

How to throw your life away

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Living life without planning out a long-term goal is like blind folding yourself and flooring the car. The ideal life would be taking some time to figure out what you want to do and start living life so that you can achieve that goal. In other words, you have to look at the map and navigator before you start hitting that accelerator.

When I talk to elementary students, they know what they want to do for the rest of their lives. Or they think they know. That rapidly changes in 5 years. Highschool students often believe that they know what they want to do for the rest of their lives. Especially in physics, I have encountered people who believe that physics is what they want to do for the rest of their lives. I'm thinking of one specific person, who is a freshman and spends his 24/7 on physics. To be very honest, I think this is a terrible decision.

First, you know nothing about it to like it or hate it. This statement is made under the assumption that you are young (in your 20s or even younger) and that your knowledge in that specific area is not on a graduate-student level. For example, physics to a 15-year-old and a 30-year-old are two very different things. A physics enthusiast of age 15 may end up completely hating physics when he is 30, vice-versa. It is important to state that there are people who face their golden ages at a very old age, which is very common in academia. My uncle who is a chemistry professor often tells me that some of the best researchers in the field were struggling in their undergraduate days, and became good in the field in their 50s, even better than the ones who excelled when they were undergrads. Going all-in for a single subject is like betting your whole life on something that you are not so sure of. It's like betting my life savings on whether the cat in the box is dead or alive.

Second, you don't learn certain important factors in life. At this moment, money and human relationships are the only two that I can think of. If your head is focused solely on academics, you won't be able to prepare for the future, when you are all by yourself. If your parents suddenly pass away and you can't pay for your tuition right now, you will have to find a job so that you can survive. Or even if you become very successful in your field, you would have to know how to manage your income in a manner that satisfies yourself and the people that you may be responsible for (family). Some researchers or professors love their job but aren't satisfied with their salary. If they had prepared for the future when they were younger, paying a little more attention to finance, they would have an even better life.

Likewise, human relationships are so important. We live in a world where it is impossible for one to be totally independent. You can't cultivate, hunt, build a shelter, etc. all by yourself. The place where you live is made by someone else, the food that you are eating exists thanks to a lot of different people varying from chefs to farmers and fishermen. In other words, we live in a world where we somewhat depend on each other. It is so important to be a communicable person in this world. I personally believe that it is the parents' responsibility to teach children to be a loving, fitting member of society and if they fail to do so, their child is not having a bright future, which is sad since your beloved child is not welcome to this

society. I also believe that women are better communicators, so I like to learn from them. How to talk to someone is very basic yet crucial and is sometimes very difficult. How to get to know someone would probably be a bigger step, since you must have a more engaging and deeper conversation without having an aversion. The final challenge would be how to influence someone, meaning shifting their ideas. This can be used in arguments, closing business deals, finding a romantic partner, etc. Having a healthy and non-destructive argument is very challenging, yet if one experiences it, it means that he has achieved a very high standard. I find every single one of these sub-categories of "how to communicate" very challenging on a day-to-day basis, which is why I try to surround myself with great people, who I can learn from. (So, if we have had more than one conversation, or see each other on a day-to-day basis, I'm treating you as a role model in at least one aspect). I have met many brilliant scholars who are not social: straight-up weird. Although I respect their achievements and respect them as scholars, I believe that they will face a barrier where communication becomes an issue regardless of their expertise. In the same sense, the people that I respect the most are those who can communicate (not weird and have a sense of humor) and have great achievements in their expertise. These are the ones who inspire future generations that they can be successful as well. The weird ones discouraged me making me feel like I must dedicate my whole life, sell my soul, to become successful.

Lastly, there is just so much fun in life. Academic achievement is not the only factor in anyone's life quality. For example, I would rather have a semester having amazing meals and get a B in every class than have a semester having garbage food every day and get A+s in every class. I sometimes leave my academic priority behind and go running or lifting. I often find it even more helpful in an academic perspective than glueing my ass to the chair since I focus better after my workouts. It's not hard to start focusing and my focus span is prolonged after my workouts. There is so much hidden joy in life that you can find. You can make your meals better and cooking can be a joy. You may find being in nature to be fun and start trail running or backpacking. I personally found observing people and capturing the moment to be very fun and started photography. I also found joy in starting and running my own business – it's not solely about making profit, but also leading a team, changing lives, and observing customers' reviews. Others find joy in art, such as making music or painting.

Some people believe that they should wait until they achieve a certain goal or reach a specific milestone before taking the time to figure out what they truly want in life. However, this logic contains a fundamental flaw: how can you work toward achieving a desired outcome without first understanding the ingredients necessary to achieve it? Shouldn't identifying and working on those ingredients come before pursuing the outcome itself? Is it even possible to achieve a meaningful result without first clarifying what you genuinely value and desire?

To delay self-discovery until after achieving a goal is to risk spending years pursuing something that may ultimately feel unfulfilling. Why invest time and energy in a path that feels painful, only to realize later that you could have used that effort to build something aligned with your true desires? Why endure years of struggle in a metaphorical hell, only to seek heaven after reaching a certain point? Wouldn't it be far more productive—and fulfilling—to chart a course toward your own version of heaven from the start?

To put some more personal thought in, I like to divide 24 hours into 3 sections of 8 hours. 8 hours of work, 8 hours of rest, and 8 hours of sleep. 8 hours of rest may seem a lot, but it actually isn't; 8 hours of work is 8 hours of studying for students, and that is actually a lot. I usually fail to live this way, but when I do find myself following these rules including weekends, I find myself making the most progress and being in peace. For me, going to the gym counts as "rest" since I get to empty my brain, and sometimes some classes count as resting too, since I really don't do anything.

There are a few statements that I find to be very important in our 20s. One, experience and failure is key. A good friend of mine told me about the phrase "fuck around and find out". I think this is the mentality that a person in their 20s should have. Try everything out: learn how to surf, cook, taste coffee, run, lift, read books, and make friends. I found that having experience in a romantic relationship to be crucial. After breaking up, I realized that I have been taking other relationships for granted: my friends can literally stop talking to me at any point, but they decide to keep the relationship. I am thankful for every one of my friends for this reason. This also means that failure is important. We will face challenges all the time, and success isn't always guaranteed. I would rather fail a lot in my 20s than fail in my 40s if I had to choose between one, since currently I am only responsible for myself but later in life, I would be responsible for a whole family. I would rather feel pain by myself than to watch my wife and children suffer. Learning how to recover and bounce-back after failure is so important, and you can't learn this without actually failing. The greatest risk isn't failing: in fact, the greatest risk is not even trying. You miss 100% of the shots you don't take. Go out there, experience, fail, and bounce-back. Life is tough, but with the right people, life becomes easy and fun. Sometimes you may even find yourself wishing Monday to come.

I will use a lot of quotes from One Life to Lead written by Russell Benaroya starting from here.

The most important part in your 20s is finding out who you are. Who am I? What do I like? What do I dislike? What do I want? What do I don't want? Why do I want what I want? Why you do something reveals much more than what you do. These questions aren't straightforward. They are actually very challenging. It takes more than days to figure this out. Yet, it is so worth asking and answering these questions oneself because it leads to the step of planning your long-term goal in life.

I want to conclude this piece with a cheat sheet of how to find out what you like - finding your "genius zone" as Russell puts it. Try answering these questions provided by Russell, and you'll get what I mean.

What comes naturally to you?

When do people say, "Wow, how did you do that?"

What are you doing when you lose track of time?

What are you doing when you feel most accomplished?

What do you do such that when you're done, you feel even more energized?

Find your "genius zone" and talk to me. Find an overlapping part in your genius zone, what the world needs, and what the world values. I can think of so many classmates who have amazing genius zones that are highly valuable to the world.

I want to make a positive impact on "my world", and I define it as 2 things: being a responsible father and repaying to people who I'm thankful for. I am trying to find the method to achieve these goals and will never stop. Take some time today and think about what you really want, and why you really want it. This writing is inspired by Russell Benaroya, a UCSB alumn. Thank you, Russell, for such an amazing inspiration. Thank you all for taking the time to read this article.