, wanting to profit from making choices instead of you. You get an average life, they get to live a remarkable life. The perfect examples are all miracle diets, shitty jobs, high taxes with no quality public services, popular investments, sometimes even formal educational and other public systems (depending what you invest and get out of it).

There's always a question of which side you are on. Look into which direction the resources (money, energy, time, love etc.) are (and will be) flowing and who is profiting. **Never be the fool in a room where everybody else is profiting.** If you figure out that you're a fool, stop being a fool; and if it's not that easy to do that, stay a fool for a little bit longer and, in the meantime, get educated, get sharp and competent, and then show people that you aren't a fool anymore, show people that you've just leveled up your game.

Every time I watch TV, I know that I'm the fool in the room. People on the other side of the screen are the winners, living their dream lives, making money, becoming famous, and I'm throwing away my money and time, escaping from reality and the things I should really be doing. So every time I want to turn on the TV, I go read a book instead.

12. Success and happiness are two totally different things

Success or, if you want, achievements definitely make you feel good about yourself as well as kind of happy, but usually this kind of happiness doesn't last long. Pretty much the same thing happens **when you buy yourself something new: it may bring happiness into your life, but only for a short period of time.**

Success and happiness are simply two totally different things. There are several factors in life that definitely contribute to happiness, like spending time in nature, being physically active, having many deep relationships with just enough of socializing, having meaningful work and faith in life, enjoying the process of getting somewhere and not only having the final goal in mind and, last but not least, thinking as positively as possible. An achievement here and there even enforces the feeling of happiness. But...

These factors only contribute to your happiness if you have sound emotional foundations. You need to be emotionally stable first, and then following all the listed things above will definitely bring additional happiness into your life. But if you had traumatic upbringing or are emotionally unstable for any other reason, then no achievement, walk in nature or pop-psychology trick will really help you to be happier. No matter what you do, it will never be enough.

One way of turning emotional instability around is cognitive psychology. With emotional accounting, you can identify cognitive distortions or negative thoughts that influence your dark perception of life and yourself, and correct them. Besides that, **there are many other tools for building emotional stability, for example psychotherapy, meditation, transactional analysis, trauma release exercises, and so on.** You have to search and try different options and find the right tool, the right fit that can help you the most with managing your emotions

Learn more about cognitive psychology and how to deal with negative thinking in a scientific way: <http://agileleanlife.com/cognitive-distortions-negative-thinking/>

You can't live a positive life with a negative mind. But you also can't have a positive mind if you don't deal with tough and traumatic experiences from your early years. Maybe your parents were too critical of everything and emotional damage had been done. There are no shortcuts for that and it may take you months or even years to make a change and build strong emotional foundations.

But it's worth it, because **if you don't do it, if you don't face your negative emotions, no achievement or material thing or trophy spouse or walk in nature will really help you be happier in life.** In this context, scientific psychology, not the pop one, is the right way to go. And you also need realistic expectations. Reading a book won't miraculously help you to build strong emotional foundations; it may take years of hard work to do it. The same as if you want to have perfectly fit body.

13. Nobody cares

People care only about themselves. People also care about the benefits and value that you can bring into their lives. Otherwise they don't give a f*ck. That's not a critique, that's the fact of how we function. It's hard enough to manage your own life and if you were to annoy yourself with problems of every single person in your life, you'd definitely go crazy.

There's an easy proof of that. You meet up with a friend to whom a tragedy just occurred. You, as a good friend, take time and talk to them, show empathy and provide comfort. But after several hours, you go home. At home, you simply turn on your TV or computer and forget about it. You have enough problems of your own. But you forget about it, while your friend doesn't.

Don't get me wrong. I know that in most cases, family members and friends care about each other very much. But at the end of the day, your problems and emotional traumas are not other people's problems. You're on your own whether you want it or not, with support of others of course. But only support.

That leads to two more important things. The first one is that **if you're looking for constant outer approval and if your self-worth is based on approval from other people, you'll always be disappointed.** People will, of course, congratulate you for your successes and achievements, but they'll forget about it the very next day. The same happens a day after your birthday; or when somebody dies in your life. Nobody cares anymore after a moment. You get a like on a social network and then they forget. So everything you do, you have to do it for yourself, not for others.

The second thing is that **like people don't care (I know it sounds harsh) about your successes, so they don't care about your failures.** Therefore, you shouldn't be afraid to fail and get potentially publically humiliated because of your failure. People may laugh at you for a second, but they'll forget about it the next one. Failure is a part of life as well as a part of success and you shouldn't be afraid to fail, especially not because you're afraid of others and their opinions.

Be yourself, do the things you want to do in life, don't be afraid of failure and don't bother too much with what other people think about you; but only if you aren't doing anything really stupid or weird; in that case, listen to people wiser than you.

14. But haters gonna hate

Nobody cares, but haters are going to hate. That is a big irony of life. **There will always be someone who agrees with you and someone else who tries to convince you otherwise or is even radically against you** and, of course, consequently tries to block your actions.

The more successful and firm you are, the more haters you'll have to face in your life. But that's okay. If you stand for nothing, you will fall for anything. If there are no loud blockers and backers in your life, you probably aren't standing for anything really important.

Sometimes blockers are regular nice people, only respectfully fighting for their own interests, which is totally okay. A clash of ideas leads to even better ideas. But to be honest, **many blockers convert to haters who try to knock you down without any style, solid arguments or constructive discussion.** Internet enables everyone to hide their identity, which even further encourages haters to become really insulting and primitive.

Whether you want it or not, haters are the consequence of you standing for something and even more so of you being successful. **Haters are the byproduct of your success.** There are several reasons why haters are going to hate you: a clash of interests, wanting to keep the status quo they're benefiting from, having different values, personal issues, stereotypes, low self-esteem and self-image, envy, bad communication and so on. Well, and some people are just pure assholes. The most important question is what to do with all the haters.

The best possible advice for dealing with haters is to simply ignore them. If you wrestle with pigs, you get dirty. Don't get dirty. When you're insulted, take a few breaths, forget, and move on. Carefully choose your battles, because you have a limited amount of energy and other resources. Dealing with haters is, of course, an obvious big waste of resources. Just completely ignore evil people.

Read the full article on why haters gonna hate and how to deal with them in the best way possible: <http://agileleanlife.com/haters-gonna-hate/>

15. The world has changed so much and it will change even more, so prepare yourself

It's no news that the world has changed/been turned upside down in the past few decades, especially with the information revolution (computers), but we're often not even aware of all the changes in our lives. If you think about it, toilet paper was invented as late as 1857. But now we have electric cars, robots, internet and **many other innovations that make our lives ultra-comfortable, but also much more stressful.**

Every change, no matter how big or small, brings new positive things and opportunities to us, along with new challenges and concerns. **There is no solution (change) without a new set of problems.** The bigger the change, the bigger the impact with all its positives and negatives.

As the biggest revolution in our history (besides the agrarian and industrial revolution), the information revolution brought us many advantages with all the technological advancements, but also a new set of challenges.

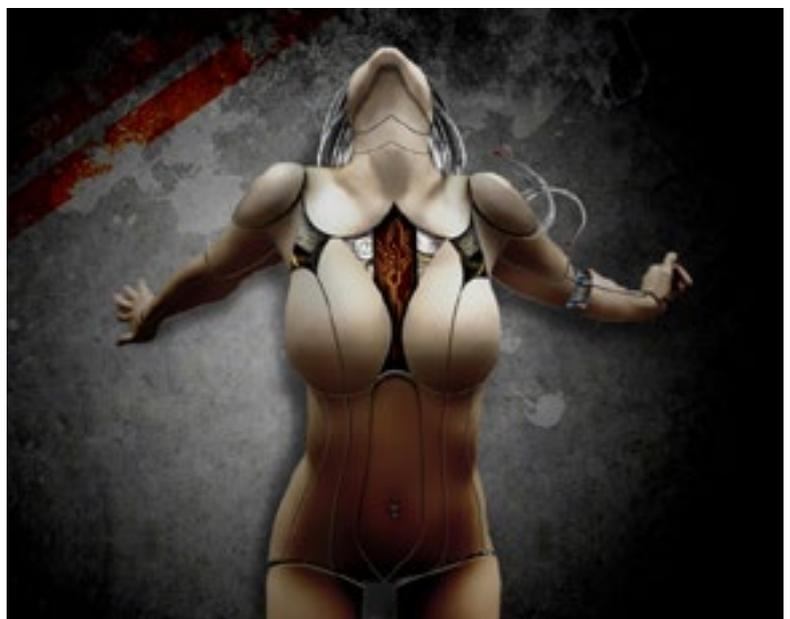
It's very easy to see **all the positive elements of the new digital world** that was shaped after the third world revolution (also called creative capitalism, the knowledge society, post-information age etc.). They are, at least, *easy access to information, ease of communication, high material status and endless options for shopping, mobility and low transport costs, pretty good safety and longevity. If you compare today's times to the past, we live in the best times ever.*

The positive sides of the new digital world are big, as are the new challenges. **Here are the biggest personal challenges everyone is facing in the digital world:** *having too many options and being overburdened with all the choices, unrealistic expectations towards a life of having it all, information overload, market complexity and a hardly bearable uncertainty.* In other words, there are no more safe and secure jobs for your whole life that you could easily get after only finishing college.

What two decades ago was the hard road is today the easy road.

What nobody is telling you is that the world will change even more and even faster in the future. The pace of changes is accelerating and the official term for that is singularity. The fact is that the world will become even more flat, complex, uncertain and competitive. You will need to have all the necessary competences to deal with it.

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to study future trends. It's hard to predict the future, but it's easy to know the general trends, paradigms and structural changes that are happening. If you understand what's happening to the world on the macro level, you'll be able to identify many more opportunities and avoid many potential threats. You should deeply care about the future, because you will live the rest of your life in it.



16. Being good doesn't mean life will spare you problems

Be a good person and you'll get good things in return. It's true. But people often confuse and simplify this; to their own benefit, of course. And this later leads to disappointments. I am talking about the mentality that goes along the lines of: **be a good person and life will reward you with a good job, a lot of money, luck in love, and so on. Wrong!**

Be a good person and you'll get good things in return; yes, but only in the same context of life, from the same angle. People will mostly act nicer towards to you (not all of them). You'll feel better in your own skin. Your world will be calmer. You'll also obtain some social capital. You'll be rewarded with additional spiritual/karma points. But all this has minimal correlation to the amount of money you earn, your luck in love and a good job.

Both bad and good people can have a lot of money (or are happily in love or have good health or whatever). The amount of money is mostly connected to skills that are connected to money, if we dismiss lottery and inheritance. Luck in love depends more on our personal relationship skills and commitment to partnership, and beforehand the effort we put into searching for the most suitable partner (perfect fit), than on whether we are generally a good person (except if this is a value that's important to our partner).

Sometimes being only good can even be counter-productive. For example, it has been psychologically proven that being only nice (niceness falls in the category of being good) isn't the smartest male seduction strategy, while if women are nice, this can quickly give false signals to men.

Being a good person in life is an absolute must – having integrity, being nice, compassionate, not harming others, helping, connecting, collaborating, and so on. However, what's wrong is the expectation that life will reward you all by itself and that this is why you don't have to make an effort in other areas of life.

Being good won't save you from your life challenges; and evil people may never get punished the way you want them to get punished (being broke, having no love in their lives etc.).

17. We can't completely resist biological forces even with high moral standards

We are animals and we are spiritual beings. To deny one world or the other can be very painful. **The fact that a part of us is animal means that we are partially acting out of an entirely biological impulse written in our genes** – one that is completely direct and clear: spread our genes as far as we can and with the best possible combination for our offspring.

Nature (biology) knows two mechanisms for the purpose of reaching these two goals: the first one is lust and the second one love. The role of the former is quantity (everything that suits our genetic/psychological code) and the latter quality (cohabitation until producing offspring and raising it). It's clear from this alone that we aren't fundamentally monogamous beings, but that monogamy is definitely a sensible social innovation that can bring a lot of good into our lives; if we have realistic expectations and are prepared to keep investing into a relationship.

What's even more important is that both mechanisms (lust, love) play an important role in finding true love in the first place; before love, sexual attraction is needed in most cases and infatuation oftentimes as well, especially in the younger years. **The sexual force is, besides the wish for survival, one of the strongest forces of humanity;** based on this force, each individual actually possesses certain sexual capital.

One part of our sexual capital is given, namely looks and the general quality of genes, while a large part of sexual capital is also obtained. **The bigger the sexual capital, the greater the choice of potential partners,** while our relationship can also have higher quality.

It will help you a lot in your life (especially love life) if you work on your sexual capital. Sexual capital can be obtained in three different ways: the biological, sociological or psychological one. The first, biological one simply means being fit. The most visible way of being not-fit is being overweight. Not only does excessive body weight lower your sexual capital, it also brings many other inconveniences and potential complications.

Thus being fit and taking care of your health is incredibly important, not only from the aspect of energy and physical performance, but also the (sexual) status in society. We can also put neatness, well-groomed appearance, care for oneself, motoric abilities and other things under the biological aspect of sexual capital. We can also increase our sexual capital with a sociological and psychological approach. This includes everything from material status, social skills, individual's values, diversity, self-confidence etc. All of the listed things increase either the individual's social capital or their psychological one, and consequently also their sexual one. So even if you weren't born to be a model, you have quite a few options for increasing your sexual capital.

If we go one step further, to the level of biology and sociology, **there are generally two ways of climbing the social ladder (and consequently increasing our sexual capital too)**. The first one is based on dominance in the broadest possible sense, including intimidation, domination of other people, aggression and dictatorship. This strategy mostly works in a crisis or in battle times and survival situations; sadly, those situations make up the biggest part of the known history of humanity. Others follow in hopes that with an aggressive approach, resources will be guaranteed for them as well. It's upon these foundations that the concept of an "alpha male" is built, as is the path to a bigger sexual capital based on physical/biological dominance (being fit, having muscles, good athletic abilities etc.).

Nowadays, in decreasingly violent times, the dominant strategy is subsequently also less and less effective. Namely being an alpha male is always possible only in a certain context and in a certain situation. In another situation and another context, even an alpha male can become a beta male (e.g. an esteemed professor who'd find himself in prison). Since there are fewer and fewer life and death violent situations, there are also fewer and fewer contexts and opportunities for the success of the dominance strategy. The access to resources is also increasingly more frequently connected to creating value rather than taking things by force.

Thus another path to the top of the social ladder has come to exist – one not based on dominance but rather on the prestige of an individual. This one still encompasses several qualities of an "alpha male", namely a high level of self-confidence, ambition and strength, but in a combination with compassion, care for others, empathy, niceness and an easy-going nature. Such a strategy is effective in significantly more social situations than dominance.

If dominance is effective in battle situations and competitions, then the strategy of prestige is effective in most aspects of life, including society management. But this doesn't mean that dominance is bad and that prestige is a good approach.

From the aspect of the social ladder and the probability of it working, **the optimal strategy is a combination of building on prestige that shows care for a group, while using dominance only in situations when that is absolutely necessary.** It's written in our genes that such individuals have an advantage in the society, and with this, access to more resources, power and potential partners.

In short, I definitely don't want to stamp all over the meaning of true love and nice ideals. But the fact remains that **sexual capital stemming from biological and sociological dispositions is an important category besides the intellectual, spiritual and emotional capital.** It leads to more choices when choosing potential partners, to a higher status in the society, and may consequently also lead to a more suitable partner.

The main lesson is that **hoping for true love means giving power from one's own hands. And that's never good. The bigger our sexual capital, the bigger the possibility of us finding the right partner.** This is why it's right that you focus on your sexual capital and its development, not only for the purpose of finding a partnership, but also for developing your power, improving your social standing and potentially having a (positive) influence on the environment.

On the other hand, **you should definitely not glorify sexual capital or go too far in developing it;** even it has its boundaries, especially when focusing on partnership. After all, people with low sexual capital find their partner as well. Why? Because another category exists, and that is the uniqueness of an individual.

Sexual capital plays an important role in first impressions, at the beginning, with the general social standing, **but in the long run, in the context of searching for an ideal partner, sexual capital loses value and the uniqueness of an individual starts gaining value.** At that time, infatuation also plays its role; we go from quantity to quality.

18. Politics are a large part of life

What happens in a situation when someone wishes to position themselves on the social/material ladder, but isn't prepared to invest any energy into ensuring the right real value added, a fair competition or maybe doesn't even have the opportunity for it due an underprivileged situation?

This leads to politics (the negative connotation of the word), manipulation and exploitation, while in the more extreme cases, it can also end in violence or even wars for natural resources. **Politics, manipulation and exploitation are a large part of our world, often already ingrained in the educational and financial system, healthcare, religious institutions and everywhere else.** People wish to ensure that their positions are as monopolistic as possible at all levels.

It's worth to note that the above-written words don't only concern politicians but rather the human nature in general. Politics is just the most illustrative example of this part of human nature. **Discrediting the opponent, false promises, misleading, exploitation, corruption, manipulation and so on – all of this can be found anywhere, in all industries of humankind,** but is most obviously expressed in politics; most such "political" actions simply bring voting points, and who allocates the points other than people. Leadership is always merely a reflection of the people.

And there's only one reason why there's so much politics in the world. It's because it actually works to a great extent, especially in the short term. Here are some examples of dirty political thinking that you will encounter sooner or later in life:

Don't put too much hope into friends, learn how to take advantage of enemies. Never show your true intentions. Others should work, you take the credit. Avoid miserable people. See to it that people are dependent on you and come to you on their own. Completely destroy your enemy. Make it look like you are stringing up achievements without any special effort. Play on people's feelings, conjure false promises. And we could go on. Sad but part of real life.

The question that arises with this is whether such an amoral strategy is a sensible survival strategy. It depends on your values, your goals and environment. **The more value added that you can create, the more you will be valued in the environments that acknowledge value added and healthy competition (in that case, there is no need for politics).** Those are the systems that are striving towards transparency, integrity, healthy competition and collaboration. I am a big fan of that kind of systems.

In a system like that, there is no place for corruption, exploitation etc. However, this doesn't mean that the human nature is any different in such a system. There's just systematic effort for trying to direct it onto a more productive path – progress. In such a context, it's also right that you are honest with yourself and know how much of a politician lies in you or, alternatively, to what extent you are disgusted by political behavior. I would encourage you to avoid politics in a negative way as much as possible. But **it's definitely impossible to escape politics in life, neither at the workplace nor among family or friends** (gossiping, for example, is one of the most basic political actions in groups of friends).

19. People don't change

Changing oneself is incredibly hard; the hardest thing in the world. And each individual has plenty of positive and negative behavioral patterns in their life. Changing a negative behavioral pattern or character trait is nearly impossible. Up until now, I've met only a handful of people with enough self-awareness, self-criticism and will to change one of their behavioral pattern.

Let's look at a banal stereotypical example, a bit upside down. A young couple. The boyfriend is extremely upset if the girl leaves the toilet seat down; since this had already annoyed his father with his mother. Now three scenarios are possible: 1) boyfriend explains to the girlfriend how vitally important this is for him and asks her to change her behavioral pattern. 2) Boyfriend confronts himself and realizes it's not a big deal and that he can simply put the seat up, therefore changing his own emotional reaction to the situation. 3) There are daily fights about the toilet seat.

And sadly 99 % of people will stay with the last scenario, be it in a personal or a business relationship. People change with much difficulty, if we even do at all. **We definitely develop, acquire knowledge and experience, but we rarely change in our essence and our habits.** Besides this, we humans are often incredibly uncritical towards ourselves, full of ego and thus very easily point fingers at someone else rather than to see our own faults that need to be changed.

The basic rule of each relationship is that we first take enough time, without prejudice and expectations, to get to know the person. **Then we accept each person fully for the way they are.**

If we are bothered by something in that person to the extent that it's a deal-breaker, then we don't count on the person to ever change. It's simply a deal-breaker. An exception are smaller things, whereby even for a small change, a lot of communication, tolerance and understanding are needed. Even with these smaller matters, it's better and fairer if we first try to change ourselves, and only then the other person.

At the end, **it absolutely makes more sense to find someone with whom you are more compatible than to change someone.** So it's right that we accept people for the way they are and then decide whether they fit into our lives. We patiently communicate on the matter of some trivialities that truly bother us, while we try to change ourselves for others.

Please remember that people don't change, no matter if they say they will.

20. If you are not honest to yourself, it's like kicking yourself in the balls

The biggest harm you can do to yourself (and others) is by not being honest with yourself. **When you don't listen to yourself, you insist on a path that leads to long-term personal dissatisfaction and unhappiness.** The problem, of course, lies in the fact that your deepest desires are usually inconsistent with society's expectations or with expectations of people in your life. The second problem is that the path of honesty is usually a much harder path than a path society expects from you.

Dissatisfaction in the job. Dissatisfaction with the partner. A new business opportunity. Whatever it may be. **The larger the change or the decision you have to make in life (marriage, changing jobs, the type of study, longer journeys...), the more you have to be honest with yourself, the more you have to listen to the voice inside you.** Before every important decision, you have to take time for yourself and see whether this is something that you truly want, truly desire.

Do you see yourself doing this in five years or being with that person in five years? Is this something that is a part of you and your nature?

Whenever you feel that something isn't right for you deep down inside, yet still let yourself be convinced, a much more difficult situation follows in the future. Dissatisfaction and doubt keep growing. Each time that you are dissatisfied, dishonest with yourself, this has to surface sometime. If you repress these feelings, they fester in you that much more and have to come out somewhere; be it in your health, unhappiness, but also in your relationships.

Adhering to yourself and the voice inside you is often accompanied by social pressures and pressures that come from expectations of people you are in relationships with; **by choosing the right path for you, you often disappoint people and don't fulfil their expectations.** But the only right thing is being honest with yourself (but do everything in a legal and moral way of course). However, you should also expect and understand the same thing with others.

The sincere path is often also the harder path. This can mean searching for a new partner, new job, developing new skills for switching industries, or for whatever else. **Despite all this, it's right to fight for what you truly want and feel is your real path, while at the same time knowing how to say no to everything else.**

The compass is simple. A longer period of positive emotions shows that you're heading in the right direction, while negative emotions (anger, dissatisfaction, sadness...), maybe even forcibly repressed ones, warn you that you aren't on the right path; **negative feelings are a signpost that you aren't on the path that's meant for you.** If you are accompanied by negative emotions, this means that your soul is suffering. The exception is fear, which is an indicator of what you still have to face in your life.

21. Different is not always better

At every turn we can find the underlying philosophy of "be different". Difference certainly presents an important advantage in a lot of cases, but not always. In reality, **being different isn't even that hard. What's incredibly difficult is being different and better at the same time.** This is an important lesson, since it's easy to accept the philosophy of being different in one's younger years, but it's much harder to understand that you have to be better at the same time.

Any deviation from the average requires risk, an enormous amount of knowledge, experimentation, trying, failing as well as failures that can hurt us significantly more than they can benefit us at the end. You don't only need a different approach, you also have to find a better system by trying; namely **a system that brings you better results than the one that is generally suggested.**

Let's look at a concrete example. We have a standardly recommended diet; at the same time, it is common knowledge that such a diet includes too much sugar and that you should add more vegetables and healthy fats into your daily life. Up to here, we are still in the safe and somewhat above-average zone from the aspect of diet quality. But we can claim with certainty that such a diet will ensure survival, satisfy the nutritional needs of the body and provide a certain level of health for the average lifestyle.

Now we wish to go a step further, be it from a health, ethical or aesthetical aspect. Vegetarianism. Veganism. Macrobiotics. High-protein diet. Cabbage diet or whatever else there is.

Most of these approaches demand almost entirely removing one group of foodstuffs (carbohydrates, proteins, fat) from the diet. And here is where suddenly appears a certain risk that we won't be getting all the necessary nutritional substances. This is why more knowledge is necessary for correctly combining foodstuffs, changing our lifestyle etc. With vegetarianism, for example, we can do more harm than good if we don't possess enough knowledge, and substitute the lack of meat with a larger intake of simple sugars or if we don't get adequate protein.

The more we deviate from the average, the more knowledge we need. That's also one of the reasons why the hard road is really hard.

With this, I am not claiming that vegetarianism isn't a good diet. I am only saying that if you really wish to benefit from the real value added of this diet, you must have enough knowledge to substitute the loss of animal protein with a suitable combination of plant protein, mustn't significantly increase the intake of simple sugars, somewhat change your lifestyle at the same time and we could go on. There's also a question of whether vegetarianism truly suits everyone, as it probably suits someone more and the other less. In short, the purpose isn't to find reasons for or against vegetarianism (nevertheless I was a vegetarian for 7 years), the purpose is to emphasize that each deviation from the recommended is accompanied by a risk.

It's exactly the same with career – entrepreneurship, as an alternative to a job; money – investing instead of saving; partnership – polygamy instead of monogamy; sleep – polyphasic sleep instead of eight hours in one piece, and we could go on. It's smart to take a different path, but the different path must also be better – better for you and people around you and the society.

Smaller life decisions are no different, for example when it comes to arguments. It's simple to not agree with someone, we are already different by doing it, we have a different point of view. Justifying it with arguments, however, explaining why our viewpoint is better and maybe even making a synthesis of both viewpoints and slightly changing our perspective is much harder. Despite everything, conflicts are a source of progress if the synthesis of differences leads to something new; different again, but better.

A big trap also lies in the thousands of books, blogs and other authorial self-help contents that offer shortcuts to success, no matter which area of life you look for. The formula that led somebody to success won't necessarily do the same for everyone else, including yourself.

This is why being different doesn't only mean standing out or taking an approach different to the one of the majority, but rather means that **you are prepared to invest drastically more energy into trying, gaining knowledge, failures etc. with the purpose of finding a way that's perfect for you** and allows you a high quality of life, including feeling good in our skin and achieving personal goals.

If you are prepared to invest all this effort, you can of course strongly benefit from the investment (more energy, more money, more happiness, more whatever else), but the path to a different and better alternative isn't simple. You oftentimes come to the conclusion that you are most suited by what suits others as well; and you mustn't close our eyes to this. **Being different has no value added if you harm yourself.**

Sometimes going mainstream may even be the best path.

The conclusion

I hope you enjoyed reading this eBook and that the presented twenty-one harsh life secrets have been eye-opening and insightful. **It's hard to accept that we're all being lied to just because it's the easier road.** It's hard to accept that in some ways, we're still worse as a society than it may seem.

We're sometimes still more animals than divine human beings; and sometimes it's still harder to live a quality and happy life than people think, especially when being young. But here's some very good news. **Trends are positive and we're heading in the right direction.** There's less and less violence in the world. Technology advancements help us reduce food production costs and costs of other basic material things that people need, so there's less and less poverty in the world. The richer the world becomes, the less need there is to fight to life or death. Soon we won't only evict poverty, but we'll also have flying cars and settle on other planets. People are getting more and more aware and kind to each other. The future is bright and you can help make it even brighter.

But the **one thing we all still have to do is learn how to manage life to be really happy in today's good times;** and for that, we have to learn the harsh truths, the lies that we're telling ourselves and each other just to pretend that the world is an easier place than it actually is. But it's much better to know the truth and be suitably equipped with competences to face that truth than to live in a fairytale that can burst your bubble at the first bigger life challenges.

The more people who know the truth about how life works, the more people will open the doors to a better quality of life. It may be hard to accept the truth, but when you do, you can definitely make much better choices for yourself, the people you love and the whole world. Because when you embrace the truth, you see that the best path you can take is the path of constant personal improvement and building your life on prestige rather than dominance. There are no big disappointments anymore and suppressed feelings that only escalate in a negative way, be it doing harm to ourselves or to others.

If you're interested in continuous improvement and would like to learn the difference between a fixed and a growth mindset, read the following article:

<http://agileleanlife.com/kaizen-growth-mindset-continuous-improvement/>

It's much better to light a candle than curse the darkness; and now you know how you can light a candle, for yourself and for a better world. Let's repeat that: *you have to take full responsibility for your life and the choices you make. Don't put yourself in the position of a victim, you have the power in every single situation in life. You have to find the truth on your own and apply the best knowledge to manage your life properly. The media world is distorting your picture of reality and can even make you feel bad with all the unrealistic expectations. Learn where your limits are by considering your starting point.*

If you don't know what you want, life will kick you around. If you aren't honest with yourself, it's like kicking yourself in the balls after life already kicks you. So know what you want very clearly and as soon as possible. It takes so much to achieve anything remarkable, but it's worth it. At first, your job isn't doing remarkable things, but making everyday things remarkable. Nevertheless, focus and become remarkable at one thing after you build strong foundations. Your environment matters a lot, so choose carefully, from your spouse and friends to the industry you work in. Don't take given things for granted and develop all your talents. You have to be different in life, but not only different, also better.

Success and happiness are two completely different things. If you want to be happy, you must be emotionally stable. If you aren't, work on your emotions first. Nobody cares if you fail or succeed, except the few people really close to you. So don't think too much about what other people think and don't be afraid to fail. The important thing is that you get up.

Nevertheless, the more successful you are, the more haters will try to block you and stop you. Haters are the byproduct of your success. You won't have to deal only with haters, but also with dirty politics and people who'll try to take advantage of you. When it happens, remember that people don't change. We can't completely resist our biological forces even with high moral standards. Haters and dirty politicians are the leftovers of our dark past. But the future is bright. You should be good, but remember that being good doesn't mean life will spare you problems. Last but not least, the world has changed so much and will change even more, so prepare yourself. Learn how to deal with uncertainty, complexity, information overload and similar challenges.

Happier and more successful you will be, happier and more successful will be people around you and even the entire world. Good luck!

The next step you should take is read the Agile and Lean Life Manifesto to learn how to manage life in today's complex world:

<http://agileleanlife.com/the-key-principles-of-the-agile-and-lean-life-all-manifesto/>