

100 Ways To Live Better

 putanumonit.com/2019/12/30/100-ways-to-live-better/

View all posts by Jacob Falkovich

December 30, 2019

A couple of weeks ago Venkatesh challenged his followers to brainstorm at least 100 tweets on a topic via live responses. Since I'm not an expert on anything in particular, I decided to simply see if I can come up with 100 discrete pieces of life advice in a day.

1 like = 1 way to live better. I'll try to keep a ratio of 50% things I actually do, 50% things I should do but don't. <https://t.co/IRNzWwimBL>

— Putanumonit Jacob (@yashkaf) December 14, 2019

This off-the-cuff game turned into perhaps the most successful creative project I've ever done. The thread was viewed by tens of thousands of people, received thousands of likes, and gained me hundreds of Twitter followers. I didn't know there was such thirst for random life-advice, nor that I would be the one to tap the keg. And now my blog readers get the expanded, edited, organized, and illustrated collection.

The good life is a frequent subject on Putanumonit. I aimed for this thread to be an inspiration to myself as well, writing down many things that I think I should do but haven't gotten around to yet. I tried to steer a middle course between over-generalized Navalisms and too-specific tips on the particular brand of chapstick that will change your life. May these inspire you to live your best life or to mock me in funny ways in the comments.

Meta

1

Any life advice that isn't given to you personally is not designed to be followed to the letter. Try to resonate with the philosophy that generates it instead. Remember that directional advice (e.g., "be more ...") may need to be reversed before consumption.

2

Collect feedback from everybody. Play games with close friends where you have to give each other constructive criticism and ways to improve. Collect anonymous feedback from internet strangers on Admonymous.

3

Stop lurking; write that comment. You know the saying about letting people suspect you're dumb rather than opening your mouth and removing all doubt? Fuck that. We know you're dumb. You get less dumb by saying things and getting feedback.

4

Learn some improv, at least to get the basic gist of it. Take a class or read Impro. Improv mindset is a great way to approach many social situations including most interactions on the internet. A good comment/reply often starts with “yes, and”.

5

Don’t nitpick, that’s the opposite of good improv. You think that the categories in this post are arbitrary? A piece of advice doesn’t apply to your special situation? You’re probably right, but writing this in a comment will just make readers annoyed and make you frustrated when nobody responds.

Mind

6

There are more great podcasts than you’ll ever have the time to listen to. If it sucks after 10 minutes, skip half an hour ahead. Still boring? Delete and move on. Obviously, do the same for books.

7

Free will. The anthropic principle. Solipsism. The simulation hypothesis. Moral realism. They’re fun to argue about through the night but don’t judge anyone too much based on the positions they take and don’t treat any of them too seriously as guides to actually living your life. It should all add up to normalcy in the end.

8

Find a medium of expression and express yourself publicly every day for three months. If you’re good with words, write 100 Tweets. An artist — post 100 sketches on Instagram. Music/dance person — 100 TikToks.

9

Tell a bad joke or a pun as soon as you think of it, even if it’s just to your exasperated spouse or coworker. It takes 20 bad jokes to think of a single good one, and you only start making good jokes once you remove the unconscious filter stifling your generative brain.

10

If you can’t give it up completely, try to constrain the bandwidth of how much you hear about politics. Don’t start your day with the front page of the Times. Unfollow anyone whose posts are more than 20% about politics or the outrage du jour. And don’t jump into online arguments, it’s vice masquerading as virtue.

11

Binge a show/video game for a couple of weeks, then take a break from TV for a couple of weeks. Trying to limit yourself to an hour a day is less fun and more addictive.

12

Should you watch that movie / play that game / read that book? Use the ratio:

$([\# \text{ who rated it } 5/5] + [\# \text{ who rated it } 1/5]) / [\# \text{ who rated it } 3/5]$.

This doesn't apply to everything, but it applies to many things, including media. There are too many options out there to waste time on mediocrity, and everything great will be divisive.

13

Unless one of them is your friend or boss, you should spend 100x less time thinking and talking about billionaires than you currently do.

14

Facebook is for event invites only, not for scrolling. The people you met offline are not going to be the people posting the best stuff online, so the timeline content is worse than what you'd get on Twitter/Reddit/blogs. And the algorithm is designed to fuck with your brain.

15

Don't keep watching a bad TV show just because your friends are talking about it, it's a terrible time trade-off. You can read a recap or even better — bring up richer topics of conversations. And don't pay money for bad movies just because "everyone is watching them". Doing so is defecting against your friends since they'll now have to watch it to not feel left out.

16

Habits are reinforced by your habitual environment. That's a big part of why retreats work: they take you away from your usual surroundings and people. If you want to start meditating, doing pushups, intermittent fasting, etc, try starting on a vacation where the new circumstances make it easier to integrate new habits.

17

Are you really going to give up on expressing yourself, learning from mistakes, attracting like-minded people, building a reputation, and changing the world because someone may someday try to cancel you? They can smell the fear, you know.

18

You just read 1000 words. Close your eyes and count to 10 to break the dopamine loop and make sure that reading a listicle is really the thing you want to be doing most right now. If not, this post will still be here when you get back.

Body

19

Humans are made to walk. Set up your life to encourage walking by acquiring soft-soled shoes, good audiobooks, and/or a dog. If you're not enjoying walking and not getting your 10,000 steps you can get there with good design choices.

20

Wrestle while naked and covered in coconut oil.

21

Buy a \$20 bar of soap on Amazon just to see how it feels. If it doesn't do much for you, go back to \$4 bars. Liquid soap has a low ceiling, so don't bother.

22

Shower in the evening instead of the morning. You'll sleep much better when you're clean, your muscles are relaxed, and your body cools after a warm shower. And if you don't sweat at night (keep the bedroom cool) you'll be clean in the morning.

23

Doctors are fallible humans, they have biases and make mistakes. It's your job to be educated about your diagnoses and the drugs you are prescribed. If you're confused, ask for details or a second opinion.

24

In 🏈 / 🏏 / 🏐 / 🏓 , keep your eye on the center of the ball through the hit. The goal/court/table doesn't move, only the ball does.

25

Keep fresh fruit around. Even if you end up throwing a couple apples out once in a while, it's hugely valuable to have a tasty fruit closer at hand than junk food.

26

In case you missed it, humanity has fully optimized apples. Snapdragon, Zestar and Cosmic Crisp if you can find them, Honeycrisp or Sweetango as backup, Fuji in a pinch. All other cultivars are a distraction.

27

Get massages, give massages. You don't have to know what you're doing to make someone feel great. Use scentless oil, or simple moisturizer if the recipient is not going to shower afterward.

28

The #1 measure of an exercise program should be "is this fun enough to keep me coming back to the gym?" I don't care how "efficient" HIIT is, it's for masochists.

29

If you're not waking up at sunrise on purpose, your bedroom should be dim when you wake. Put up blackout curtains and get rid of all electronic lights.

30

Do you know what a sex toy in your butt feels like? You should at least find out.

31

Most sexually active Americans have two things: herpes (often undiagnosed and asymptomatic), and fear of herpes (often irrational and unfounded). It's not part of most standard STD screens because most people get more psychological pain from finding out than the virus itself ever caused. If you decide to check and you have it: congratulations, you don't have to worry about catching the type you have and getting an outbreak.

32

If you're not obese, have you considered that losing 20 pounds will not actually solve all your problems? If you can't lose weight easily, keep your weight stable and work on the insecurities that make you scared to take your shirt off.

33

Once in a while, try eating only a short list of simple foods for several days. For example, carrots+almonds+yogurt+water. You'll eat less without being hungry, and afterward you'll savor flavorful foods a lot more.

34

You wouldn't clean mud off a leather couch with dry toilet paper, would you? The same applies in the bathroom. In a pinch, you can just splash some water on regular toilet paper.

35

Learn how caffeine and alcohol affect you. I know people whose quality of sleep improved dramatically once they stopped having coffee with friends after lunch; it turned out they are metabolizing coffee very slowly and it affected them 10 hours later.

36

When you wake up to a long day on not enough sleep, start with tea instead of a triple espresso. You want to pace your caffeine intake throughout the day instead of crashing at 1 pm.

37

Play a competitive team sport to make friends and practice masculine virtues. But don't show up if you're not ready for 100% effort — your teammates can tell.

38

Not a single hungry child in Africa was helped by you finishing a meal you didn't enjoy.

Stuff

39

If you're moving chargers and cables around the house, you need to buy more chargers and cables. A girl in every port, a USB-C in every room.

40

Expensive personal lube is worth every penny. Same for hot sauce. Just don't get the bottles mixed up.

41

Old: buy 20 of the same pair of black socks so you don't have to worry about matching.
Bold: buy 20 colorful pairs and don't worry about matching.

42

Ask people to stop giving you non-consumable gifts. A physical thing that's not exactly what you need costs more in storage and opportunity cost than it's worth.

43

Buy some cryptocurrency, maybe 2-3% of your net worth. Barbell investing makes sense. As a bonus, checking Coinbase every day provides the same excitement as checking social media but takes a lot less time.

44

Every week at the grocery store buy one ingredient you're not sure what to do with. Try eating it raw if you haven't been able to figure out where to incorporate it.

45

If you're meeting a friend for lunch who makes less than half your income, you should pick a place in your price range and pay for both of you. And if a friend who makes double offers to do the same, accept it graciously.

46

Try a much harder mattress. Try a much softer mattress. They all have 100-day free trials now, there's no excuse for spending thousands of hours on a less-than-perfect mattress.

47

Becoming a tea connoisseur is as fun as becoming a whiskey connoisseur but much much cheaper. Craft beer snobbery is in the middle price-wise but can veer dangerously close to obnoxious hipsterism. Start a tea club at work, it's an excuse to chill and socialize deliciously.

48

Cars are getting both more reliable and more complicated, so the payoff to learning car maintenance is getting worse. It's reasonable to buy a second-hand car and own it for years without needing to fix anything yourself.

49

Learn to make one cocktail really well and always keep the ingredients at home. It impresses people, and no one ever expects you to pull off a second one. My go-to: cucumber elderflower gimlet.

50

Any <\$100 purchase that may turn into a hobby is worth it even if the hit rate is low. Sports equipment, a musical instrument, art supplies, etc. If it doesn't catch on, gift it to a friend.

51

Order weird clothes off the internet. It doesn't make economic sense for anyone to open a shop of "J-pop streetwear" or "African athleisure" in your town, but someone from South China will send them to you for cheap. It's easier to stand out by being weird than by spending more on the same style that everyone around you wears.

52

Do blind tastings of wines, then just keep buying the \$10 bottle you like best. Novelty is good, but let's be honest: you can't really tell different Malbecs apart that much.

53

An espresso machine with all the functions (grinder, milk steamer, etc) not only makes better coffee but also provides you with a meaningful, multi-step ritual to start your day with.

Place

54

Have sex in a public park at 1 am. 10% chance of getting caught = 10x erotic excitement.

55

Do vacations where you just spend two weeks in a city. You'll run out of touristy things to do and discover the climbing gyms, live shows, art classes that you'll love. You'll also be forced to start actually chatting with the locals.

56

Tinder is a terrible dating app in the US but an excellent way to find a dinner buddy while abroad. Make it explicit that this is what you're looking for.

57

If you love dogs but can't own one, volunteer to walk a neighbor's dog once a week. Dogs should be part of the share economy.

58

Put more light in your house. More. Still more.

59

If you're bored at home on a Tuesday and hate it, move to Brooklyn. If you're stuck on another crowded subway and hate it – move to a small town in the mountains. The city you live in has a massive impact on your life. And if you're single, consider also the dating market and gender ratio of singles.

60

Yes, moving to a new city will make you restart your social life from scratch. But is that a bad thing? Are you sure you have the best reputation / social role / circle of friends you could have?

61

Travel with a hiking backpack, not wheeled luggage. You want to be moving freely, not to be tied down to a heavy box dragging behind you.

62

There are way more fruits in the world than you know about. When you travel to South America or Asia buy a couple of each at the market and try them.

63

Put art on all your walls. If you can't afford originals, buy prints. Can't afford prints, buy posters. The selection criterion is a piece that you can stare at for at least 10 minutes the first time you see it. When you find better art, take down the old stuff.

64

If you live in a big city it's fine not to cook. The cooks at the Mexican spot on the corner are better than you and appreciate your patronage.

The Soul

65

Give meditation a 50 hour trial with a good app or guidebook. If it ain't your thing, give it up

P.S. The best places to meditate are churches and cathedrals.

66

Participate in exactly one riot in your life.

67

Before lying or doing something unethical, consider the real possibility that you and everyone you know will live for hundreds of years with enhanced memory and reputation tracking.

68

Read Emily Dickinson, her poems are both poignant and immediately accessible. Memorize five, they're quite short.

69

Nice!

Keep making this joke, happiness is built up of simple pleasures.

70

Most great music is made outside your country and in other languages.

71

In any giant museum, your goal should be to spend 5+ minutes with 10 amazing works, not 5 seconds with 1,000. If it's the Louvre, one of those should be Guérin's "The Return of Marcus Sextus".

72

When you're home alone, blast some music and dance. Don't think about any particular moves, just focus on the music. Then do the exact same thing when you're at a dance party.

73

Stand in the shower and repeat out loud "My opinions on guns, taxes and immigration have no impact on the world" until inner peace arrives.

74

Once in a while let yourself cry, fight, scream, and eat your boogers. That shit worked in kindergarten, there's no reason to completely give up on it now.

75

Set a pile of bills on fire. Watch your partner kiss someone. Bomb at an open mic. Observe in precise detail how you feel. You will learn that there is much more complexity to your emotions than "this is bad and painful". You'll also surprise yourself with how you react.

76

Take MDMA once a year, at home, with a person you care about.

77

Study an ancient mythology in depth and find a god to channel.

Every “spiritual” thing is worth trying at least once: Sunday mass, holotropic breathwork, any sort of ritual. They have purposes and benefits that can’t be explained ahead of time to a skeptic, and that can be enjoyed even if you don’t buy in to any of the underlying ideology.

Career

80

You won’t get money, status, fun, impact, and career capital at the same job. Pick two, get the rest elsewhere in your life.

81

Don’t put money in savings accounts, let alone CDs, let alone secured CDs. These are all scams. You should own mostly stocks, but if you want a low-yield-low-volatility investment you can get a better rate with no lockup or fees at online brokerages.

82

If you’re thinking about doing that degree, think twice. If it’s a PhD, think ten times. Can you start doing now what you hope to do with the credential and get where you want in fewer years while also making money? Also underrated: dropping out of grad school one year in.

83

It’s fine to eat lunch alone. Catching up with co-workers every day doesn’t do much beyond what you’d get from catching up once a week. A good podcast is more interesting than your best colleague. Also, you don’t want your main friend group to be contingent on everyone remaining employed at the same place indefinitely.

84

If you’ve been waiting for months for someone to create an event and invite you, whether it’s a book discussion or a BDSM orgy, just throw one yourself. Most social scenes suffer from lack of initiative, not excess.

85

You can wear the same outfit to the office two days in a row. Your boss won’t notice. Your colleagues won’t notice. The only people who’ll notice are those who have a crush on you so this is a good way to find out who those are.

86

At work, if someone wants to set up a meeting or call, don't accept until they send a clear agenda or a list of questions/topics. If you need someone's time, send a clear agenda and list ahead of time. Meetings should not be about deciding what the meeting should be about.

87

When looking for employers, perhaps your first priority should be whether they're raking in cash. No friendly culture, creative freedom, or generous package can survive long in an unprofitable business. You're investing your time and energy in an employer so think like an investor.

88

If someone could really use several hours of your help, ask them to hire you at a fair price. Do the same when you need help. There are amazing win-wins to be had.

Relationships

89

Put a reminder on your phone to call your grandma. Ask her to tell you about some of the dumbest shit she has done in her life.

90

Talk to people on flights, starting at the boarding gate. Everyone is bored and alienated in airports, and you get the chance to meet people far outside your normal circles. Offer people gummy bears to break the ice.

91

If your spouse, friend, or family member has a dumb but not strictly harmful habit, try thinking of it as their artistic expression instead of using facts and logic to fail to talk them out of it.

92

Sex doesn't have to be symmetrically satisfying every time. Some nights are just for giving, some are just for receiving. Same for relationships in general.

93

Take a tab of acid and hang out with a 5-year-old as equals.

94

Interview people you know, even if they're not famous or experts in any particular thing. Just write down 10 questions and hit *record*. You'll learn a lot and deepen the relationship.

95

If you have too little social life, wake up at 10 am every day to have energy in the evening. Too many people bothering you — wake up at 5 am to enjoy some alone time in the morning.

96

Your parents can handle hearing about your crazy life, dumb mistakes, and weird opinions. How will they learn to respect you as an adult if you don't believe in your own story enough to share it?

97

If you're not having fun on dates, think of something you enjoy and do that as a date. Painting class dates, hiking dates, ping pong dates, board game dates...

98

At any big party or event, your goal should be to make 2-3 connections, not to collect 500 business cards or Facebook friends. Throw quarterly gatherings with only the most recent friends you've made to consolidate the relationships and get them to meet each other.

99

Unless the guests haven't seen each other in more than a year, parties with an agenda are much better than general hangouts. Some ideas: silent party, deep question party, touch/cuddle party, relating games party, art/performance party.

100

Promise people you'll do 100 of something (like writing pieces of life advice) even if you're not entirely sure you can do it. Then do 109. Overpromise AND overdeliver.

101

Make friends from as many subcultures and worldviews as you can. A Mormon friend, an SJW friend, a transhumanist friend, a crystal healing friend, an 8chan friend, a hard normie friend, etc.

102

Try to meet your online friends offline. It's always incredibly cool to see in person someone you've built a connection with and imagined a lot of things about over the internet.

103

Learn to be OK with nudity and to disentangle it from shame and sexuality. Go to a nudist lodge, or just throw a nude non-sexual party with your trusted friends.

104

Yes, manic pixie dream girls and insouciant bad boys are interesting. But have you tried dating sincere, honest, and responsible people who actually care about you?

105

"I know we were just introduced, but I forgot your name."

"I saw the email you sent me last month, I just procrastinated and forgot to respond."

"This is the best effort I was realistically going to make."

Try it, it's liberating.

106

If you think you're running 10 minutes late, text to say you'll be 15 minutes late. That way the other person gets one disappointment and one pleasant surprise. Most people do the opposite: they say they're 5 minutes late when it's 10 and end up annoying the other and looking like total fools.

And Finally

107

Giving life advice to an anonymous crowd on the internet is an act of service, but giving life advice to a single person's face is often a brash power move. Same for challenging someone's model of the world. Remember that every act of communication has two sides and a context.

108

Write things online, even if you're not qualified to write them, even if you think that no one will care. I started this thread on a lark, but ended up making friends, practicing creative brainstorming, gaining followers, and coming up with ways to improve my own life.

Attachment styles:

- Secure
- Anxious/avoidant
- .doc
- .pdf
- Link to shared drive
- Everything in a big zip file
- In an email 5 minutes later apologizing for forgetting the attachment

— Putanumonit Jacob (@yashkaf) June 10, 2019